

Horspath Parish Council Wildlife Conservation Area Volunteers

Project work planned for the summer and autumn 2023, updated 30th June 2023

There are no new capital projects to start in this, the 23rd year of this successful community nature conservation project, and some of the routine annual maintenance tasks for which volunteer help will be greatly appreciated will include:

1. Cutting back this year's vegetation growth from over-hanging the gravel path around the site, particularly stinging nettles and holly at both eye and floor level. Raking off this cut vegetation down-slope of the circular path or barrowing it to the compost heap beside the flat lower level path, whichever is easiest.
2. Periodically raking off the accumulation of fallen leaves from the gravel paths in the autumn and winter. The dates when most leaves fall and make the footpaths very slippery varies with the weather every year.
3. Raking off invasive pond weeds to leave about 20% of the water surface open in the northernmost frog-breeding pond, and piling the rakings near to the wetland for any small aquatic life to return back to the pond.
4. Removing any fallen branches from within any of the 3 wetland areas.
5. Cutting and raking off any tall vegetation growing in the southernmost seasonal wetland area.
6. Cutting off and removing the tall vegetation growing on the 3 clay dams which control the flow of different qualities and volumes of water through the wetland.
7. Cutting back and removing the tall vegetation growing up around the narrow brick access path giving access to the west side of the frog-breeding pond, often used safely by children for pond dipping.
8. Barrowing some additional gravel to be applied to the main path around the site, as may be required.
9. Tea and coffee making for the regular social break half-way through any volunteer working session, typically at 11.00 am on a designated Saturday morning.
10. Providing assistance when the HPC's tractor and mower is used in September to mow flat the nettles and rose bay willow herb growing extensively on the clay grass meadow, which will involve raking off and barrowing to the nearby compost heap any excess of cut vegetation.

The Parish Council provides some basic gardening tools like 5 grass rakes and 2 wheelbarrows, but volunteers are welcome to bring along their own gardening tools such as garden shears, loppers or secateurs. All working volunteers should wear protective gloves, and follow safe practices for themselves and for others working nearby.

Additional volunteer help will be necessary to assist the professional builder who will supervise the repairs to the wooden footbridge across the wetland and to the steps or the ramp on the footpath sloping up on the west side of the wooden footbridge.

Professional help from a tree surgeon will be required to remove the large tree which has fallen across the first clay dam in the wetland, as this is a job is for professional tree surgeon rather than for volunteers, who are not permitted to use a chain saw. Volunteers should keep clear of this operation when it occurs, but there may be some clearing-up to do afterwards.

As soon as the Parish Council has some specific times and dates for starting these volunteer activities, the volunteer project manager for the Parish Council will e-mail this information to all those volunteers who have sent their contact details to the Parish Clerk.

People of all kinds and ages are welcome to attend any of the Parish Council's volunteer work sessions, without any commitment to stay for any specific time, or to attend all the volunteer working sessions which the Parish Council organises. Children must be supervised and in the care of their parents within the Wildlife Conservation Area, or they must be in the care of someone specifically approved to do this by their parents.