



Wild About Campsea

c/o Honeysuckle Cottage, The Pit,
Campsea Ashe, Woodbridge
IP13 0QQ
peter.marett@hotmail.co.uk

Update Report for the Parish Council on *Wild About Campsea* Activities: May 2023

We are pleased to report that almost all the 400 trees planted on the perimeter of the recreation ground during the autumn of 2022 seemed to have survived over the winter. The theft of canes was a nuisance but little damage was done and this problem seems to have ceased. There are too many trees to mulch and water individually so we hope there will not be a repeat of last year's drought, giving them a further year to establish.

We met a few times over the winter to harvest and tidy the garden beds and Tom, Adam and Aaron built a tool shed and erected a trellis around the IBC on the back of the cabin. Clare M and her son Louis helped Gary and Adam to build an archway over the entrance in order to demonstrate vertical gardening—growing beans and squashes upwards to save ground space. Following news of Bernard Burley's illness and his difficulty in accessing the station in a wheelchair due to debris on the footpath, WAC volunteers joined Paul Joy on a couple of work sessions to clear the pathway from the village shop to the station.

In January 2023 we received notification that we have been awarded £2000 by East Suffolk Council under their Field to Fork scheme to promote the growing and preparation of food in local communities. This enabled us to purchase hand tools for the garden and carpentry tools for use in the cabin plus materials with which to construct planters as part of a kit to donate to interested residents in order to encourage small-scale, back garden food production. The grant also included a sum to cover costs associated with organising a spring event we called "**Campsea Ashe Growing Together**", held in the Community Garden and Village Hall on Saturday 15th April. The day included talks by our own Clare Matterson, Director General of the RHS, and by Sheila Das, Head of Edibles at RHS Wisley. We also had a compost-making demonstration and a short walk around the recreation ground perimeter with an expert forager. Throughout the day there were crafting opportunities—making planters (thanks to Adam Osborne) and weaving willow bird feeders (thanks to Debbie Ireland and Hannah Pauly), a home-made soup lunch was served and we ended the day with a barbeque. Approximately 50 people attended and although the event was free, over £80 was donated by participants. This is being allocated to a petty cash fund to pay for consumables such as seed compost and butterfly netting. We received a lot of positive feedback from this event.

The "Growing Together" event has led to two more we are organising in June. Some participants in a Christians Against Poverty Life Skills group which runs in Saxmundham and Woodbridge attended the Growing Together day and requested a session to be held at the community garden where we can do some gardening and crafting with the group. This has been fixed for Tuesday 13th June. Then on Thursday 22nd June we will host an evening organised with East Suffolk Council's Greenprint Forum on establishing community gardens. "Green" organisations throughout East Suffolk have been invited and there will be displays, talks and a "tour" of our project.

Elsewhere in the village we hope to participate in the "Caring for God's Acre" wild plant recording initiative which contributes data to the National Biodiversity Atlas. Churchyards are often species-rich remnants of former meadows and heaths and during the summer months we hope to interest local residents in appreciating and monitoring plant species in our churchyard.

Work continues on the community garden beds as seedlings raised by volunteers are planted out. We also hope to construct a couple of cold frames to expand our ability to protect seedlings and hope to add to our pots and troughs to demonstrate container gardening. We also plan to produce labels and interpretive notices to explain the plants we are growing and the techniques we are using, and we will re-establish our watering rota in expectation of drier weather. Finally, we still need to purchase a wheelchair access ramp for the cabin and install some motion-activated security lights around the cabin in order to discourage vandalism after dark. Throughout the summer we plan to have the cabin open every Sunday afternoon so that villagers know when they can join us for a chat and share in the produce.

 (Peter Marett, on behalf of *Wild About Campsea*).