

Report on Conservation Walk

29 May 2013

Present: Mark Belton (area manager for CGM); Mark Cullen (chairman of the Cricket Club); Alan Alderson (tree warden) and Sandra Allen (Alan's partner and resident); Susannah Ticciati (conservation rep on the PC); Anona Cram (biodiversity group rep); Michele Ide-Smith (biodiversity group rep); Margaret Starkie (PC clerk – arrived half way through).

Context

Verge cutting was raised as an issue in the open forum of the May PC meeting, with particular respect to the church wall. The cutting back of the snow berries on the rec was also raised in the open forum. It was decided that a general reconsideration of current verge cutting practice would be a good idea, getting input from Mark Belton and Alan Alderson, as well as from the newly started biodiversity group. The latter was introduced at the May APM by Anona Cram.

Recreation Ground

Mark Cullen confirmed the need for the outfield to be cut once every week, in preparation for cricket matches. He said that the cutting/leaving of the verges does not affect the cricket.

Proposal 1: Verge on East side of rec could be cut two times a year instead of six (once early and once late in the year).

Proposal 2: On cherry tree side of rec (West side), planting of hedging needs to be finished (type of hedge tbc).

Proposal 3: In area where snow berries have been cut radically back, they could be allowed to come out by 1 metre. The rest of the flattened area could have the top soil taken off to inhibit snow berry growth, and other plants could be planted there instead.

Proposal 4: In the past CGM has been instructed to use the weed killer Glyphosate on this area. Further investigation should be done into its effects before further use.

Green End bench

Proposal 1: The verge around the bench has been cut frequently by a local resident. It is proposed that he or she is encouraged to refrain from doing so, in order that wildflowers be allowed to grow, in accordance with the following proposal (which takes into account the need for the area just around the bench to be cut frequently by CGM).

Proposal 2: Apart from just around the bench (with a metre's leeway), the cutting of the verge could be reduced: on the right hand side of the bench (where there are no daffodils) to twice a year (early and late); on the left hand side of the bench (where there are daffodils) to once a year.

Alternatively, more daffodils could be planted (also on the right hand side), along with Forget-me-not, Honesty, Oxeye seeds along with other mixed seeds. This would be a good 'showpiece' of what could be achieved, perhaps to be replicated elsewhere in the village if it gains approval from residents.

Proposal 3: Along edge of rec opposite Plough verge should not be strimmed so low. An ivy covering should be left to hold the bank together.

Church and High St verges

Proposal 1: Could experiment with leaving verges along church wall (both on Church St and on the extension of the High St) to grow wild flowers, cutting only once in Autumn and clearing away debris. The cuttings are presently left to rot; natural rotting would be preferable. Suitable wild flowers could be planted here, e.g. Honesty. The stretch between the sign and the church gate will need to continue to be cut as before: this is necessary in order to improve sight lines for traffic at the junction, as required by Cambridgeshire County Council Highways service.

Proposal 2: Further thought to be given to verge on extension of High St opposite church wall. Opinion divided as to whether this needs 6 cuts a year, or whether 2 would be sufficient. In the case of 2, the path could still be kept clear.

Proposal 3: Alan suggested that the suckers be removed from the lime trees along this path. Forget-me-nots and primroses could be planted under the limes. Michele has also suggested snowdrops.

Wadloes Footpath

This is cut back on both sides regularly. There are complaints when it gets too overgrown (especially by ‘rush hour’ parents with push chairs and cyclists). So there is no proposal to change the current cutting regime.

However, Alan suggests that the mowing might be stopped at the far end on the left between the recently planted willows and the ditch as this will not interfere with using the path at all.

Matters to investigate

1. Strimming: benefits and drawbacks. Could high strimming be an alternative form of maintenance which does not endanger frogs and other wildlife?
2. Protected Verges (PRV): it is possible to apply for verges to be protected such that they are not subjected to the usual 6 cuts a year by PCs. This needs to be looked into.

General principles

1. Cutting verges and leaving the debris encourages the growth of ‘thuggish’ plants.

For this term, see the website: http://www.plantlife.org.uk/about_us/news_press/flowersonthedge/

Thuggish plants are the ones which thrive on the soil being too rich.

The above proposals should all be taken to suggest fewer cuttings, but with cuttings being removed. It costs much more to remove cuttings, but with fewer cuts costs should overall be kept about the same. In order to reduce costs, however, it was suggested that we look for a location in the village where the cuttings can be

deposited, thus forming a ‘village compost heap’. This would encourage hedgehogs and could be re-used by villagers once rotted down.