



FRIENDS OF BUTTS CLOSE

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER

December 2022



Anna Parr

Fall

After the summer heat, Autumn on Butts Close seemed languid, lingering. Even now some leaves are clinging on and buds appear, expectantly. I always enjoy its transitions: that vibrant early green, the sometimes dead, dusty brown of the summer, then the rebound, and a carpet of leaves, before the mists and finally the frosts descend, with their own beauty. Many people have said that a walk across Butts Close puts them in touch with a different pace of life, and are grateful for it. And it also needs its own pace of TLC.

Greening 1



Stuart Howarth

The *Sapling Hedge* continued to need on-going care: thanks to the Friends who have weeded and cossetted them over the last year. They are thriving, albeit at different rates. The ones at the north end have done less well, and that made it easier for more graffiti and tagging to appear. Andrew Mills (NHC) has agreed to our adding some robust Elders at that end (no, not pensioners...).

However, *Countryside Management Services (CMS)* have advised us that the saplings now need coppicing so that they spread laterally and start to form a hedge, rather than a row of straggly trees. This means cutting them back to about 15cm. They advise that this should be done in January. The growth will bounce back but I guess before it does there will be more 3am spray cans to suffer. Graffiti is of course wider than a Butts Close issue. My understanding from the research is that planting up an area where graffitists and taggers work really is the only viable solution long-term, although this probably only moves them on to use another site. The hedge was indeed planned partly for this purpose, but we will have to wait awhile, accepting nature's pace, before that happens.

Greening 2

The Greenspace Action Plan included enhancements to the biodiversity of the Close by amending the grassland cutting regime and by increasing wildflower sowing. I thought it worth reproducing the relevant section of the GAP and the notices placed on site to advise users of the Close. These are appended. It's an involved and carefully planned business, something emphasised in the notices put up by the seeded areas.

The CMS will also organise planting a new hedgerow along the brick wall on the southern perimeter of the Close, and carry out remedial and enhancement work around the pond.

Hitchin – The Movie Set

Hitchin continues to attract movie makers. First it was episodes of *Dr Foster*, and then *The Policeman* with Harry Styles in the outdoor swimming pool.



David Tennant

Now we understand that the 2023 *Dr Who* will feature Butts Close, with a scaled down Tardis due to the recession...

...and still...

Best Wishes for Christmas and for the New Year!

Anna

Bill

Ellie

Helen

Stuart

Tony

Friends of Butts Close Steering Group

December 2022

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Appendix

GAP 2022-2027 – pages 18-19

The process for creating wildflower rich grasslands is an involved process in the first year to aid establishment, requiring prior ground preparation work and regular mowing to inhibit faster growing species. While this preparation work is being carried out it provides an opportunity to enlarge some of the conservation cut grassland into adjacent areas which are currently underutilised. This would bring the current wildflower grassland around the pond further west towards the path and expand the most southern portion of conservation cut grassland south towards the boundary of Bedford Rd. The area of conservation grass adjacent to the swimming pool will also be moved into the mapped areas of conservation grassland for the site. This will significantly increase the amount and the value of wildlife friendly habitat within Butts Close and management of this aims to further enhance this. Retaining a small area of conservation cut grassland over winter each year by leaving this out of the cut and lift can provide valuable winter habitat for wildlife. Butterflies especially rely on safe places to lay eggs and hibernate, and amphibians will seek shelter within long grass. As the grassland is already divided by location this can be achieved by leaving one section uncut, around 1/5 the total area, and rotating the chosen area each year so that no area is left uncut for 2 years in a row. Undertaking similar management of the longer scrub type material along the boundary north and south of the pond, by carrying out alternate yearly cuts, provides additional year-round habitat while remaining manageable.

Wildflower meadow creation project

Wildflower meadows are an important habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, particularly pollinators and have been in decline.

Hertfordshire County Council's Countryside Management Service are creating new wildflower meadows locally, in partnership with North Herts Council.

The pink areas below will be sown this Autumn, please avoid trampling.



Wildflower meadows take time to establish so be patient and look out for wildflowers in bloom in this area over the next few years.

For further info please contact Elgan Adlard

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Countryside Management Service works with communities across Hertfordshire to help them care for and enjoy the environment.

Tel: 01992 588935 Web: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/cms



North
Herts
Council



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