

PROGRESS REPORT

Report of the: Head of Operational Services
Contact: Samantha Whitehead
Annexes/Appendices (attached): Annexe One – Picture of the Voles and Councillor John Beckett
Annexe Two – Butterfly Survey Table
Annexes Three and Four – South & South East in Bloom Judging Results
Annexe Five – Dementia sign

Other available papers (not attached):

REPORT SUMMARY

A report to update the Joint Management Committee on the progress of matters considered previously and the activities of the Volunteer Groups

RECOMMENDATION (S)

That the Joint Management Committee notes the progress of the following:

- (1) Updates from the volunteer groups**
- (2) South & South East in Bloom Award**
- (3) Dementia Friendly Park Signs**
- (4) Round Pond fencing**
- (5) Marking of the Palace boundaries**

Notes

1 Update from Volunteer Groups

Nonsuch Voles

- 1.1 June was an exceptionally busy month in the Mansion House garden, with a lot of preparation work for the South and South East In Bloom judging, which took place on 30th June. We were delighted that the Park received Silver Gilt in both the Large and Heritage Parks categories.

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- 1.2 The Voles have completed the renovation pruning of 2 large Yew trees at the top of the terrace. This involved cutting back over 10ft of top growth to reduce the overall height.
- 1.3 In the nearby "Yew Room", following earlier renovation pruning, there is good re-growth from most of the old Yews. Of the 16 new Yew trees planted, 15 are growing well. Unfortunately, one was pulled-up by vandals shortly after planting and has not survived.
- 1.4 In July, there was a visit by the Agriframes account manager, Vicky Standing, and the agreement for future co-operation was signed.
- 1.5 We took delivery of a significant amount of complementary Agriframes products and have already installed a large obelisk, some low borders around flowerbeds and a screen panel next to the restored Bothy.
- 1.6 The Voles have now finished the re-pointing and stabilising of low walls in the vicinity of the old greenhouse site and constructed a wooden barrier to protect visitors from the drop at the end of the Terrace which resulted from the toppling of the wall by vandals.
- 1.7 In addition to the works in the garden, the Voles have also been involved in a number of woodland project.
- 1.8 In the previous report we mentioned that one of the commitments of the Woodland Management Plan is to install interpretive signs in The Wood and at Boundary Copse. The first sign was installed in The Wood, but was damaged by vandals shortly afterwards. The Voles have repaired the sign and installed the second sign at Boundary Copse with the help of Future Woodlands.
- 1.9 The Voles continue to weed and water tree saplings planted last winter.
- 1.10 The Voles are pleased that planning approval has been received for the Voles Shelter and are now in receipt of the generous funding from the Community Foundation for Surrey. We will now plan the installation process.
- 1.11 We have inspected and cut back the Wickham Avenue ditch and the Main Ditch and removed any blockages in preparation for the winter.
- 1.12 Following last year's similar work, another small area of Cherry Orchard farm meadow was scythed in September.
- 1.13 On 17th August The Voles were pleased to be visited by Councillor John Beckett who came to see the pruning and planting in the Yew Room. The new trees were paid from the Councillor's Surrey Members Allocation. Some photos were taken for future local publications – please see Annexe 1. Subsequently, a furthfunding application for the purchase of a new trailer was successful. It will improve our ability to move tools and materials around the Park.

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- 1.14 Volunteer hours from the start of June 2017 to the end of September 2017 are 1247.

Nonsuch Watch

- 1.15 Frances Wright of Nonsuch Watch has provided an excerpt from Bill Downey's (Transect Co-ordinator, Surrey & SW London branch of Butterfly Conservation) interesting interim report on butterflies in the main park. Copies of the spreadsheet relating to the comments below will be available at the meeting.
- 1.16 There were only a couple of walks done in Spring and so that has affected the figures. The common grassland species are doing well – Meadow Brown, Marbled White, Ringlet and Gatekeeper – as there is an abundance of coarse grasses on the site. Pleasing is the number of Small and Essex Skippers which seem to be doing particularly well here. They don't do as well at many grassland sites and have been declining in our area.
- 1.17 Particularly good are records of White-letter and Purple Hairstreak. The site is a stronghold for the rare White-letter Hairstreak – rare because elms have been ravaged by Dutch elm disease – but as these are canopy species, I would not expect many to be recorded on transects. But a few is enough to tell us they are doing OK.
- 1.18 I would expect to see more Common Blue recorded – Birdsfoot Trefoil, their food plant, must be present and so I am a bit surprised by that. Also I would like to have seen more Small Copper recorded, but few transects seem to have been walked in late summer when they are at their most numerous.
- 1.19 Grazing in the park would definitely improve the sward and should encourage more butterflies. I have no idea if this is a possibility.
- 1.20 Very few Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks which is disappointing. First brood Peacocks were OK this year so I expect they were present on the site in greater numbers in spring. But the second brood of Peacocks has been poor.
- 1.21 The Small Tortoiseshell is almost becoming a rare butterfly and now seems to be seen in greatest numbers early in the year as hibernating adults emerge. They need areas of nettles on which to lay so it would be useful to see if that habitat is provided at Nonsuch.
- 1.22 One Small Blue seen which has no doubt wandered across from Warren Farm.
- 1.23 The Small Blue and White-letter Hairstreak are Nonsuch's rarest butterflies.
- 1.24 Peter Camber has been conducting weekly butterfly counts at Warren Farm for five years and the table attached under Annexe 1 summarises the observations during that time. The notes below indicate how he thinks the various species have fared in 2017 and over the five years.

1.25 Species Count

The total number of species I have recorded at Warren Farm is now 28, although the following were only seen in limited numbers (totals shown in brackets) in the years indicated:

- Clouded Yellow (1) – 2016
- Brown Hairstreak (5) – 2013, 2014, 2016
- Purple Hairstreak (1) – 2017
- White-letter Hairstreak (2) – 2013
- Painted Lady (3) – 2014, 2015, 2016
- Small Heath (1) – 2014

Of these, I only recorded the Purple Hairstreak this year and I didn't see any Green-veined White, which resulted in a total of 22 species being recorded in 2017.

1.26 Increases

Seven species did particularly well this year:

- Orange Tip – although only 11 were seen, this represented a big increase on the maximum of just 4 seen in the previous 4 years.
- Small Copper – this year's count of 85 continued a trend of increasing numbers seen in each of the previous 2 years.
- Common Blue – although less than my record count of 124 in 2013, this year's count of 83 represented an important recovery from the decline seen in each of last 3 years.
- Red Admiral – this year's count of 24 was exceptional and compares to a total of only 22 seen over the previous 4 years.
- Comma – this year's count of 35 was the highest seen so far and represented a 60% increase on the 22 seen last year.
- Gatekeeper – this year's count of 207 was exceptional; more than double last year's figure of 98, and beating the previous record of 174 in 2013.
- Meadow Brown – at 1,562 this was another exceptional figure; up more than 50% on last year, and beating the previous record of 1,233 in 2013.

1.27 Decreases

Unfortunately, six species did not fare so well this year:

- Large Skipper – only 18 seen, continuing a steady decline from a peak of 101 in 2013.
- Large White – 15 seen; representing only 50% of those seen in the previous 2 years and just 25% of the 2013 figure; a disappointing decline.
- Holly Blue – only 10 were seen, compared with 26 and 32 in 2016 and 2015 respectively.
- Small Tortoiseshell – only 9 seen, continuing its decline from a peak of 35 seen in 2014.

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- Peacock – only 15 seen, continuing its decline from a peak of 51 seen in 2014.
- Ringlet – although still present in good numbers, it has also declined for 3 years, dropping from 285 in 2014 to 128 this year.

1.28 Small Blue

As the site's star species, it is pleasing to note that Small Blue had another very good year. Although its total count of 442 was down from last year's exceptional 545, this species was second only to the Meadow Brown for abundance this year, and once again exceeded the total for Marbled White.

1.29 Conclusion

Overall, Peter concluded that the butterflies of Warren Farm have had a good year. A total of 3,826 butterflies were recorded – the highest figure of the 5 year period and a 30% increase on last year's total of 2,939. It was pleasing to see the resurgence of Common Blue, after its poor showing last year, and Meadow Brown after it dropped to 610 in 2015. However, the continuing declines of Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock in particular were rather worrying and it is hoped to see some improvement in their numbers next year.

Friends of Nonsuch

- 1.30 A verbal update of the activities of the Friends of Nonsuch will be provided at the meeting.

2 South & South East in Bloom Award

- 2.1 As mentioned in The Nonsuch Voles' update, judging for the South & South in Bloom Awards took place in June.
- 2.2 Reg Harrison from the Bloom campaign judged the Park for both the Large Park and Heritage Park categories.
- 2.3 Both staff and volunteers put many hours of work into preparing the Park for judging and we feel the two Silver Gilt awards awarded have reflected this.
- 2.4 We are particularly proud of the Silver Gilt award in the Heritage Park category as other winners in this class were either 'pay to enter' gardens or the recipients of Heritage Lottery Funding.
- 2.5 The judging results, attached at Annexe 2, are extremely useful to assist us with planning for future improvements.
- 2.6 The Streetcare manager would like to thank all our volunteer groups for their huge contribution to our success this year, without which an entry into this type of campaign would not be possible.

3 Dementia Friendly Park Signs

- 3.1 At the onsite meeting to discuss the new dog socialisation area and pond, a suggestion was made that it might be wise to temporarily postpone the renovation to the park noticeboards, which display a park map, until we are confident that planning permission can be obtained to create the new dog pond.
- 3.2 However, to ensure we make a start on the project, the Streetcare Manager is in the process of designing some inexpensive, directional signs for the café, gardens, parking and toilets that meet the requirements set out by the Alzheimer's Association. Please see Annexe 3 for examples.
- 3.3 These signs will be clear, bright and pictorial.

4 Fencing of the Round Pond

- 4.1 Installation of fencing and vehicle gate at the Round Pond is now complete.
- 4.2 Although it was agreed not to lock the vehicle access gate until the new dog pond has been established, the Countryside team are concerned that leaving the 4.2-metre gate fully open, the area is still very attractive to dogs and the pond is not getting the ecological benefits of restricted access.
- 4.3 As it is uncertain how long it might take to get planning permission for the new dog pond, it has been suggested that a small pedestrian gate is installed which will remain unlocked but hopefully restrict the volume of use.
- 4.4 The cost of a fully installed, small, pedestrian gate is £150 and can be funded from existing budgets.

5 Marking of the Palace Boundaries

- 5.1 Nikki Cowlard from Epsom & Ewell History & Archaeology Society (EEHAS) scheduled a meeting at Bourne Hall on 12 October to discuss archaeological projects at Nonsuch Park.
- 5.2 The meeting was well attended by representatives from the Council, EEHAS and the Friends of Nonsuch.
- 5.3 The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the potential for a number of projects to do with enhancing the visitor experience of Nonsuch Palace and the identification of the later stables related to the Palace.
- 5.4 After a discussion about the proposal to mark out the Palace boundary, Nikki Cowlard agreed to contact Heritage England for advice about how this might be best achieved and about permissions required for scheduled monument consent.

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- 5.5 Nikki Cowlard explained that her group had access to the Surrey Archaeological Society magnetometer and that this equipment could be used to carry out a magnetometry survey over the potential site of the stables. It was agreed that Nikki would liaise with Peter Steel so that the survey could be conducted after the grass is cut in November.
- 5.6 It was agreed that the group would meet quarterly to progress these archaeological projects and the Friends of Nonsuch kindly offered to host future meetings at the museum in Nonsuch Park.
- 5.7 It was agreed that the meetings would be timed to ensure that all progress is reported to Joint Management Committee meetings.

6 Vandalism in the Park

- 6.1 An verbal update will provided at the meeting.

7 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 7.1 It recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report.

WARD(S) AFFECTED: Nonsuch Ward (EEBC)