

# Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

17/03/20

## Outside Body Report

<b>Outside Body</b>	Hayle Park Nature Reserve
<b>Councillor(s) represented on the Outside Body</b>	Paul Wilby, Brian Clark and Derek Mortimer
<b>Report Author</b>	Cllr Paul Wilby
<b>Date of Outside Body Meeting Attended</b>	09/03/20

### **Purpose of the Outside Body:**

Nature Reserve

### **Update:**

#### Activity

Our biggest achievement this year is signing the lease for the former Dean St land fill site. This was capped in the 1980s and covers an area of around 28 acres. The site has two ponds, which vary in size dependent on the time of the year, and a dry-stone wall that runs along the back of the site. Due to its former use as a tip site there are some restrictions on what we can do. Our aim is to repair the site boundary and then introduce sheep for conservation grazing, this should lower the soil fertility and allow a wider range of wildflowers to return. We are in the process of producing a management plan that will allow us to apply for funding for the site.

In a report carried out by an independent assessor for Maidstone Borough Council, Hayle Park Nature Reserve received the highest ranking. Based on this report, we have been proposed by MBC to receive official Local Nature Reserve status. The next stage is for MBC to fund the administrative procedure, which we anticipate will happen in the next couple of months. I am very proud of this achievement and the public recognition for the conservation work that we carry out.

We have also purchased a tractor to help us with maintaining the reserve. This has been a great help in allowing us to stick to our management plan and lighten the load on the volunteers

#### Worked carried out over the last year:

We have continued our planting of a new hedge around parts of the inner fence, this should aid small mammals to move about the reserve. Unfortunately, a lot of the

planting from the year before has been damaged by vandals. We have replaced most of what was damaged, but this is a constant issue.

Coppicing with standards is almost complete on the area behind Hayle Place. The aim of this is to help increase the diversity of trees in the woodland, by leaving certain species to reach maturity, whilst other - more numerous species - can be repressed. The wood gathered has been left in piles, providing great habitats for a large variety of invertebrates, mosses, lichens and fungi. Creating different levels of shade and vegetation density generates a wider variety of habitat niches, which will be filled by a range of plant and animal species. As some of you may have already seen, some of the coppiced trees from last year have growth of over 6ft already.

The grass in the enclosed field was cut and baled producing bales for hay. We sold most the hay and recuperated the cost, even making a small profit. The reason we cut and bale the hay is to increase the number of wildflowers in the field by lowering the fertility of the soil. We have seen an increase in the number wildflowers this year following the hay baling in 2018.

#### Events:

There have been several well attended community events this year including; a Dawn Chorus Walk, Bat Walks, Small Mammal Survey and Yoga in the Park. There was a Children's Summer Club, funded by Tovil Parish Council, which was well attended by children of all ages. At our AGM we were excited to host Arbor the Tree giant - over 70 people attended this event.

Many of these events are made possible by the work of Steve Songhurst (Warden of Vinter's Park Nature Reserve) and I would like to publicly thank Steve for all his work and guidance. I would also like to thank Shannon Hines-Clark for organising Yoga in the Park and generously donating her time

#### Plans for the coming year:

- Finish the tree work behind Crisbrook Cottages. Plant the areas that have had tree work done with new saplings of more diverse tree species.
- Continue to host community events. Applause (Arbor the Tree) will be returning with their new show Tree Fellas. Yoga in the Park will also be held.
- Secure more funding for our work. We are in the process of applying for charity status, which will enable us to apply for bigger grants to fund our upcoming projects.

The councillors carry out the majority of the governance of the trust and the fund raising. As an asset to Maidstone its important that MBC has input into the nature reserve.

Cllr Paul Wilby is chairman. All Cllrs have been involved in securing the Dean Street site, in applying for charity status and help in running events.