

Turnpike Field and 2020 - did much happen??

Apart from the obvious increase in people of all ages spending time in all parts of the field (walking, picnicking, sitting, rope swinging etc), did anything actually change in Turnpike Field this year?? Well, although you may think that there hasn't been a great deal of activity, its actually been quite a productive year!

Unfortunately Covid has meant that it wasn't, and still isn't, possible to hold a public meeting so as to update the community on what's happened/happening. So please read on.....

Green Car Park:

Progress has unfortunately been slower than desired, primarily because of the Covid situation. Following some visits to look at several green car park installations, an advert was placed on AOL at the end of January requesting tenders from individuals/ companies to undertake the preparation of final design drawings for the proposed new Green Car Park with a closing date of 5th March 2020. No responses were received.

However a local resident very kindly offered draw up plans for submission to CEC with no charge to Audlem Parish Council (APC). A subsequent site meeting was held with this resident to discuss the technical aspects - unfortunately it was not possible to make any further progress at that time.

At the recent October meeting of the Working Group it was agreed to progress the first phase technical works building on the plans which had been developed previously. Hopefully these can be still progressed following the latest Covid lockdown plan for November.

In July, following correspondence received from CEC relating to measures for social distancing for highways and open spaces, APC responded to CEC suggesting Turnpike Field could be used as a temporary car park during the summer, however unfortunately this has not progressed.

Other Activities.

A number of projects were successfully completed this year - all aimed at improving the field as a community recreational asset, whilst preserving and hopefully enhancing its natural state.

In 2020 there were quite a number of successful activities in the field:

- creating mown walking paths
- installation of picnic benches
- installation of rubbish bins
- tree maintenance
- creation and fencing of 2 ponds
- discussion and documenting of the wide variety of wildlife
- clearing of a significant amount of Himalayan Balsam
- £500 grant won from Calor

Last week's Working Group meeting was yet another "Zoom Meeting". This has become the new norm in the past 9mths. It was testament to the sheer determination of our volunteers to 'attend' these meetings that one member actually participated whilst in a car, traveling at 70mph on the M54/M6/M5. No, he wasn't driving at the time!

At the meeting, several decisions were taken regarding further activities to benefit the field:

Safety/Information Signage

These will be installed at each of the 3 entrances and hopefully be eco-friendly wood rather than plastic - once the cost is agreed they will be installed.

Main Entrance Barrier

A new entrance gate is needed that will be set back from the main road and incorporate a height-limiting barrier - costs to be obtained and planning requirements to be checked.

Maintenance/Safety

- Improvements to the access gates at the canal and Green Lane so as to minimise the danger of children/dogs accidentally getting through
 - costs & contractor to be determined
- Lifebelts for ponds being ordered and installed asap
- Floating Bog
 - CEC pathways are to be contacted to establish how to improve the access from Green Lane across the floating bog. A boardwalk is potentially a suitable solution.

2021 Maintenance Plan

This is being revised to take into account all of the wildlife varieties as determined by the recent Wildlife Report carried out by Adrian Leighton.

This comprehensive report covers the surveying period May-September 2020. It follows on from the spot check survey undertaken by Cheshire Wildlife Trust in 2019. For purposes of comparison and continuity, the survey has also been undertaken along the lines of the area designations made by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust survey, with one or two slight modifications. See the report here: <https://tfra.audlem.org/doc/D514987.pdf> - you might be rather surprised to see the enormous variety of wildlife that exists in the field.

If anyone has any questions or would like to comment on any of the above, please contact us at turnpikefield2018@gmail.com and we will respond asap.