



Needham Market Town Council
Climate Awareness Group
MINUTES: Tuesday 27th February 2024
7pm, Green Room

Present	Amanda Reardon (Chair); John Reardon; Jo Lea; Jean Pittaway; Richard Pittaway; Nicola Booth; John Matthissen; Ross Piper. In Attendance: Bethany Murrell and Sarah Wilding from BMSDC.
Apologies	Jo Hughes; Andy France; Mark Dimes; Martin O'Shea.
Minutes of last meeting	The minutes of the meeting held on 30.01.2024 were approved.
BMSDC Presentation	Bethany Murrell and Sarah Wilding updated the group on current and planned initiatives in the area. Some already involve Needham Market. Some may in the future. These included: • EV points • Eezybike installations • LCWIP (Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan • Community Energy Pathways More information is available at: https://www.greensuffolk.org/about/sccp/ Slides from the presentation will be shared on receipt There are opportunities we may be able to tap in to if they match our priorities and capacity.
Meadow Management	Ricard Parmee at MSDC was asked for an update and provided the following response: <i>We got a somewhat mixed response from local people on these areas. We expect those that don't like it to be more vocal than those that do, and we certainly received more complaints than messages of support!</i> <i>It proved a useful exercise to leave all the areas, both to see what appeared and how people reacted. We weren't helped by some of our mowing team, who didn't start cutting around the path edges until later in the season. Consequently, it appeared to many we'd just not bothered to cut rather than it being a deliberate. We've been working with the mowing team to ensure this doesn't happen again in 2024.</i> <i>We found that most of the areas didn't have much wildflower interest. A few bee orchids appeared between Primrose Way and Chainhouse Road, and the Quinton Road / Foxglove Avenue areas contained the most flowers. I understand one of these was recently heavily disturbed by work on a gas main or similar, so we'll have to see how they respond.</i> <i>In Primrose Way we had areas of aspen poplar suckers coming up around a couple of trees. We also got lots of complaints about there being no space for children to play, problems with dog walking and the town being unsuitable for rewilding, we should stick to the countryside. In light of this, we are scaling back the area left in this location. We will be cutting regularly the areas in which the aspen suckers appeared, as they are always going to be a problem. That way, we counter objections on lack of play space and dog walking; it's hard to say there's nowhere when there are clearly areas available, and it's hard for people to claim that the entire area is needed as short grass, so we should reduce the level of objection. I doubt it will all disappear, though.</i> <i>Hargrave Avenue didn't work. Some spaces are too small to be practical, especially by the time we have cut the path edges. We will revert to regular mowing here. Instead, we will leave another larger area in Primrose Way we didn't include in 2023. A few larger areas work much better and in general, get accepted more readily than lots of small ones.</i> <i>Pinecroft Way generated several complaints. One pointed out that there was a sign on the side of a house stating that this was designated as a play area for small children. It was the only example of such a sign we've ever come across, but it has our logo on it. We took the decision to go back to mowing the area next to the sign, on the understanding we would monitor its use by children to inform what we do next. I have never seen anyone playing on it, though twice a rope swing has been put up on one of our trees, well beyond the reach of me, let alone any children. Both times, the swing was new and very clean. My guess is a local resident puts them up to provide evidence children play there.</i> <i>So, we will continue with most areas, though in a reduced scale in Primrose Way to address the level of objections. We do point out that we get complaints when we cut the grass as well as when we don't, so</i>

	<i>one approach will never work. We need to find a compromise that balances the needs of those wanting short grass with those wanting wildflowers.</i> <i>As part of our approach this year, we will be making much more use of promotional material. This will include use of social media to encourage people to visit and photograph interesting flowers and insects, updating our website, putting up more signs on new meadow areas, and providing all town and parish councils in which we have meadow areas with information on where they are. We found in 2023 that where people were better informed, they were generally more supportive.</i> <i>Once the plans have been revised for Needham Market I am happy to send them over to you – these are being worked on now so we can provide them ahead of the start of the mowing season.</i> After discussion, it was agreed that the following points would be relayed back to Richard: • Thanks. • Triangular area of grass on Quinton Rd, at the end of Priestly Rd – a pyramid orchid appeared last year. Could this area be meadow managed to see if more come up? • The area recently subject to disturbance due to groundworks – does this mean the area could be suitable for seeding if it has been scarified? • There is an area of grass at the end of Burton Drive which loops round to Platten Close (not the whole field) which is relatively untrodden and desire paths are obvious – could this be considered for addition to the scheme? • Is it possible that we could discuss the borders of the Middle School Field being meadow managed? Post meeting: • Amanda will also mention the Pinecroft Way area regarding the section which has been mowed as there is a sign saying it is for children to play on – there have been one or two children observed there in recent months. A family living very close by have taken it upon themselves to regularly mow this section themselves.
Community Orchard	• A brilliant event on 17th February with 23 children attending to help. • The atmosphere was fabulous with families and additional members of the public turning up to help. • 7 trees went in and the remaining two will be planted this week. • Richard will lead on a way forward to manage the watering rota. • A discussion had taken place with Jigsaw re the water butt. They have identified a risk in that youngsters occasionally climb over the wall to retrieve balls and we do not want them falling into water. An ICB would be a safer option and it was agreed that this could be installed. Amanda will check with the RFO re purchasing methods and Ross will explore sources. • The Rangers attended and have used the money they raised at Earth Day to create a sign for the orchard area. • We have still to decide on the location for the bench which has been purchased.
AOB	• Amanda will enquire about the timing of the Middle School Field consultation. • Ross referred to an upcoming NO Farmers NO Food event at The Limes on 14th March, 7pm. It would be interesting to attend and listen as much of their communications are anti climate action initiatives. • Ross has set up a meeting between Suffolk Wildlife Trust and local farmers to discuss take up of schemes to increase hedgerows and trees on farmland as well as other climate initiatives which include flood mitigation. Twenty farmers have signed up to attend so far. 4th March.
Next Meeting	Tuesday 16 th April, 7pm, Green Room.