

# Kingston Action Group: report to KPC November 2022

Our last report to the KPC seems to have been as long ago as March 2021. Since then much has changed!

We had at that time only just finished clearing the former allotment site at Gow's Croft and decided to transform it into a public garden.

## Community Wildlife Garden – Progress

Volunteers have now spent almost 500 hours (since September 2020) on the site. In the last 18 months we have:

- Removed the remains of the greenhouse erected last year (and which was then destroyed in a storm) and replaced it with another, also donated by a villager
- Bought (but not yet assembled) staging for the greenhouse
- Cleared the remains of the tree which had demolished the greenhouse
- Erected the donated shed and linked new guttering there to three donated water butts
- Installed a new post and rail fence
- Erected a panelled fence, completing the fencing around the periphery of the site
- Excavated and laid a new circular path, wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs
- Planted a hedgerow along the eastern edge of the site – nearest to Wellgreen Lane
- Constructed four compost bays
- Also constructed three raised beds. Like the compost bays, these were made from reclaimed wood
- Applied successfully for a grant from the Chalk Cliff Trust which helped to pay for the path and fence, the remainder coming from the KPC
- Dug a large hole which will in time become a bog garden
- Removed more than a ton of waste material, dug up from the site including rubble, broken paving stones, metal and plastic
- Planted (in October) more than £500 worth of shrubs, climbers and perennials to supplement already donated shrubs and other plants!

Over the next few weeks, we have plans to plant another hedgerow (underplanted with snowdrops), scores of other bulbs and more perennials and shrubs.

In the medium term, we will erect a notice board just outside the site. Among other things, this will advertise future work days and tasks.

We heard on 1 November that a grant application made in February to the CARES (Climate Action Resilient Ecosystems and Sustainability) project had been successful. Part of the sum applied for will cover our rent and insurance costs for the next three years, giving us real security. It will also enable us to install – at least – some form of seating at the site and perhaps even a shelter, should another grant application we intend to make meet with a similarly positive response. This one will be to a scheme specifically targeted at Community Gardens and run by the National Garden Scheme.

By the summer of 2023, the Garden will include a range of features to attract wildlife and engage the interests of children, as well as providing a new public space for people of all ages to enjoy.

## **Elsewhere in the village**

In the last six weeks, we have:

- Planted 5000 crocus on the green at Snednore
- Planted 200 wild daffodil bulbs along the woodland edge of St Pancras Green
- Stripped turf from another section of the village green and sowed wildflower seed there, thus doubling the size of the meadow established in 2020.

This autumn, we will also be planting, in the space by the lower tennis court, a variety of bulbs including wild tulip, grape hyacinth and cyclamen.

Plans for a meadow area on St Pancras Green are currently in abeyance until the proposed outdoor exercise equipment has been installed since there appears to be a potential clash between these two projects.

## **Financial help from the KPC**

The KPC decided to give the Action Group £10,000 spread over four financial years, beginning with £1000 in 2021/22. That first tranche was used on the Community Wildlife Garden to supplement the grant from the Chalkcliff Trust for the path and fence; for repairs to the shed; and for the purchase of hedging plants and some garden tools.

Of the £3000 given for the current financial year, we have spent (in round terms):

- £1050 on crocus bulbs
- £610 on other bulbs
- £310 on wildflower seed and the hire of a turf cutter
- £560 on shrubs, climbers and perennials for the Community Wildlife Garden

The balance of c £500 will be spent on more bulbs and plants, including some additional snowdrops for The Avenue.

We have outline plans for spending next year's allocation and that for 2024/25.

## **Volunteers**

Apart from the work done on the Community Wildlife Garden and bulb planting elsewhere, volunteers' activities have been restricted by illness of our Group leader. Even so, some 40 hours of time was spent earlier this year on sweeping leaves and clearing the paths around St Pancras Green. The virus, while individuals have achieved minor miracles with litter clearance.

## **In Bloom**

The entry to this year's competition, made jointly with the KPC, was rewarded with a Gold Prize, following last year's exactly similar outcome. This was a source of considerable satisfaction in itself but the acknowledgement that it represents could be extremely useful as supporting information when making grant applications.

## **Traffic calming**

The Group would like the KPC to consider a form of traffic calming widely used on mainland Europe which, on the face of it, has the potential to reduce considerably the average speed of through traffic in the village. The system involves:

- a notice warning drivers that they are approaching a speed control point
- a sensor measuring the speed of each vehicle
- a signal from the sensor which causes a traffic light ahead to turn red if any vehicle is exceeding the speed limit, the light remaining red for a specified time.

This system operates (at least) in Portugal, Spain, Italy and France. While it may not reduce the volume of traffic, it has been proved to reduce traffic speeds as very few drivers are willing to risk passing a red light.

Steve Berry  
on behalf of the Kingston Action Group