

PHIL GIFFORD: CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2023

- 1) The report was given verbally at the AGM on 5th Dec 2023 and is now given below
- 2) Our watchword **Think Global Act Local**. is now enshrined on our Wild Norley Face book page and website Climate change/loss of habitat, humanities' unsustainable use of resources, the continued decline in many species especially insects, have all pushed us into the midst of a sixth level of extinction . So Biodiversity is still and must remain the **key** element of all our efforts
- 3) There were three people In particular that I want to single out as making a significant contribution towards the success of the Group
 - a) Once again our treasurer Sheila Hills despite considerable health problems has continued to be our treasurer, battled with intractable byzantine banking systems helped the Chair on numerous occasions as well continued to look after plaque no 4 Sam Grindley's patch
 - b) Our secretary's Madeline French's work on Habitat mapping together with her team has been invaluable for NWG's work. We now have benchmarks and the identification of opportunities to improve bio diversity is very great. The relationship with RECORD- the local environment record centre has proved very useful
 - c) Roger Goulding Green Infrastructure Team Leader CWaC has helped the group immensely the renewal of the Waste, taking out the trees at Breech Moss, the promise of permanent Toad crossing signs would not have happened without his intervention

- 4) It is significant too that CWaC CWT & Chester Zoo are all working together to ensure the maximisation of Bio diversity net gains in the county. The groups award by the zoo as Champions for conservation was a very welcome accolade
- 5) On the Social media side, the Wild Norley articles in the Norley News continue to be popular and our Facebook attracts many hundreds of visitors, At long last our website, www.wildnorley.com went live, our parish council paid for most of it but nonetheless we ended up £275 over budget. However It was a major effort to bring it to fruition and the final product was well worth it and we will I'm sure more than recoup any losses
- 6) The Wildflower Memorial walk with its map and guide now on line continues to be a valuable flagship for NWG, bringing well being to walkers, bringing people into Norley, and it educates and generates useful publicity for NWG. The WI put out their poppies, in time for the Poppy crosses walk and we helped the Appleton family with the Xmas wreaths on. It is good for wildlife but I still needed to be in dialogue with the council over cutting wildflowers that had spilled beyond and onto verges, joining the "dots" is still far off And the efforts the Plaque stewards into ensuring their stations are maintained, and have flowers over a long period need to be recorded
- 7) Listed below are particular noteworthy matters. I have not gone into a lot of detail as much of it is in our website
 - a) It's now 6 years since NWG took over full responsibility for the Memorial Garden, it's been hard work the cyclamen beds are now well established and spreading, the snowdrops and Wild English daffodils have established themselves. It is now indeed a Wildlife

haven and there is a new attractive information board provided by Chester Zoo. Preparations for sowing a new wildflower meadow in the spring are underway.

- b) As noted the pond at the waste was conserved for Great Crested newts (Natural England is monitoring) a path and hard standing put in with Members Funds viz monies from the three CWaC ward Cllrs and the NPC A bench dedicated to the memory of Chris Proudfoot was provided by his partner Jill West Signage etc is NPC's responsibility but possibly a QR code could access info on our website. However local residents have now set up a team to manage the area, which is to be welcomed.
- c) Breech Moss restoration has sadly stalled and will remain so until the drainage can be restored.
- d) The rewilding of 20 acres of Sandycroft Farm by CWaC (that man Goulding again!) is a tremendous opportunity for a huge BNG
- e) Similarly Forestry England's acquisition of 40 acres of Hondslough Farm is great scope for a BNG boost. NWG will take an active interest in its development
- a) The beavers at Hatchmere have made an amazing contribution to BNG. NWG needs to play its part in ensuring that they can take their rightful place in the ecology of Norley. Across the country there is a pressing need to develop a strategy as they begin to repopulate it after 400 years absence
- f) A meeting with NPC Cllrs. & Cllr Edwards over growing wildflowers in verges is hopefully a sign that at long last Plantlife's COP will be adopted. The experiment however along the high street was not a resounding success but was a start However it was disappointing that mowings around the Norley Sign were not

removed. A most laborious task completed by your Chair and Secretary.

- g) “Beating the Bounds - the Norley Commons walk” 30th April coincided with the City Nature Challenge for the Chester Region in 28th April 1st May. It ended up with only three of us, there was in essence nothing to report that wasn’t known already.
- h) The “homemade” Toad crossing signs on Cow and Moss Lanes were put up again by Toad patrol manager Neil Holding, hopefully for the last time.
- i) We had a stand at the WI Plant sale/swop on Saturday 20th May. It went very well and especial thanks to Catriona whose meticulous planning paid off her own contributions on solitary bees were brilliant.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

As ever these remain formidable:

- NWG needs to have more younger members and especially volunteers for work days. Young people as stewards of the future are vital for a sustained effort over the coming years **NOTE** this quote has been repeated for the last five reports. But I’ve now resumed talks at the Primary school and our website may well help to involve them too
- We can only better protect or improve bio diversity by establishing proper benchmarks. The essential work on habitat mapping has carried on and thanks to the “Team” will I’m sure take us on into ‘24
- Despite setbacks we should still try to encourage the use of headlands as at Bickley Hall Farm. That and better hedges are the

best ways to increase the number of farmland birds and the holy grail of wildlife corridors. The Sandycroft Farm “rewilding” with wildflower meadows and better hedges will clearly demonstrate this right in the heart of the village

- Finally after 10 years in post your Chair though still passionate about wildlife would like to hand over the job of Chairman in ‘25

I commend this report to members

PHIL GIFFORD - CHAIR NWG, DEC ‘23