

Acton Park

Seasonal Report

01/04/22 - 30/09/22

Seasonal Ranger:

Hannah Farnell



**Park
Maintenance**

Events

**Junior
Rangers**

Contents

Job Description Evidencing	3
Report Summary	4
Overview	5
Completed Seasonal Work	6
Park maintenance.....	6
Hedge Cutting and Path Clearing.....	6
Flooded Path	8
Site Checks	8
Wildlife	9
Community Engagement	10
Events/ Schools / Volunteering/ Facebook	10
Events	10
School Sessions	15
Junior Rangers	16
.....	17
Acton Park Voluntary Group	18
Social Media	19
Projected work	20
Park Maintenance.....	20
Hedge Cutting and Path Clearing.....	20
Bench installation	20
Park Signage	20
Community Engagement.....	21
Events	21
School sessions	21
Acton Park Volunteers	21
Ranger Projects	22
Potential Project Ideas:	22
Collaborative Projects	22
Edging on Paths.....	22
Designated off-lead dog area	22



Environment Department

JOB DESCRIPTION

POST: **Seasonal Ranger, Acton Park**

JOB PURPOSE: To support the provision of countryside recreational and environmental educational opportunities in the Parks, for visitors and the local community.

Principal Accountabilities:

- | | | | |
|----|--|---|--|
| a) | Assist in the operation, maintenance and development of the Parks and the associated visitor centre facilities (including general site and visitor supervision, practical estate maintenance work and animal husbandry), to ensure that they are accessible and safe for visitors. | } | Evidenced on pages 6-8.
See "Park Maintenance" |
| b) | Plan, organise, deliver and monitor the Parks, Countryside and Rights of Way Service events and environmental education programmes(including leading groups, writing events programmes, producing interpretative displays and developing learning materials which support the National Curriculum, eg school resource packs), to increase public knowledge and understanding of the countryside and related issues. | } | Evidenced on page 15.
See "School Sessions" |
| c) | Work with the local community to develop and lead volunteers programmes, to assist in the care and management of the parks and rights of way network, eg Junior Rangers (under 16 years old), adult volunteers and other work placements. | } | Evidenced on pages 10-14 & 18.
See "Events" and "Acton Voluntary Group" |
| d) | Support the promotion of the park facilities, through the development, production and monitoring of marketing and promotional literature, exhibitions and group talks, in order to maximise awareness of the Parks, Countryside and Rights of Way services and facilities. | } | Evidenced on page 19.
See "Social Media" |
| e) | Supervise information assistants, seasonal and temporary staff, volunteers, placements and contractors, in compliance with relevant personnel policy and procedures. | } | Evidenced on pages 10-14 & 18.
See "Events" and "Acton Voluntary Group" |
| f) | To undertake any other relevant duties as directed by the Senior Parks and Countryside Officer. | | |

Report Summary

2022's summer has been packed full of events, school groups, volunteering and the launch of Acton Park's first ever Junior Rangers course.

Completed Works

Park Maintenance

Hedge cutting and strimming have been carried out to control summer growth, keeping paths and the orchard passable.

The second of three benches has been installed and a temporary fix has been made to the fence in the "off-lead dog area", as well as the flooding being dealt with and path re-surfaced by the Japanese garden.

Events

4 events have been held over the summer period with over 400 people attending the Easter event, our most attended event to date.



Great crested grebe –
photo by Hannah Farnell

Proposed work

Path maintenance is an ongoing job across the park especially leaf blowing to keep paths clear and prevent build up on the sides. Events will be held over Halloween and Christmas as well as an orienteering event and craft event (bug house making) over half terms. Alongside events and school sessions, the following projects could be completed: re-painting of benches and instillation of the final bench, creating permanent signage for the new orchard and old trees in the park, as well as a duck feeding information sign for educational purposes.

Volunteering

The Acton Volunteer group has met every 2 weeks and completed essential maintenance on the Japanese Garden, rose garden and shrub bed near the playground.

Schools

A total of 11 school sessions have been held at the park covering topics on: Acton Park history, duck ecology, aging trees, wildflower meadows and planting up flower beds. 3 Local Brownies and Rainbows groups attended sessions and a junior rangers course was also held.

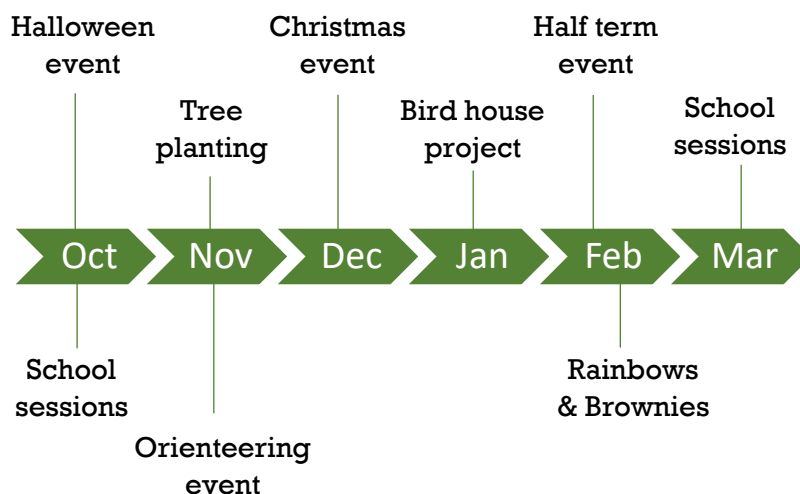
Social Media

Educational Facebook posts on the park's ecology and wildlife have continued and Facebook provides a platform for advertising events.

Wildlife At The Park

A clutch of dunnock chicks was found in one of the shrubs during a volunteer session. They are a common garden bird and as it was found later on in the summer it would be safe to assume this was the dunnock's second clutch if not third, suggesting a successful breeding year. Buzzards have been regularly spotted flying between the mature trees and a great crested grebe (a rarer sighting, pictured) was spotted on the lake.

Future Highlights



Overview

This summer work has focused largely on community engagement, including: events, schools groups, Brownies, Rainbows, volunteers and Junior Rangers. In total, five events have been held, eleven educational sessions taught, two Brownies groups and one rainbows group have had sessions in the park as well as a junior ranger course for fourteen children which ran for four weeks.

Acton volunteer group gained new members, meeting every 2 weeks and achieving amazing work maintaining the Japanese garden, rose garden flower beds and shrub bed near the playground.

Park maintenance has continued involving hedge cutting, strimming and path blowing to prevent the build up of leaves which rot and get compacted narrowing the paths which took intensive hoeing last year.

Social media posts on Facebook have continued, regularly highlighting ecological changes to the park in the summer as well as advertising events and spreading the word about school visits and works completed.

Plans for the winter period include events such as: Halloween, Christmas and a craft activity. Tree planting with the community and local primary schools is planned for November and a project such as bird house making/decorating could be held to benefit both children and wildlife.

Completed Seasonal Work

Park maintenance

Hedge Cutting and Path Clearing

Maintenance of the paths has continued through the summer season. The seasonal ranger has completed hedgcutting and leaf blowing to ensure access, keep the park looking well-kept and prevent leaves compacting on the edges which narrows the paths. Using the blower regularly to keep paths clear has meant that the compacted mud on the edges (that was cleared last season) has not returned. Strimming has also been undertaken regularly to maintain the width of paths and keep stinging nettles down.



Before



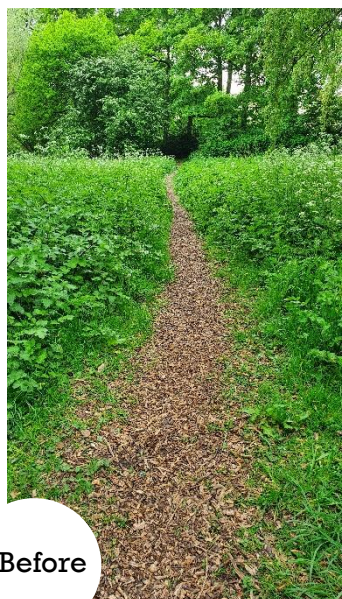
After



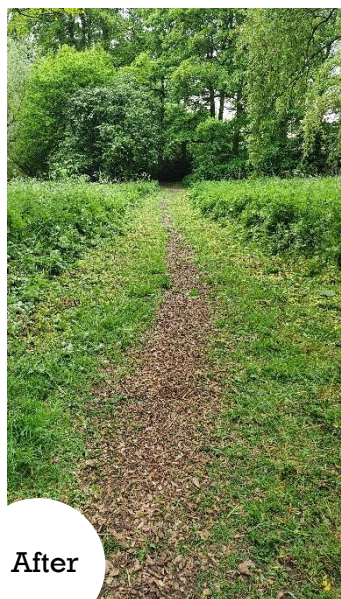
Before



After



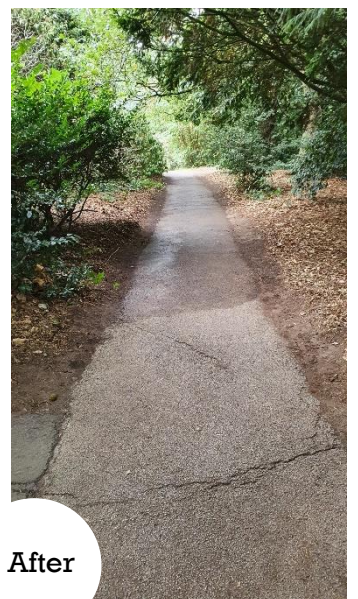
Before



After



Before



After

Orchard

The young trees have established well in their new home and produced a beautiful blossom and array of fruits in their first spring/summer. The grass and hogweed are prevalent in this area so regular strimming has been completed to ensure the trees aren't smothered by other species whilst still young.



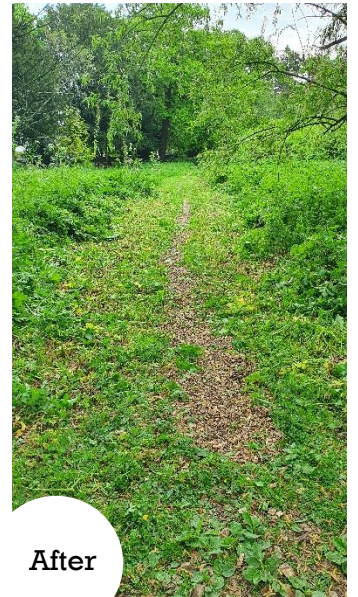
Before



After



Before



After



The second bench of three has been installed this summer with the help of the wider ranger team.



A temporary fix has been made to the wooden fence which used to enclose the old playground before it was re-located. Locals continue to feel strongly about keeping this area intact for use as an off-lead dog area.



Flooded Path

A path in the park has suffered from flooding for several years, which, when bad was covered in muddied water, impassable without waterproof footwear. The ranger continued to raise this issue with the Council and work was completed this summer. The drains have been cleaned and the path has been re-tarmacked, solving the issue of flooding.



Site Checks

Regular site checks have been undertaken and any issues reported.

Wildlife

Wildlife spotted in the park over the summer period:



Clutch of dunnoek
(*Prunella modularis*)
chicks found on 29th
June '22.

Common garden bird
found throughout the
UK. Nest between
April and July, having
up to three clutches.
(RSPB)



Buzzard
(*Buteo buteo*)

Now the most common
and most widespread
UK bird of prey. They
feed on small
mammals birds and
carrion. (RSPB)



Great crested Grebe
(*Podiceps cristatus*)

Once hunted near to
extinction for its feathers in
the UK. They mainly eat fish
and dive under water to
feed and escape. (RSPB)

Community Engagement

Events/ Schools / Volunteering/ Facebook

Events

Events continue to be well attended and we were lucky with some warm, dry weather over our summer events. We hosted our largest event yet with over 400 people attending the Easter Trail. In total five events have been held at Acton Park over the summer, each with a different focus varying from pirates to animals and trees.

Easter Event

Date: 17/04/22

Details: The Easter trail involved solving clues to find the next location where the next clue was hidden. There was rabbit ring toss and skittles available for people to play as well as a colouring competition to colour in your own egg, the winners received chocolate Easter eggs as a prize, with 111 entries!

People attended: 429



Pirate and Mermaid Trail

Date: 12/06/22

Details: Children had the option between the pirate trail or the mermaid trail where they received different handouts, then followed the same route round the park ticking off objects they found along the way. There was a pirate treasure search and mermaid jewels search where buckets of sand had hidden coins and jewels in them; this was very popular with younger children. There was also a “walk the plank” activity where children had to walk along a plank and then step into a paddling pool, which was in constant use and provided great enjoyment for the children! We hosted a costume competition, there were 21 entries and eight winners who received themed goodie bags.

People attended: 139



Poster



Walk the plank game



Sand search game



Costume competition entries

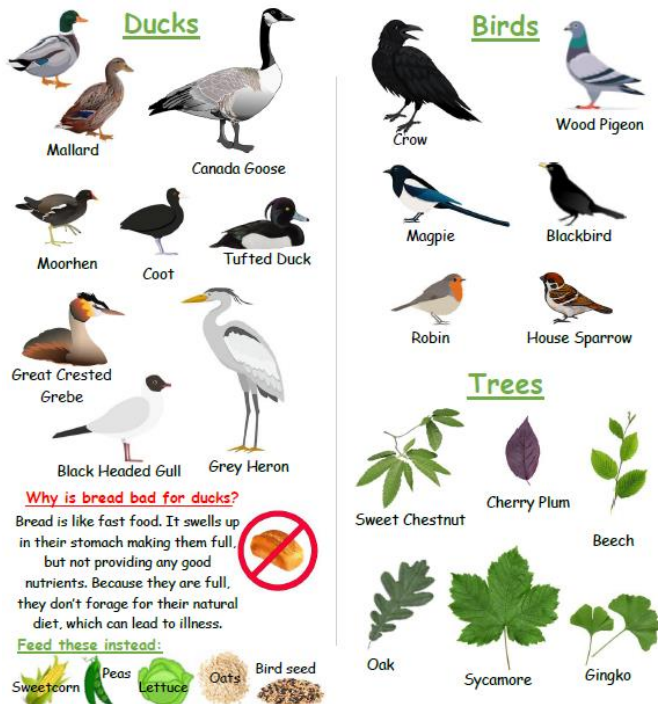
Nature Trail

Date: 24/07/22

Details: This trail focused on nature that could be found in the park. There was information to read on the way round on birds, bamboo, trees, hedgehogs, butterflies and more. Leaflets were handed out which also had ID guides on for spotting bird and duck species. We also set up a feeding station near the lake to educate people on what's best to feed ducks and why bread isn't good.

People attended: 76

Leaflet:



Acton Park Nature Trail

Follow the footprints round the park and discover interesting facts about nature. When you reach an eye, stop and look around. Also, can you find which animal the footprints belong to?

1 A small creature with 7000 spikes, they are active at night and eat bugs and worms. What are they and how many can you find?

2 A yew tree can live thousands of years, they are one of the longest living trees in Europe. Can you find one in the park?

3 Some people think long grass looks messy but it is very good for nature and wildlife. How many different animals can you find hiding in the grass?

4 This plant is not a tree, it's actually a grass! Explore between the stems to discover what it is and some fun facts!

5 Male and Female magpies look the same, they mate for life, they can recognise themselves in a mirror and recent studies find that they are actually scared of shiny things! Can you see any in the park today?

6 Can you spot all the duck species on the lake? Did you know bread isn't good for ducks, grab a bag of our super duck food mix and see who comes over to have a taste!

7 This plant can sting so watch out! But they're important for nature, especially the peacock butterfly!

8 Can you find a tree with a hole in it? Is it still alive? YES it is! Holes in trees can be good for the tree AND wildlife! Find out how...

Tree-mendous Day

Date: 16/08/22

Details: This event was a celebration of all things tree! We had the ancient tree trail set up which took people to some of the oldest trees in the park with information available on the species and calculation to age the tree themselves. A colleague from Wrexham Council provided teaching information and leaf printing (bashing leaves with a hammer onto cloth to stain the cloth with the natural dye from the leaves) which was a great hit with the kids! On the day, we also had wood cookie colouring and 'grow your own tree' kits to hand out.

People attended: 92



Trail information on an oak tree



Leaf printing



Wood cookie colouring



Grow your own tree kit

Orienteering Taster

Date: 28/08/22

Details: This event was to advertise the permanent orienteering course and give beginners the opportunity to try the activity for the first time. Maps were handed out and advice was offered on how to complete the course. Hot drinks were offered at the end. As well as finding your way round the park using the orienteering map (provided by Deeside Orienteering Club) there are also letters to collect at each control point that spell out a phrase related to the history of the area. There are also animals on each control point for children to find and record on their sheet.

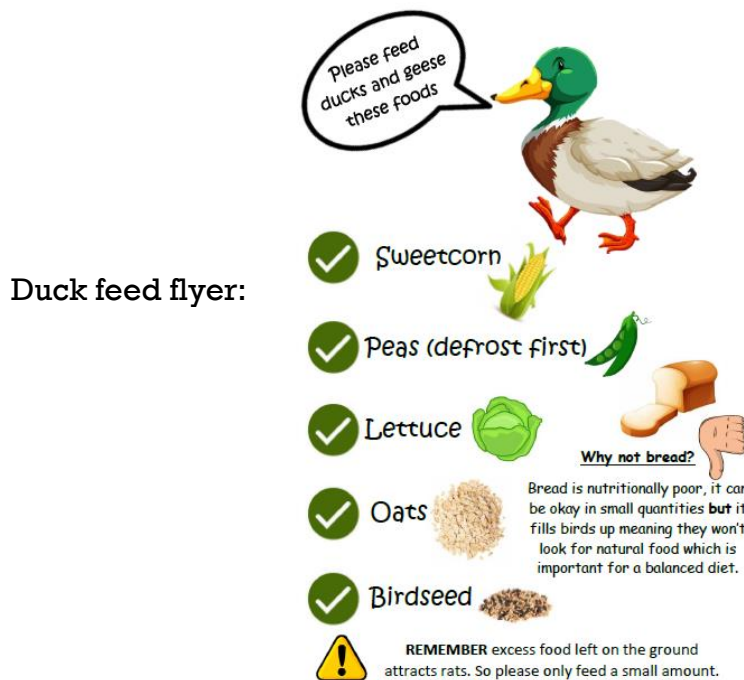
People attended: 27



School Sessions

Several schools have been to the park over the summer, learning about a variety of topics and planting flowers. A junior rangers course was also run over the summer holidays which covered all aspects of what being a park ranger is about. A total of eleven educational sessions have been held in these last 6 months.

Wats Dkye Primary came to study the ducks on the lake. The session covered duck ecology, diet, species identification and surveying. The session was finished with badge making.



Acton Park Primary attended a history session where they walked around the park learning about different elements of the park's history, including the uses of Acton Hall, Judge Jeffreys and the natural history of specific tree species and animals like grey squirrels.



Acton Park Primary also took part in re-planting two flower beds which had become overgrown with grass. Two classes took part in digging a hole, planting a plant using compost and watering it afterwards. The children thoroughly enjoyed the session and a new lease of life was given to the two areas in the park. The flowers chosen are all bee-friendly to help encourage and support pollinators: Napita, lavender, crocosmia and fox glove.



Before



Prepared



After

Two Brownies groups and a Rainbows group came for educational sessions in the park. Four sessions were hosted in total, focusing on: aging trees, duck diet, wildflower meadows, making nature cards and making seed bombs.

Junior Rangers

The Junior Rangers course ran for two hours, one day a week for four weeks. There were fourteen children who attended the course, all giving very positive feedback. Each session focused on an aspect related to being a park ranger: trees, park maintenance, plants and animals.

Booklet example:

Week 3 - Plants

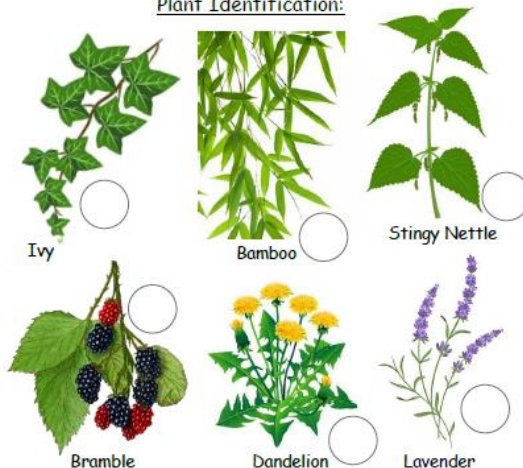
To be a Junior Ranger you need to:

- Know what plant species are good to plant in a park

Tasks

- Identify plants in the park
- Create a nature card
- Learn about pollination and why bees are so important
- Plant a bee-friendly plant in the park

Plant Identification:



Pollination is: _____

Can plants survive without pollination? _____

Name some pollinators: _____

I planted this plant at the park:



Logo:



Insert photo

Park Maintenance:



Group Photo:



Flower planting:



Bug house decorating:



Acton Park Voluntary Group

The volunteer group continues to have motivated individuals who have completed lots of work on the park throughout the summer, tidying up overgrown flower beds and shrub beds making them look cared for again. Below you can see the progress made on the rose garden and the shrub bed near the playground.

As well as achieving huge amounts of maintenance work, several volunteers regularly help with events and have also offered to provide hot drinks at the events run by the ranger. Equipment is now being sourced so that hot drinks can be offered at the next event.



Before



After



Before



After



Before



After



Before

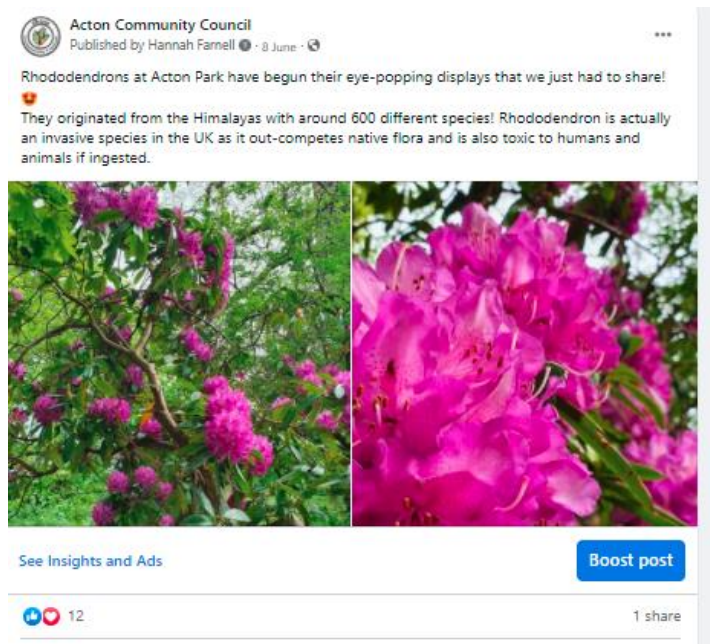


After

Social Media

Engaging and educational information continues to be posted on the Acton Community Council's Facebook page, covering a range of topics relating to the park such as: wildlife and plant life in the park, progress pictures including ranger work, voluntary work completed by the Friends group and event advertising. Facebook is an excellent tool for: educating the public park ecology, providing updates on maintenance works that are completed by both the ranger and volunteers, as well as advertising park events.

Post examples:



Projected work

Park Maintenance

Hedge Cutting and Path Clearing

Maintenance will continue to keep hedges and branches back away from paths, whilst other paths are scrapped to remove mud build up and re-widen them.

Bench installation

The final metal bench is still to be installed which can be completed in the next period.

Park Signage

The Friends voluntary group have 2 notice boards that are in poor condition and need replacing.

Two members of the community have requested whether it is possible to get a duck feeding information board position where most people come to feed the ducks. People regularly still feed bread which is not good for ducks so a sign where the main foot traffic is would be beneficial to educate people with what foods are better to feed.

It would be aesthetically pleasing and informative to have a plaque made for the new orchard area, establishing what tree species have been planted and who by. It would offer recognition to those that came to help as well as information for park visitors.

There are many interesting and ancient tree species at Acton Park which could have permanent name plaques installed for visitors to identify and learn about them.

Community Engagement

Events

Last year's colder weather in the winter months didn't perturb people from the events hosted so similar numbers are expected again at Halloween and Christmas.

Proposed dates are:

- Sunday 30th October (Halloween event: Creatures of the Night Trail)
- Tuesday 1st November (Orienteering)
- Sunday 18th December (Christmas Event: Rogue Reindeer Trail)
- Feb half term (bug house making event)

Proposed event Ideas:

- Park run
- Rubbings trail: taking rubbings of molds placed round the park.
- Nature-based events highlighting the flora and fauna in the park.

School sessions

There is continued interest from schools who wish to return for more for educational classes at the park.

Tree planting is being planned for November where it is hoped to involve all of the local primary schools with the planting of young trees.

After the success of the flower bed project with Acton Park Primary School, there is scope for further projects in the park that could make excellent activities for the children, such as: making/decorating bird houses that can then be installed in the park. This will also benefit the wildlife in the park by providing habitats as the old bird houses have now fallen down or are in disrepair.

Acton and Garden Village Rainbows and Brownies are also keen to return for more sessions at the park, and Rhosddu Brownies are interested in attending their first session.

Acton Park Volunteers

The original Friends group has been disbanded, but the new group of volunteers are still keen to continue working at the park. There are plans for the volunteers to offer hot drinks at events and be involved with any park projects such as tree planting and making bird boxes.

Ranger Projects

Potential Project Ideas:

- Mapping: creating comprehensive maps of the park
- Making and installing Bird Boxes
- Making and installing hedgehog homes
- Get out in nature/ sensory play days in the park
- Planting wildflower areas

Collaborative Projects

Edging on Paths

Some paths in the park would greatly benefit from some edging to prevent mud washing down onto the path and compacting which causes the path to become narrower and slippery in the wet. Installing edging at the worst affected areas would also reduce the labour that is needed regularly to scrape the paths; scraping is intensive work and not always suitable for Friends volunteers nor for long periods through the day. The mud is currently so compacted that the street sweeper vehicle will not remove it hence the recommendation for path edging as a solution.

Designated off-lead dog area

The fenced area which used to surround the old playground is regularly used by locals as an off-lead dog exercise area; whilst this area isn't designed for this use, the concept of building a specialised off-lead dog area may benefit the local community. The duty ranger would be able to offer advice to such a project due to prior experience as a dog trainer/behaviourist.