

Rewilding Girton, 2020-2021

Inspired by the beautiful displays of wildflowers in Eddington over the past few years, a group of residents and Parish Councillors felt that it would be excellent if this initiative could be continued on into the village of Girton.

The purpose of rewilding is not only for the sheer beauty of the wildflowers, which will delight both residents of Girton, and passers-through, but also the vital need to aid the insect population, currently decimated by thoughtless development over recent years. Bees are particularly badly affected, and our planting plans will always include bee-friendly species.

With this in mind, the Rewilding Group was formed, consisting of some Parish Councillors, plus representatives from the Allotments, Girton Garden Society, Girton Green Team, and a wildlife expert. In addition to this, there is a large group of willing volunteer helpers who can be called upon when required.

The Parish Council kindly agreed to allocate £300 as a starting sum for the rewilding project, for which we are extremely grateful.

At our first meeting via Zoom in November 2020, we were joined by two people from Eddington who had been involved in setting up their wildflower initiative. They were extremely helpful, and we are grateful to them for giving up their time. Many ideas were put forward, and we left with an idea of what we hoped to achieve. It was decided to begin with the Mayfield Triangle, and it was planned to seed a swathe of wildflowers there, and to clear the overgrown rose garden to be replanted with insect-friendly flowers.

However, due to Covid restrictions, it soon became clear that at that time, large work parties could not be deployed. Therefore our initial enthusiasm had to be scaled down, and in the end we decided on the following courses of action:

- The rose garden would be cleared and replanted by a team of two, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Kay Green and Janet Sheard for their hard work in getting this done. I think we all appreciate how much better it looks, and the bees will certainly be pleased!
- An area in the centre of the Mayfield Triangle will be left unmowed, to see what grows naturally. Thank you to David Adamson who has marked off this area with canes. It already has a good crop of dandelions, which will be good for insects.
- Native species of wildflowers which have self-seeded in people's gardens, will be transplanted to the areas under the trees alongside the road at Mayfield. We have already seen primroses and violets starting to grow there.

Lucy Wilson, one of the team of volunteers, has made a detailed study of the species naturally occurring on this piece of ground. Lucy has tremendous knowledge, and we thank her for doing this. Nicola Gardiner, from the Allotments, has been invaluable in advising on appropriate species, and thanks are also due to George Thorpe for giving us the benefit of his experience. Councillor Anne Kettle has kindly taken on managing the finances of this project. Sandi Irvine is keeping abreast of birds and small mammals which may be affected.

The Parish Council has responsibility for cutting the village verges, and the county council is happy for the Parish Councils who do so, to do what they think is best for their villages. At the moment we do not know what will happen with verges. Therefore the Rewilding Group will step back from seeding these areas until we know what the plans are. There is also the

problem of people parking on verges, for which we have no solution at present, though beautiful flowers may be a deterrent.

Girton Town Charity has generously donated two benches to be placed on the Mayfield Triangle, so that residents can sit and enjoy the evolving beauty of the wildflowers and rose bed. The Rewilding Group is extremely grateful to the Town Charity for this.

I think it is clear to see that rewilding has captured the imagination of residents throughout the village, and we are definitely encouraged to proceed. I would like to reiterate my thanks to all those who are working so hard on this project, and once the pandemic is behind us hope that things will really take off in a big way.

Mary Rodger

April 2021