

Acton Park

Seasonal Report

01/04/23 - 30/09/23

Seasonal Ranger:

Hannah Farnell



Park
Maintenance

Events

School
Sessions

Pictured: Fox glove in Acton Park

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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 5-8.
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 9 - 14.
See "Events" and "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 9 – 13 & 15-16.
See "Events" and "Acton Park 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 17.
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 9 – 13 & 15-16.
See "Events" and "Acton Park Voluntary Group" |
| f) | To undertake any other relevant duties as directed by the Senior Parks and Countryside Officer. | | |

Report Summary

Summer 2023-2024 has involved: park maintenance to keep the park tidy and safe for visitors, events including Easter, an Insect theme, a medieval theme and craft; many educational school sessions and successful volunteer days.

Completed Works

Park Maintenance

Paths have been blown to clear fallen leaves and woodchip has been laid on paths across grass to prevent mud.

Flowerbeds have been weeded, orchard trees have been weeded and wood chipped and overgrown vegetation has been trimmed back from the paths.

2 metal benches have been sanded and painted and another 5 wooden benches have been sanded and stained.

Events

Five events have been held over the summer period including Easter and a medieval themed trail.

A buff tailed bumble bee resting on a native bluebell between showers.

Picture by Hannah Farnell



Proposed work

Park maintenance is an ongoing job with hedge cutting in full swing to get hedges right back from the paths to prepare for spring growth. Six events are planned, including Halloween, Christmas and Easter.

Educational sessions will continue to be offered to the local schools.

An informative duck feeding sign will be installed by the lake along with blue green algae warning signs.

Downloadable walking leaflets for the park can be created for visitors to complete self-guided trails in their own time.

A bird box project hopes to involve local schools and replace the old and broken boxes in the park.

Volunteering

The Acton Park Volunteer group has met every two weeks and completed essential maintenance on the Japanese Garden, former rose garden and shrub bed near the playground, as well as helping at events.

Schools

A total of 11 school sessions have been held at the park. Session topics have included: bug house making, orienteering and ducks.

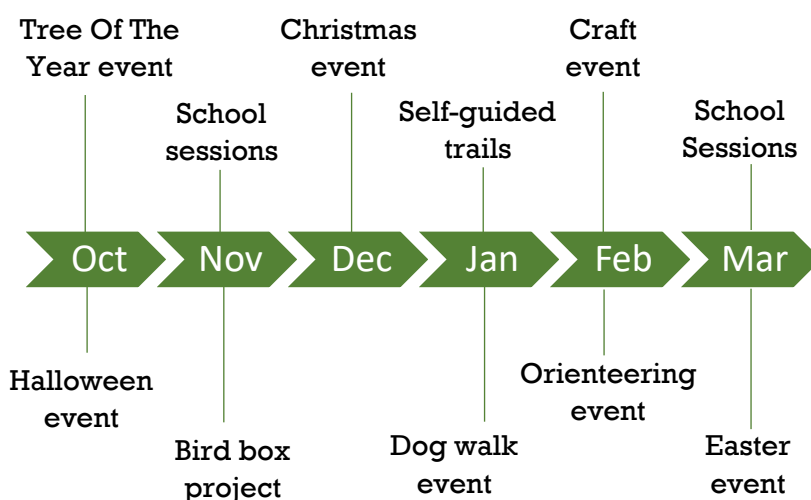
Social Media

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

Flora and Fauna at the Park

The park is host to a huge variety of plants and wildlife. Insects spotted include the speckled wood and holly blue butterflies, buff tailed bumble bee and tawny mining bee. The lake has seen Canada geese, greylag geese, moorhens and coots all with young, as well as a visit from a great crested grebe.

Future Highlights

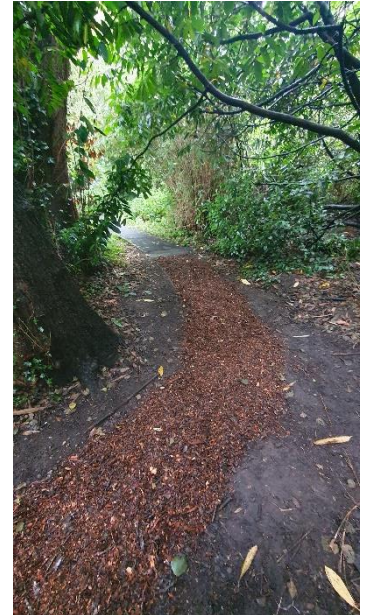


Completed Seasonal Work

Park maintenance

Path Clearing and Wood Chipping

The paths have been cleared regularly to remove leaves, twigs and nuts off the tarmac. This keeps the park looking tidy and also prevents leaves rotting near the side and compacting, leading to the narrowing of the path. Fresh woodchip was placed near the ponds and board walks to ensure the path wasn't muddy for visitors over this wet summer. Hedges have been trimmed back to ensure they don't block the path but this has been kept to a minimum over the summer as it is bird nesting season.



Pond Clearing

Following the pond clear up, the silt that was dragged out of the pond was left to sit for a couple of weeks to allow any pond dwellers to return to the pond. The silt was then removed.



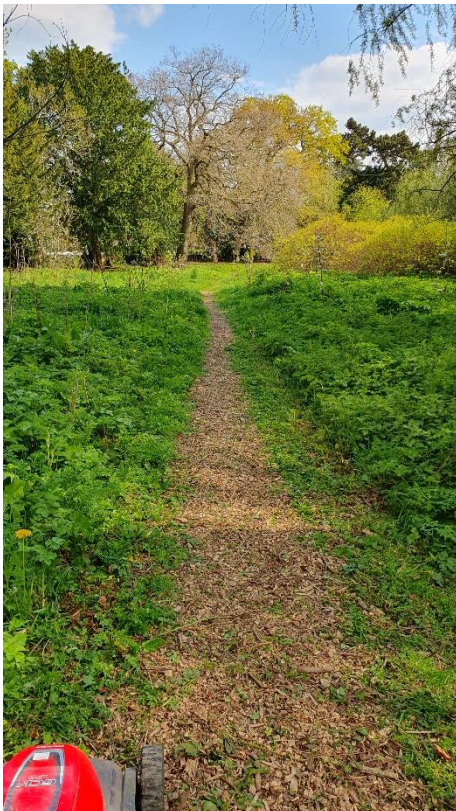
Before



After

Orchard

The orchard has been regularly mown and strimmed to maintain a footpath through the middle of the trees. More woodchip has been added this summer, due to it breaking down into the grass/soil within six months it is a twice-yearly task. The orchard trees have also been weeded and fresh woodchip applied to help keep in moisture on hotter days and reduce competition from weeds around the roots.



Mown edges of the main orchard path



Mown path through middle and inter-joining trees

Bench Painting and Staining

Seven benches have been either painted or stained. The new metal benches installed last year had a lot of graffiti scratched into the paintwork which needed sanding down before repainting. Two of the three metal benches have been sanded and re-painted. Five wooden benches have been sanded and stained. Unfortunately the back rest on an older wooden bench had been broken and removed, but the seat was able to remain.





Site Checks

Regular site checks have been undertaken and any issues reported.

Community Engagement

Events/ Schools / Volunteering/ Social Media

Events

Events see between 100-300 people and are popular with the local community. Five events have been held at the park in the last six months with very positive feedback. At each event the ranger has had the help of several members of the Acton Park Volunteer group who work hard to keep the event running smoothly and make bigger events possible.

Easter At Acton

Date: 08/04/23

Details: The Easter trail consisted of a character scavenger hunt with large wooden, handmade Easter characters along the trail. There was a colouring competition with chocolate Easter eggs for the winners. Games on the day consisted of: “guess the name of the rabbit” to win the teddy and “hunt for the golden eggs” where kids had to find golden plastic eggs hidden in a small ball pit. Both games were very popular and offered some cheap interactive fun for the children. On the day Clement Rabbit Rescue charity joined us with a tombola to raise money for their charity and educate people on keeping rabbits and rabbit welfare. Ultimate Entertainment provided the Easter Rabbit (entertainer in costume) to walk around during the event for people to get photos with. The Acton Park Volunteers

People attended: 368



Wooden Easter Characters to find along the trail around the park



Winners of the Easter colouring competition

Craft Event: Bug House Making

Date: 04/06/23

Details: The bug house making craft event is a smaller, but still a well-enjoyed event. We don't see as big a numbers as the trail events, but those who attend really enjoy the free activity. It was also held in February half term with 24 people attending. It was hoped with the nicer weather that more may attend this time, nonetheless, it is a smaller event to prepare for and a nice outside/nature activity for the community to have access to for free over the holidays.

People attended: 23



Acton 'Tree' Party

Date: 17/06/23

Details: Co-hosted with Jacinta, the landscape officer from Wrexham council, this event focused on everything “tree”. There was a picnic area, hammocks in the trees, campfire cooking, storytelling, wood cookie craft and the ancient tree trail designed by the ranger. The Acton Park Volunteers also offered refreshments on the day.

People attended: approx.100



Event poster

Designed by Wrexham Council graphic designer



Event set up



Craft stall



Ancient tree trail information










Created by the ranger

The Honey Thief



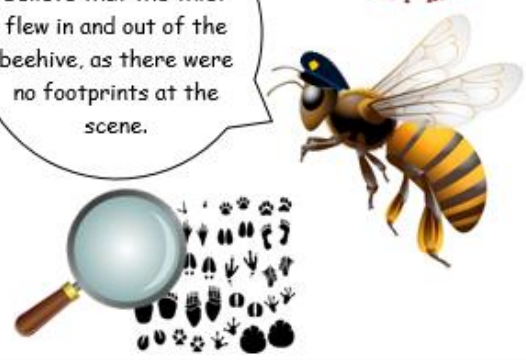

Date: 30/07/23

Details: An insect-themed trail to educate and entertain children over the summer holidays. To appeal to a wider audience (not just bug lovers) this insect trail was designed in a “who done it” style; Honey had been stolen from the beehive and the Insect Police Force (IPF) needed children’s help to find out who did it. The participants began the trail with their handout, a list of “suspects” (different insects) each with a mini fact file. As they went round the trail, they found clues, which allowed them to strike off suspects from the list until they were left with just one insect- the honey thief! There were a couple of games: bug sand search and snail racing. Kids could also make their own badge to take home.

People attended: 119

The Honey Thief Mystery		
 <p>The IPF (Insect Police Force) need your help, someone has stolen honey from the beehive and we need your help to find out who! Below is a list of suspects, one of them is the honey thief. Follow the trail around the park to find the clues and use your detective skills to cross off one suspect at a time!</p>		
Honey Thief Suspects:		
 Ladybird No. of legs: 6 Wings? YES Mouthparts: Mandibles	 Butterfly No. of legs: 6 Wings? YES Mouthparts: Proboscis	
 Ant No. of legs: 6 Wings? NO Mouthparts: Mandibles	 Spider No. of legs: 8 Wings? NO Mouthparts: Mandibles	 Wasp No. of legs: 6 Wings? YES Mouthparts: Mandibles
 Grasshopper No. of legs: 6 Wings? YES Mouthparts: Mandibles	 Beetle No. of legs: 6 Wings? YES Mouthparts: Mandibles	 Dragonfly No. of legs: 6 Wings? YES Mouthparts: Mandibles
Detective's Name: _____		The honey thief is: _____

Trail Handout

Footprint Report	
	
 <p>We have reason to believe that the thief flew in and out of the beehive, as there were no footprints at the scene.</p> 	
 <p>Insect Detective: The thief can fly! Do any of our suspects NOT have wings? Cross off the suspect with no wings.</p>	

One of the multiple clues laid out along the trail



Racing snails game



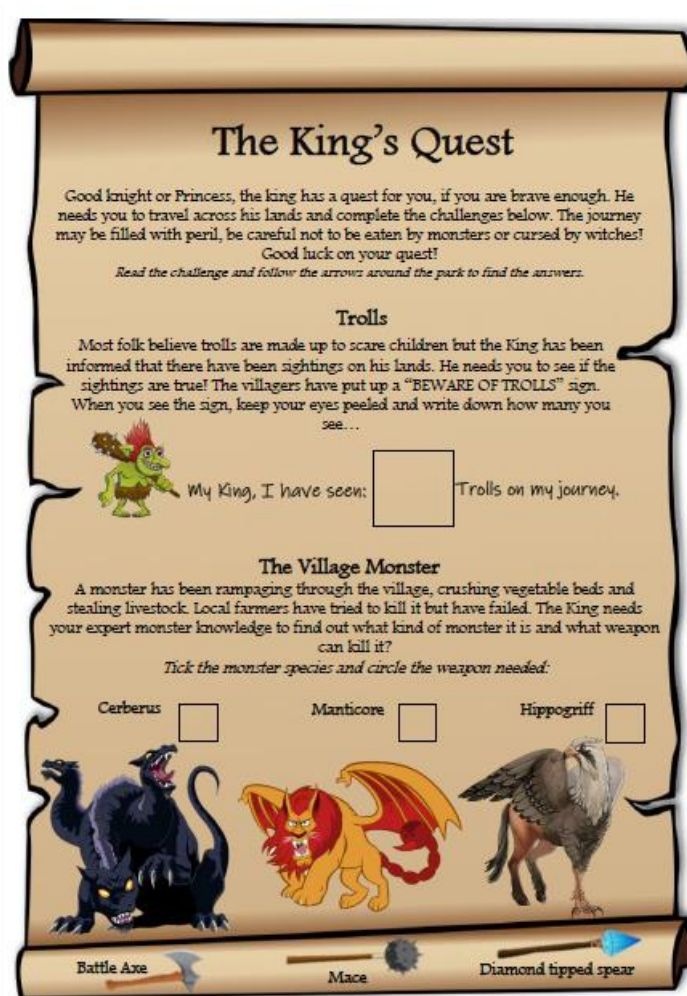
Badge making

The King's Quest

Date: 19/08/23

Details: This was a medieval themed event for the summer holidays with the aim to have one educational event focusing on nature (The Honey Thief) and a second event for fun to draw people out into nature and get active (The King's Quest). The children received a handout at the start of the trail where they had to walk around the park and find answers for the king, earning a gold chocolate coin as reward. Historia Nomannis, a medieval re-enactment group attended on the day with a small encampment, sword fighting and "have a go at archery". The ranger also designed a small replica catapult for children to experience.

People attended: Approx. 100-150



Trail Handout side 1



Trail Handout side 2



Historia Nomannis



Handmade painted wooden trail characters

School Sessions

A total of eleven school sessions were held over the summer period, involving three of the local primary schools.

Barkers Lane Primary School and Wats Dyke Primary attended sessions on camouflage, food chains and bughouse making, where they decorated and then stuffed their own bughouses to take home. The bughouses are made from wood that is cut and then glued together by the ranger before the sessions.

Borras Park Primary attended two sessions on orienteering in the park where they practiced map-reading skills with cones and simple maps before taking on half of the permanent orienteering course in the park.

Two other classes from Borras Park attended two sessions on ducks where they looked at: why ducks live on lakes, what they eat, actively feeding the ducks a pre-prepared mix of healthy foods (including bird seeds peas and lettuce) and also made some badges to take home.

Acton Rainbows and Brownies attended separately to learn about food chains and to make bughouses to take home.



Barkers
Lane



Wats
Dyke



Borras
Park



Acton
Rainbows



Acton
Brownies

Acton Park Voluntary Group

The volunteer group continues to provide essential help for the up keep of several areas of the park. The group meets every other Tuesday for a two-hour practical session followed by a well-earned cup of tea and biscuits. This summer they have weeded and cleared the former rose garden area, weeded and wood chipped the orchard, weeded the Japanese garden as well as shrub area by the playground.

As well as achieving great amounts of maintenance work, several volunteers regularly help with events, assisting with trail handouts, games and offering hot drinks.



Former rose garden 18th April weeded and fresh wood chip laid.

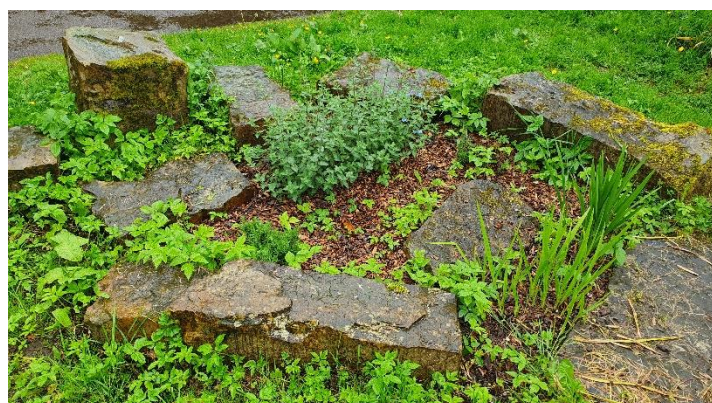


Before

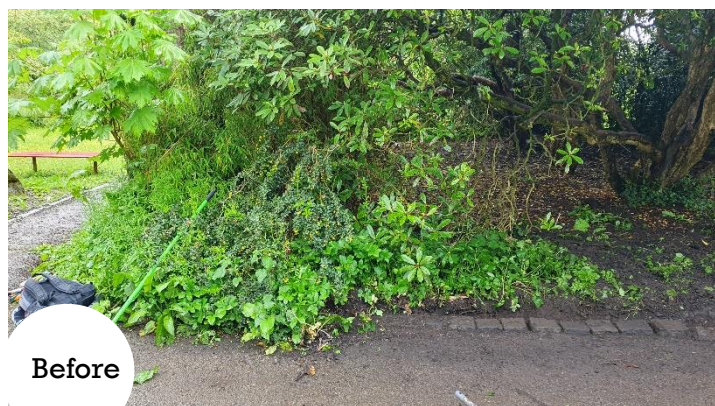


After

Former rose garden 19th September - big trim.



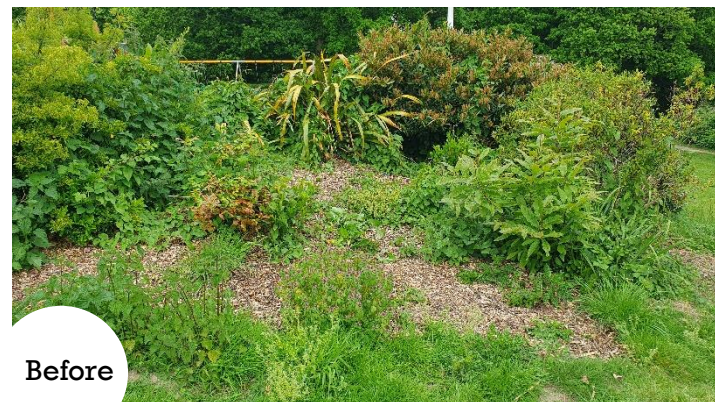
Rock flowerbed planted by Acton Park Primary. Weeded 9th May.



Japanese garden edging 9th May.



Japanese garden edging 23rd May. Pictured from left: Kate, Ruth, Martin and Tomasz.



Shrub bed by playground weeded and fresh wood chip laid 23rd May.



Orchard weeded
and wood chip laid
around the trees.

25th April

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:



Park Flora and Fauna

Flora



Potentially a grisette mushroom

Amanita vaginata



Allium

Allium

Part of the onion family



Fox glove

Digitalis

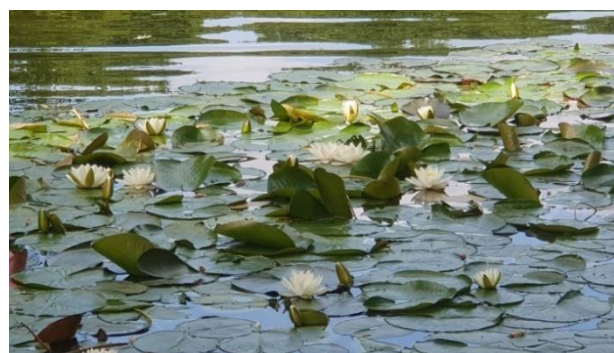


Native bluebell

Hyacinthoides non-scripta



Buttercups on the grass (*Ranunculus*)



Water lilies in the lake (*Nymphaeaceae*)



Common bistort (*Persicaria bistorta*)



Blanket of bluebells 7th May

Fauna



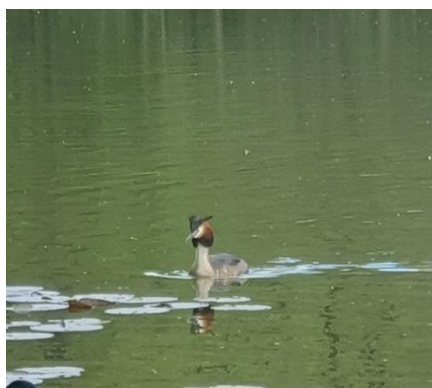
Buff tailed bumblebee



Speckled wood butterfly



Tawny mining bee



Great crested grebe



Holly blue butterfly



Canada goose



Coot and three young



Two greylag geese



Two Canada geese chicks

Projected work

Park Maintenance

Hedge Cutting and Path Clearing

General park maintenance will continue, including hedge cutting, path clearing and strimming to keep weeds on path edges back.

Park Signage

The Friends volunteer group had 2 notice boards that are missing and need replacing.

An information board on the best foods to feed ducks has been created and is ready to be installed. Posts will be dug into the ground and the information sign attached to the posts.

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 winter's Halloween and Christmas events were well attended even in poor weather, which highlights the interest for free family events among the community. This years' Halloween and Christmas events will aim to be slightly "bigger and better" than last year and as always, a new theme or trail will be created for the days.

Proposed event dates:

- Sunday 8th October – Celebrate the Sweet Chestnut
- Sunday 29th October - Halloween
- Sunday 10th December – Christmas
- Sunday 21st January – dog walk
- Tuesday 13th February – small half term craft event
- Sunday 31st March - Easter

School sessions

Each term an email is sent to all of the local primary schools offering session topics and dates. Each time there is always a positive response from schools. Wats Dyke Primary are interested in bringing five classes to a history session in November and Rhosddu Primary are interested to attend sessions in the spring term.

Each school is given a list of educational sessions to pick between (listed below) as well as the offer for the ranger to develop a session linked to their current topic of study.

- Ducks
- Birds
- Trees
- History
- Food chains and bug house making
- Orienteering

After the success of planting up a flower bed 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.

Downloadable Walks

Downloadable leaflets can be created and offered free to parents who are looking for something to do with their child at the weekend or over the holidays. Trails could include scavenger hunts and information on the plant life and wildlife in the park. Parents would be able to print the leaflet out and then take themselves to the park to complete the self-guided trail in their own time. Downloadable trails could also be designed for adults who want to explore Acton Park in greater detail and learn about the nature and history the park has to offer.

Acton Park Volunteers

The Acton Park Volunteers group will continue to meet up every other week, as well as assist at events.

Ranger Projects

Potential Project Ideas:

- Mapping: creating comprehensive maps of the park
- Making and installing Bird Boxes
- Making and installing hedgehog homes
- Planting pollinator friendly flowers in flower beds
- Planting wildflower areas
- Planting bulbs

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.