



Wilbrahams' Environment Group

Welcome to our first Wilbrahams' Environment Group (WEG) Newsletter

June 2020

It now seems a long time since we gathered in the Memorial Hall to discuss the potential for developing environmentally friendly and sociable projects for the villages and it was fantastic seeing so many people supporting this initial Wilbrahams' Wilding meeting.

Covid-19 has delayed a lot of initiatives, but a small group of enthusiasts has been working behind the scenes to keep some projects on track. The aim of this newsletter is to keep you informed and ask for ideas and potential volunteers when we are all able to move around the village more freely.

There is a huge variety of skills available in the villages which gives us a great opportunity to collectively make a difference. Little Wilbraham have led the way with their established group of volunteers and we hope that WEG will maximise the skills and expand the volunteer groups between the villages. The absolute bonus is that we hope we all have fun socialising together while enhancing the space we live in.

Post lockdown we are planning to meet with a trees and woodland expert who knows the Wilbrahams' well, this will greatly benefit our planning.

As with all new groups the WEG has developed aims and objectives but undoubtedly these will evolve with time and experience. This is your group so any suggestions will be gratefully received.

The Wilbrahams Environment Group

Aims:

To promote, maintain and improve the natural environment of the Wilbrahams' for the community by:

- working with individuals and existing organisations to carry out projects using volunteers and where appropriate, assisted by local and external experts.
- helping engender a sense of wellbeing increased mental health and accomplishment in the community through shared projects.
- increasing the biodiversity within and around the villages through managed development of environmentally diverse spaces.
- enhancing the visual appearance of the villages.

Where appropriate we will be working with both parish councils and other relevant groups both within and outside the villages.

The following articles outline some of the activities currently underway or being planned in Little Wilbraham, Great Wilbraham and the Well - braham's group but look out for more initiatives when we get through this rather surreal period.

Little Wilbraham

Elaine Allison & Alan Cody

The Little Wilbraham Volunteers Group was first established in 2018 as a group of residents happy to help out on various local projects. A key aim was to have no aims other than have fun in whatever was proposed.

Since its' formation this group has carried out a number of major projects together with a series of continuing, seasonally dependent, maintenance programs.

Managing the Environment at the Ken Davison Recreation ground.

Aim: To create a local space for adults and children to relax and play in.

This project included the installation of the children's play area carried out in 2019 with financial support from the Parish Council and the Wadlow Wind Farm Community Fund. A new path was installed by the volunteer group to facilitate access and vegetation cleared from the entrance.



Some areas of brambles have been left untouched to create habitats for nesting birds, small mammals and insects. The larger trees in other areas have been made safe and pruned to give better access and provide shade.

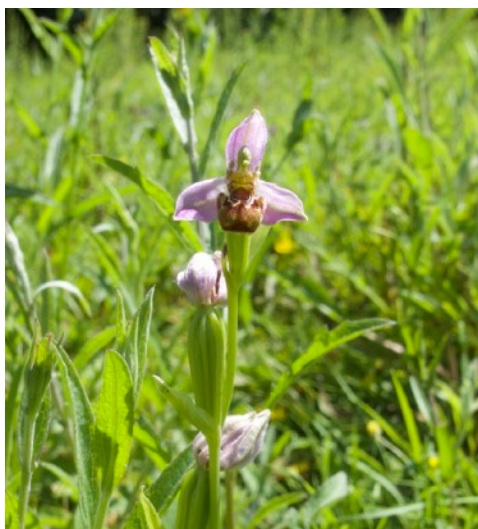
Part of this area was originally an orchard and the remaining fruiting trees provide food for overwintering birds. The management of the area is ongoing.

Future plans involve changing some of the grassed area to wildflower meadows and the addition of different species of trees to encourage biodiversity.

Pits Nature Reserve

Aim: To manage the Pits area to maximise biodiversity in line with the habitat.

For those who do not know this area it is a former gravel pit that has been used as a tip for a significant period but was filled in the 1970's. Located at the end of Rectory Farm Road and the The Little Wilbraham Road, this area has been partially managed as a nature reserve on and off over a period of years. With the support of the parish council this area will be developed and enhanced over the next few years.



A Phase One Habitat Survey was completed in 2019 and this information used to support a grant submission to the Wadlow Wind Farm Community Fund. The application was successful and £2000 will be used to purchase some power tools.

Our next action is to produce a management plan. We are working with a trained botanist, an entomologist and an ecologist. This plan has been put on hold until we can safely meet and survey the area.

St John's churchyard.

The volunteer group have helped to 'tidy up' some areas around the churchyard including ivy removal from the walls and some of the grave sites and trimming suckers from the mature sycamore trees.

Continuing projects

Seasonally dependent projects such as litter picking, trimming and vegetation management continue throughout the year

Adding trees to our environment.

As part of 'greening of the local environment' we are mapping potential sites across the villages where trees and other plantings could occur. This is an ongoing mapping project and a key part of the WEG's planning framework.

South Cambs District Council gave each parish council a voucher for £60 to buy and plant trees. This was used in Little Wilbraham to plant a Lime on the triangle on the entrance to the village opposite Reed Cottage.

Great Wilbraham

Paul Lambton

Those who attended our meeting back in February will have learnt that the Memorial Hall Committee intended to explore the options available for some of the land they have control over. Specifically the play area and the recreation ground. These options include managing the tree cover, clearing vegetation and introducing some wildflower meadows.

Tree planting in the Memorial Hall play area

Towards the end of March, just before the lockdown, a small group of volunteers planted four cherry trees in the play area, two white flowering trees facing Church Street and two pink further into the play area. With the recent dry spell we have been busy keeping these trees watered.

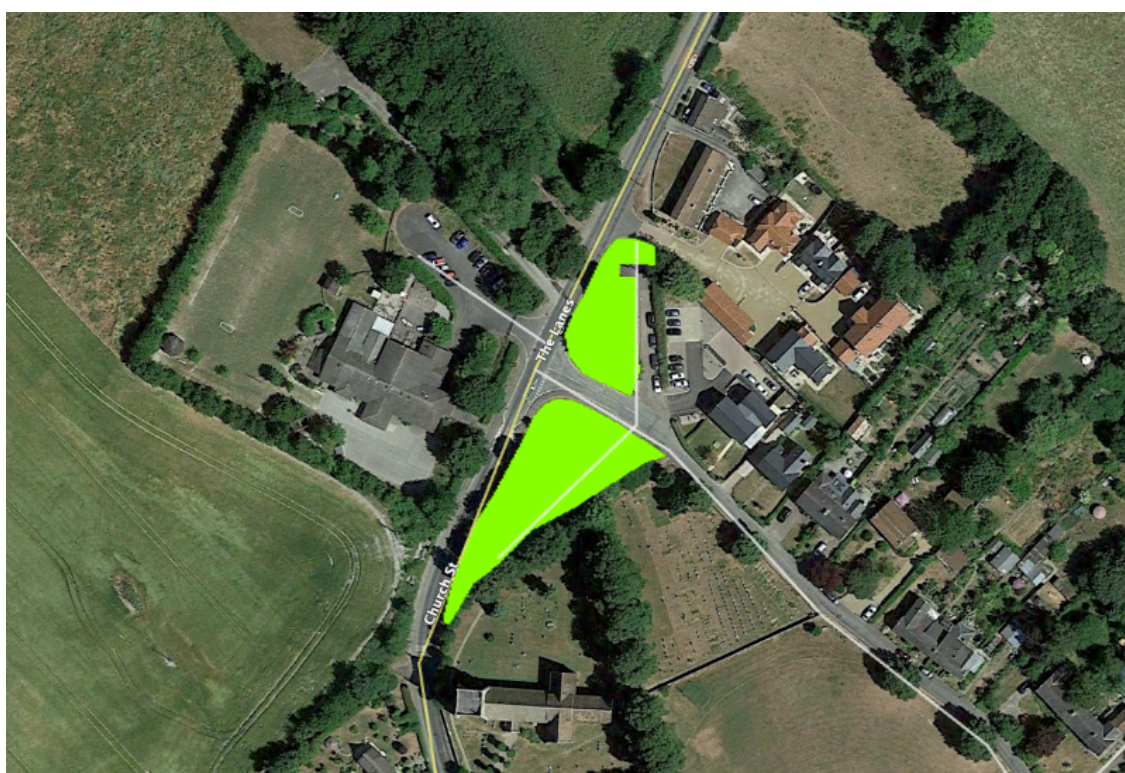


Another four trees are planned to be planted during this coming winter/spring period.



Work has also been progressing on the wilding area within the play area. The first challenge is killing off some of the grassed area so that plants can be planted and seed scattered, which is now likely to be this coming autumn/next spring. Seeds have been purchased to grow plants which are liked by bees and butterflies and a number of villagers are kindly growing them on ready for planting out. However, nature takes its time so making this area more wildlife friendly will be a continuing project.

Triangles of land opposite the School - Nick Toovey & Paul Lambton



These two areas of land consist of trees, grass and lay-bys which are used as car parking by parents dropping off and collecting school children, for the Dental Surgery and occasionally for the Church. The car parking is often insufficient and areas of the grass are churned into mud after rain. The areas are very visible to anyone entering Great Wilbraham from Little Wilbraham and we feel they could be made to look much more attractive.

The land belongs to the County Council but our Parish Council is able to make most decisions about it. Ivy and sucker growth has already been removed from the trees and the Parish Council has at our request engaged tree surgeons to remove the worst tree completely, when the bird nesting season is over. At the same time some large boughs will be removed from two other trees to enhance the visual appearance of the foliage.

We are also preparing a Landscaping Plan to introduce some contour to the land, add some planting and to improve the car parking.

In consultation with the Parish Council, the villagers and from the County Council we hope that significant work can take place in the Autumn of this year, partly with volunteer labour and partly funded by the Parish Council.

The Villages All Age Gardening Project

Joy Bray & Alison
Hargreaves

The Well-brahams has been working on the idea of a community gardening project for nearly a year and the formation of the WEG Volunteer Group could assist in realising this dream.

There is increasing evidence of the therapeutic value and the feeling of wellbeing that people gain from gardening and engaging with the outdoor environment. This is against a background of increasing levels of mental ill health in the community combined with the problem of loneliness in the old and isolated. Not helped by the current lockdown.



We are proposing an all-ages garden project where we will offer villagers the opportunity to create herb gardens, flower beds and planters around our community for the enjoyment of all. This will encourage cohesion between village groups and societies who may not usually work together, For example, a single planter being looked after by the youth group and over 60s, or neighbours may volunteer to look after a designated area. This may help bridge the gap between generations and give neighbours a shared project. One interesting suggestion is a competition at the end of the year for the best kept area.

This project is not about making the village pretty (though this would be an added benefit), but is about social cohesion, encouraging exercise and spending time outdoors.

Gardening fits in with the Government initiative - **5 Ways to Wellbeing:**

1. Connect with others
2. Become more active
3. Take notice of the world
4. Keep learning
5. Give to others

How can you help with this project?

Everyone this newsletter goes out to either attended the meeting or has since joined the group and we would like your ideas and suggestions about how to make this project work.

We already have a great start as Sarah Fordham and Alison Hargreaves applied for a grant from the Co-Op to kick start the funding for this project and were awarded nearly £500. Scotsdales Charitable Trust have also offered us £300 for which we are incredibly grateful.

We have thought that it would be helpful to have one person or household act as coordinator for an area in the village. This would mean talking to the people in the area and seeing if they wanted to be involved. This doesn't mean just physical work. Some can advise, help with planning, be supportive and interested when they see work going on, donate plants/bulbs or just make tea. An essential skill.

But you may have many more or better ideas, which would be great. Or you may also want to offer to be a coordinator. That would be marvellous, thanks.

If you would like to specifically engage with this project then please contact Joy or Alison by emailing joy.bray@talktalk.net or alisonhargreaves@btinternet.com

A final thought, one of our members Julia A'Court recommended this book as a good read during lockdown '*The Well Gardened Mind*' by Sue Stuart-Smith.

And finally...

If you would like to contact us then use our email or if you would like to join our group then pop over to the website and look for the [Join Us Here](#) link

EMAIL: wilbrahamseg@gmail.com

WEB: <https://www.wilbrahams.co.uk/information/weg/>

All the best and stay healthy

The WEG Team

