



GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

newsletter

www.gefweb.org.uk

SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2014



www.walk4life

Accentuating the positive (mostly)

by Forum member Michael Tanner

The remarkably sunny days of most of July may have lightened my disposition but, walking or driving about Guildford this summer, I have observed much to raise my levels of optimism regarding the local environment and our use of it.

Maybe the 'better off' feeling vis-à-vis the economy has something to do with this. However, we seem to be in a far more comfortable zone than so many others in the world (even after our soccer in Brazil).

Perhaps I took too much encouragement from too narrow a point of view. Anyhow, the reader will concur with me about a few examples to put a smile on one's face: ✨ the capacity to organise such public events as Run For Life in the university sports

park and Guilfest in Stoke Park; ✨ the increasing use of the river and its footpaths for water sports, walking and pure leisure; ✨ the variety of public houses, cafés and restaurants in their provision and style; ✨ the botanically well-informed management of roundabouts, especially in the cathedral vicinity; ✨ the sustained displays of border flowers, for example along the A281 past Debenhams; ✨ the addition of another Park and Ride on the western approaches; ✨ the increased number of cyclists, both competitive (photo overleaf) and otherwise, especially cycling by entire young families; ✨ the increased number of serious walkers; ✨ the quality of entertainment in the High Street (especially music); ✨ the expensive pavement improvements on the south side of North Street affecting

parking and market; ✨ the refurbishment of the 1683 clock; ✨ the initiatives boldly taken on Pewley Down (photo on previous page) and Guildown for butterfly encouragement and the survival of the skylark, and the sustainable gardening and intelligent grazing in these areas and in the water meadows.

Of course, all is NOT for the best in the best of all possible worlds, to contradict Voltaire's satirical hero. How could it ever be? Memory is longer than a short summer: ✨ traffic congestion seems rapidly to be approaching a point where the solution will be of the desperate variety; ✨ the road surfaces, despite recent attention, remain dangerous in many spots and have been dangerous for an unacceptably long time; ✨ in many places the pedestrian is at considerable risk from wheeled traffic (which can include cyclists) – especially so in approaches to the station; ✨ speed limit control is erratic in places and 30mph is, in my opinion, too high for a number of roads (Madrid Road being one example); ✨ the public waste disposal facilities at Slyfield seem to me to need updating in extent and layout in particular.

It could be an interesting and useful exercise for



getsurrey.co.uk

people returning from abroad (particularly from European countries) to publicly describe what they have observed to be salient differences between the urban and rural environments experienced abroad and those they are exposed to at home: the UK would score well in some areas and badly in others. How, for example, do we rate for hospital parking, public toilets, road surfaces, public transport, litter dropping and other forms of pollution? Most importantly, how do we rate for putting good initiatives into action? We are a highly inventive people BUT...!

Guildford Local Plan

Raymond Smith

GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM is working on its response to the Draft Local Plan, and it is timely to remind members of the closing date for your own comments, which is **22nd September**.

We outlined some key issues in our June newsletter before the formal document was published and these are causing profound concern, for example the more than doubling of new home building targets from 322 annually in the (now discarded) South East Plan to 652.

There are some more points which you might like to look at.

It is very pro-growth. It tells us, for instance, that **"Guildford is designated as one of four Growth Towns by the LEP."** (The LEP is the Local Enterprise Partnership known as Enterprise M3.) In Enterprise M3's *"Working for a Smarter Future, The Enterprise M3 DELIVERY PLAN – 2014-2020"* we find that Guildford has ambitions to **"create approximately**

4,000 new jobs by 2020 and support the LEP target of increasing GVA per head from 18% to 25% above the national average". (GVA stands for gross value added.) Can this be summarised as "build to beggar your neighbour"?

The general thrust of much of the section on the environment and climate change is encouraging, but at this stage it is not backed up by detailed policies and it is important that these are not just fine words that will be lost in the wind.

Like many others we have already questioned the validity of the projected population figures and thus the housing requirement that is based on them.

It is also worth emphasising the need for robustness in the policies intended to ensure good levels of affordable housing provision in commercial housing developments. There is a risk that these targets may become a dead letter on the grounds of "viability".

GUILDFORD WALKFEST 2014

Text and photos by Raymond Smith



A beautiful chalkhill blue seen on our walk



Lottery lifeline

The charity Plantlife has secured £3 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund for its project 'Save Our Magnificent Meadows'. This aims to save what remains of Britain's wildflower-rich meadows in 55 sites across the UK.

(Source: *The Garden*, May '14)

A little little owl

One of the smallest owls in the world, the long-whiskered owl from Peru, measures just 12.5cm in height.

(Source: *BBC Wildlife*, Oct '13)

FACTS & FIGURES

1,500 years in the freezer

Frozen moss that had been buried in the Antarctic permafrost for more than 1,500 years, and showed no signs of life, has started to grow again in a laboratory. It's the longest known period of time that frozen plants have been able to survive and suggests that plants, and possibly more complex life forms, may be able to survive an ice age.

(Source: *Independent*, 18 Mar '14)

Cuckoos

The similarity between the barred plumage of cuckoos and sparrowhawks is no coincidence. *Animal Behaviour* reveals that many cuckoo species mimic their local hawks. The disguise probably scares birds from their nests, allowing the cuckoo to lay its eggs unchallenged.

(Source: *BBC Wildlife*, Jan '14)

The Forum again led a walk during the Guildford Walkfest this July. The weather was hot but not quite as searing as last year. We repeated our "Green Gems" tour around the edges of Guildford, but this year we had an impromptu treat. GEF member Valerie McClure was on the walk this time round and led a visit to the "Nectar Garden" in the churchyard of St. Mary's in Quarry Street.

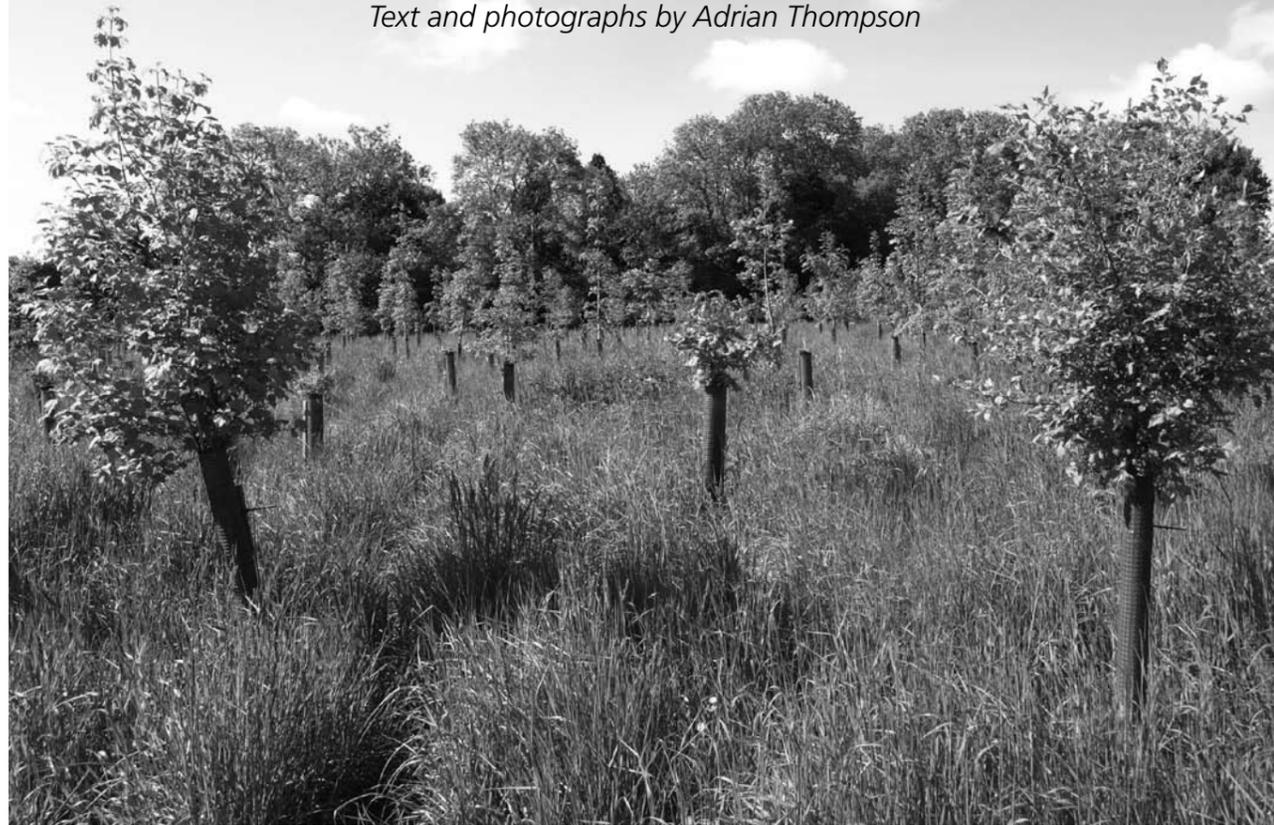
Up on the Downs there were definitely fewer butterflies than last year – mainly chalkhill blues and gatekeepers.

Less welcome as a diversion was the closure of the towpath opposite Dapdune Wharf, where we understand the National Trust are undertaking some critical repairs following the flood damage last winter. Somehow Walnut Tree Close does not have quite the same ambience as the riverside.

Still we had some entertaining conversations throughout, and various Guildford residents discovered new parts of their town besides seeing the range of environmental projects in which GEF has been involved over the last decade or so.

Planting a new woodland – our story

Text and photographs by Adrian Thompson



WE HAD BEEN WANTING to plant a new woodland for some time to offset our family’s carbon emissions. The opportunity arose suddenly and out of the blue, early in 2008. By January 2009 we had bought 3.7 acres of poorly-used pasture land in Somerset and planted some 1,300 young native trees. The cost of the 12 varieties of native species averaged £0.30p and every one needed a shelterguard and stake to protect the trees for the first 10 years from rabbits and deer. The stakes and guards cost £1.50 each, making a total cost (excluding the land itself) of about £2,340.

We were able to obtain a grant from the Rural Payments Agency that covered the cost of the trees, stakes and guards. The Forestry Commission helped with free advice and a visit to select the best mix of trees for planting in that particular site. We wanted native species and ordered 25% Pedunculate Oak, 40% Ash and 17% Hazel. The balance was made up of Wild Cherry, Small Leaved Lime, Field Maple, Common Alder, Holly, Common Dogwood, Guelder Rose, Spindle and Hawthorn.

The overall vision

The long term (ie 50-year) plan was for this area to develop into an oak woodland as other species were thinned. The oaks were planted in groups of about 16 and the smaller species were located on the edge

of the wood or near the main access strip, which curved through the woodland area. Even the oak will be thinned to leave just the best specimens to develop into 100-year-old trees.

The ash was by far the fastest grower and has grown to 20ft in just six years. There are no signs of *Chalara fraxinia* in the ash trees yet. All the trees were grown as seedlings in southern England, but there are ash trees on all sides of the wood, so we have been vigilant in watching for any dieback of the ash stock.

The small trees (or whips) averaged about 50cm in height and were collected by trailer, together with the stakes and shelterguards. All except the hollies were bare-rooted and planting is advised between mid-November and the end of March. It is vital that the bare roots do not dry out before or during planting, so they were kept in the shade in bags until the small T-shaped planting holes were cut.

Planting and ongoing maintenance

We chose the weekend of 10th/11th January 2009 for planting and notified those who lived locally of the tree-planting exercise. It was cold and frosty early on, but we were able to plant from 10.00am onwards in the sunny areas. About 15 people from the village, including several children, helped us to plant all 1,300 trees in that day. A few stakes



and guards enclosing trees can be seen in the background and one in the foreground of the photo below. It really was a great day out for everyone, and warming drinks were in demand. Many of the posts were marked with the names of the children who planted them and all the oaks had white paint marked on the tops of their posts.

A key to the choice of the site was that it was right next door to our friends, one of whom was an agricultural consultant. We arranged a fairly informal contract with him, whereby he would

manage the woodland throughout the year. As a family, we would stay with them and spend weekends on site whenever major maintenance was needed. The key jobs have been replacing broken stakes after high winds, watering some trees in the first two years and protecting the trees from ants. The warmth of the shelterguards in summer has helped the trees to grow fast, but does encourage ants to build earth nests that are up to 50cm tall within the shelterguard. If these are not removed within a few weeks, the tree will grow roots



sideways into the nest, which weakens them significantly. At least once a year we have needed to remove up to 100 such ant nests.

We also decided to apply Roundup to the area just outside the shelterguard for the first three years. This kept the weeds and grass down just around each tree and has helped the small whips to develop roots more strongly. We lost less than 5% of the trees and this was mainly due to summer droughts. The main losses were amongst the holly trees and these have all been replaced. Now after five years the wood is really taking shape. Annual maintenance costs have been kept under £200pa: these costs have mainly been the Roundup and cutting the hedge that runs beside the road.

Others now in charge

Sadly, our friends moved out of the area last year and maintenance by us alone would have become a burden. The buyer of their house was very keen to buy the woodland and keep it as a protection against nearby development. We arranged terms and we were happy to find that agricultural land and woodland had been a good investment over those five years – we made a profit of over 25% after all costs, which repaid much of the hard work that we had put in. We have banked the money for now,



but are looking for another project, possibly involving the improvement and management of chalk grassland and hopefully nearer to home.

Thinking back, this has been one of our most rewarding spare time projects. We have loved all the planning and the hard physical work in the open. Neighbours have been encouraged to site beehives on the margins of the developing woodland and we believe that our carbon offset targets have been achieved and that this will continue for many years into the future.

A wildlife legacy

We had left the majority of the field uncut, so that it has become a haven for birds, butterflies and other insects. Magical moments have included being within a few feet of deer early in the morning and watching scores of marbled whites enjoying the long grass in summer. Snowdrops, primroses and poppies are beginning to prosper and spread across the former hayfield amongst the growing trees. We have learnt a lot more about our native trees and how they change through the seasons.

Would I encourage anyone else to do the same if they have a chance? The answer, without a doubt, is yes, but be prepared for plenty of hard physical work.

The cost of meat

North Carolina is the epicentre of the global meat industry, factory-farming 10 million pigs. The waste generated by the animals is equivalent to that produced by the entire human population of Canada. High levels of ammonia, hydrogen sulphide, acetic and butyric acids emanate from the factories.

(Source: *New Statesman*, 20-26 Jun '14)

Bird food – 1

In winter each of our tit species must devote nine out of every ten waking minutes to finding food. The tiny goldcrest must forage from dawn to dusk to survive the season.

(Source: *BBC Wildlife*, Jan '14)

Bird food – 2

Blackbirds took the prize for the earliest 'early bird' in a survey conducted by the BTO. It took on average a mere 11 minutes after daybreak for blackbirds to arrive at feeders.

(Source: *BBC Wildlife*, Mar '14)

FACTS & FIGURES

The Swedish way

In Sweden 99% of household waste is recycled, with recycling stations generally no more than 300 metres from any residential area. Currently, around half the waste is burnt and turned into energy, but the aim is to gradually reduce the reliance on incineration as far as possible.

(Source: <https://Sweden.se/nature>)

2012's legacy

Remember the London Olympics? Spectacular and costly, they roused the nation, but some wondered what environmental impact they would have. Here are some cheering facts:

- Two million tonnes of soil was remediated and most of it reused, preventing landfill.



- Of the material from the Olympic Park demolition work, 98% was reclaimed for reuse and recycling.
- By this year, 48 hectares of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitat had been created. (The BAP required 45 hectares).
- Every piece of timber used on the Olympic Park was sustainable, meeting either FSC or PEFC certification.
- Potable water savings of 57% were made as a result of greater water efficiency.

Bats and wind turbines

The discovery of dead bats and birds underneath wind turbines in the US and in mainland Europe has led to concerns that research into the siting of these structures is not sufficiently rigorous, and that some have been erected on migration routes of bats and birds. This may be an issue for bats in the UK, not only because of the risk of direct collision if turbines are placed on migration or commuting routes, but also because of displacement from foraging habitat. The positioning of mid-sized wind turbines in hedgerows is also a concern.

The Bat Conservation Trust would like to see monitoring undertaken at existing and new wind



Guildford Environmental Forum aims to improve the environment in and around Guildford for wildlife and for people and to build a sustainable future.

Join us in our work for the town and have this newsletter posted to your door four times a year. Forum membership costs only £10 per year or £15 for a couple, and new members are warmly welcomed.

Please contact Adrian Thompson on 01483 222687 or e-mail adrianthompson46@talktalk.net

Giant beetle is here!

A budding entomologist has found a huge beetle in her organic garden in Martley, Worcestershire, which was positively identified by Buglife as a European rhinoceros beetle (*Oryctes nasicornis*). It's the first time this beetle has ever been found in the wild in Britain. Buglife is keen to ascertain whether it's an escaped



pet, an accidental introduction or is actually breeding here, bearing in mind that it feeds on decaying wood and Worcestershire is known for rare beetles associated with dead wood.

Trust has new Patron



Surrey Wildlife Trust is thrilled to announce that Dame Judi Dench has recently become its new Patron. The Oscar-winning and much admired actress is specifically supporting the Trust's 'Nower Wood New Build Project', which will secure the future of the reserve as a unique site for outdoor learning for generations to come.



CALENDAR



All the Forum's Group meetings are open to the public

Saturday 20 September

Open Day at Rosamund Community Garden.

Our very popular Open Day will offer fresh produce from the vegetable garden, hot soup made from our veg, refreshments, apple pressing (bring your apples and plastic bottles), scything demonstrations, and the opportunity to relax and explore this beautiful place.

Bring your children, they love operating the apple press!

Time: from 1000 to 1600.

To find us, head up One Tree Hill Road to reach Longdown Road, park along the verge and we are the first farm gate along the trackway.

Tuesday 23 September

Talk by Jim Jones, of Surrey Wildlife Trust: **Where Have all the Water Voles Gone?**

One of many events organised by the Wey Landscape Partnership in its first annual Wey Rivers' Week, conserving and celebrating the wildlife, people and places on this historic river.

Time: 1930. Venue: Lord Pirbright's Hall, The Green, Pirbright, Woking GU24 0JE.

This must be booked in advance, by contacting jimjones@surreywt.org.uk or phoning 07807 590068.

Saturday/Sunday 4/5 October

Surrey Hills Wood Fair, Birtley House.

We will be apple pressing on both days. Bring your apples and plastic bottles to take away your juice; better still, if you can, please give us a hand on our stall. This is a huge event with loads of things to do for the young and recently young – there will be great food, abseiling in trees, and stalls of many kinds.

Time: from 1000 to 1700.

Birtley House is on the A281 just south of Bramley.

Saturday 11 October

Compton Allotments Society Fête.

We shall be apple pressing again at this fête, so bring apples and bottles. Please come and support us.

Time: from 1000 to 1700.

Follow signs in Compton to the venue, which is just behind Compton Green heading for The Withies pub.

GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

Chair / Biodiversity – Raymond Smith

7 Felday, Holmbury St Mary, Dorking, RH5 6NJ
E-mail: raysmith.biodiversity@envirohistory.waitrose.com

Vice Chair – Damien Short

Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2nd Floor, South Block, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU
Tel: 020 7862 8836 E-mail: damien.short@sas.ac.uk

Transport – Alastair Atkinson

7 Elles Avenue, Guildford, GU1 2QH
Tel: 07929 138650 E-mail: bags@btinternet.com

Waste and Recycling – Lucy McSherry

E-mail: lucy.mcsherry@hotmail.com

Sustainable Building – Richard Weavis

Tel: 01730 821562 E-mail: richard@rewconstructionservices.co.uk

Community Projects – John Bannister

2 Littleholme, Upper Guildown Road, Guildford, GU2 4EZ
Tel: 01483 570468 E-mail: johnw.bannister@virgin.net

Schools – John Bannister

2 Littleholme, Upper Guildown Road, Guildford, GU2 4EZ
Tel: 01483 570468 E-mail: johnw.bannister@virgin.net

Food Group with Transition Guildford – John Bannister

2 Littleholme, Upper Guildown Road, Guildford, GU2 4EZ
Tel: 01483 570468 E-mail: johnw.bannister@virgin.net

Treasurer – Adrian Thompson

Lamp Cottage, The Street, East Clandon, Nr Guildford, GU4 7RY
Tel: 01483 222687 E-mail: adrianthompson46@talktalk.net

Membership – Position vacant (Adrian Thompson pro tem)

Newsletter – Clare Windsor

15 Tuesley Corner, Godalming, GU7 1TB
Tel: 01483 418048 E-mail: clare.windsor@waitrose.com

Guildford Environmental Forum's newsletter is published in March, June, September and December.

Please send contributions for the next issue to Clare Windsor by Monday 10 November.

The views expressed in this newsletter are strictly those of its contributors and Guildford Environmental Forum.