Update from Cllr Neve

Trees: Woodland Trust application

I have applied for a Wild Harvest pack of 105 saplings from the Woodland Trust. This is an application for trees (gifted), rather than a cash grant, and we are awaiting the outcome.

In the proposal, I suggested the margins of the communal grounds beside Exbury Club, retaining the central grassed area for recreation and events. We can also explore suitable locations alongside public footpaths or elsewhere. The aim is to add native fruit- and nut-bearing trees, future shade and wildlife habitat, while involving residents in planting and care.

Before proceeding, we will need to confirm permissions, suitable planting locations, tree protection and ongoing maintenance arrangements. However, I have made osme suggestion around this as well.

Other funding avenues and contact with Dan Poole

I have contacted Dan Poole through the grant enquiry route to discuss potential support through both his district and county councillor grant schemes, incoduing for any for costs not covered by donated trees form the Woodland Trust.

Dan has replied and said he was planning to raise grant funding at tomorrow's meeting. He mentioned Peter's bulb planting idea and Red's suggestion of swift boxes. I explained that both have already received support, so it would be useful to check with Peter and Red whether further funding is needed, then consider those requests alongside other ideas.

For trees, I am also exploring:

- Hampshire Forest Partnership: potential tree provision and planting support.
- The Tree Council's Branching Out Fund: a possible future funding route.
- New Forest National Park Authority's Sustainable Communities Fund: potentially relevant to planting and community activities. I have submitted an enquiry about whether our parish would be eligible; this is not yet confirmed. (Dan might know?)

Ideas for discussion

The three ideas I have outlined to Dan are:

1. Community tree planting: funding for protection, stakes, mulch and establishment care alongside the Woodland Trust application.

2. Nature connection and community wellbeing: an intergenerational programme of walks, talks, planting and practical activities, helping residents connect with one another and our local environment.
3. A National Emergency Briefing Film showing with follow-up activities: an event showing the film to inviting our parish and neighbouring communities, followed by opportunities to build relationships and identify positive local action. This draws on my experience helping facilitate the Brockenhurst Village National Emergency Briefing Film showing event attended by over 200 people, and also with the Eden Project.

These are exploratory ideas, not commitments. I have asked Dan for a conversation about what could make a suitable grant proposal, including opportunities to collaborate with neighbouring parish councils.

Exbury Gardens and talks

I have been trying to arrange a meeting with Rob at Exbury Gardens. Between summer availability, his holiday and jury service, we haven't managed it yet! He has only just returned to work and is busy with the Halloween activities until the end of the month, but is keen to meet.

Anyway, we have arranged to meet at the Exbury Gardens gift shop at 2pm on 30 October. You would be very welcome to join us for the conversation.

I have also had a couple of chats with Rich about giving talks, and he is very keen; we just need to work out the format and arrangements. I would like to explore this with Tom, the head gardener, too. I haven't managed to catch him recently, so I will email to arrange a coffee and discuss whether he would like to be involved.

I hope this gives you enough to update everyone tomorrow. It would be helpful to hear the council's thoughts on priorities, any further bulb or swift-box funding needs, and which ideas we should develop next. Perhaps we can meet for a coffee to discuss?

Giving nature a voice on the parish council

I'd also like to revisit the idea I emailed you about over the summer: giving nature a voice in parish council discussions, sometimes described as "giving nature a board seat". One possibility to explore would be for a councillor to take explicit responsibility for bringing nature's interests into our deliberations.

Last week, I spent time with several organisations exploring or adopting approaches that give nature, including rivers, a voice in decision-making. I'd welcome the chance to share some examples and discuss what a simple, practical version might look like for our parish.

A related example is Lewes District Council's support for a Rights of the River Ouse Charter, which recognises the river's interests, including freedom from pollution and the protection of native biodiversity. This is a rights-based charter rather than the granting of legal personhood, but it offers an interesting example of bringing nature more explicitly into local decision-making.

Next steps:
Perhaps we could we arrange a coffee to talk through this and the other suggestions above? To hear your suggestions and thoughts on what feels feasible or realistic, practical and worthwhile for our parish and parishioners, and which ideas we might want take forward together.

Erica Neve