

## **Bainton and Ashton Nature Recovery Group report for the Parish Council Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

### **Meetings:**

- Nature Recovery group meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024, attended by Susie Lucas, Martin Lucas, Cliff Stanton, Julie Stanton, with apologies from Hilary Smith and Irene Walsh.
- John Clare Countryside Verges Working Group on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024, Bainton and Ashton was represented by Julie Stanton and Cliff Stanton. The group is chaired by Sarah Lambert (Consultant Ecologist) and attendees include PCC, parish council nature recovery reps and the Wildlife Trust.
- Cluster Group Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 with our cluster co-ordinator Laura Osborne from the BCN Wildlife Trust. Bainton and Ashton was represented by Susie Lucas, Julie Stanton and Cliff Stanton.

### **Updates:**

- **Sheepwash** – work has been delayed overwinter due to the very wet weather conditions. It is anticipated that the contractor has 8 more days work to do to complete the fencing. This will start once he is able to access his woodland for the timber. Suitable aquatic plants will be added to the Sheepwash pond to improve the water quality for aquatic life.
- **Bainton Village Verges** – the grass cutting regimes that have been established over the last 4 years will continue this year. These regimes have been devised to take account of the growing conditions, visibility requirements and season of flowering of the wildflowers. However this year almost all verges will be cut in early to mid May, between the spring flowering and the summer flowering, including those verges that have not been cut until late summer in previous years. This will help to control the spread of unwanted species and give a general tidy up after the flowering of the daffodils. Exceptions will be small areas where there are important wildflower species that flower in late Spring/early summer.
- **County Wildlife Site verges**
  - \* **Highfield Road CWS** – discussions are ongoing between B&A PC and PCC's Natural and Historic Environment Team and PCC Highways concerning the damage being caused to the verge flora by private and commercial vehicles that park on the verges. The specialist calcareous grassland flora is not able to grow in these areas due to the resulting compaction of the soil. Concern is also being raised over anti-social behaviour involving parked vehicles. PCC are proposing measures to address this problem with a combination of signage and bollards. B&A Parish Council members, nature recovery team members and our cluster group lead Laura Osborne are seeking a site meeting with PCC in April/early May to make progress.
  - \* **Bainton Green Road CWS** – PCC have confirmed verbally that they will take on the Cut and Collect grass cutting on Bainton Green CWS verges. This will consist of an early

summer cut and collect and a September cut and collect. B&A PC has not yet been advised of the formal changes that this will entail to the License agreement. The Nature Recovery team advises that while this change is helpful and necessary at the present time, a more site specific and local approach to management of this grassland could be better tailored to the needs of enhancing the site, rather than the more general approach that PCC is able to undertake. Should JCC have access to Cut and Collect machinery in the future, B&A Parish Council should review the arrangements.

- \* **Winter verge damage** - through the JCC Verges Group, PCC, Laura Osborne and Sarah Lambert are to consider preparing guidance for re-instatement of verges damaged by heavy vehicles and cars in wet weather. This would be for all CWS verges in the area covered by PCC.

### **2024 Projects:**

Grant funding is being sought through John Clare Countryside, via our Cluster Group co-ordinator, for:

1. New signage at the Sheepwash which will acknowledge the grant given for restoration of the Sheepwash fences and give historical information plus information about the wildlife and the work being undertaken to increase and support biodiversity.
2. Printing costs for two nature recovery newsletters for 2024 to 2025 financial year.
3. Wildflower seed and plug plants for Ashton verges, for two areas in the vicinity of the village sign.
4. Laura Osborne will continue to raise the re-pollarding of ancient willow pollards in Ashton as a project for partial grant funding, although the cost involved in dealing with overgrown willow pollards is likely to put this project beyond the scope of grant funding.

Peterborough City Council trialled scarifying and seeding two roadside verges in JCC area with a low growing wildflower mix in 2023, which can be cut every 5 or 6 weeks. The trial in Barnack has been successful. The possibility of doing similar on larger areas of verge in Ashton (not the CWS site verges) will be explored with PCC through the JCC Verges Group.

CS and JS 19/3/2024