**2024 Banstead Wildlife Field End of year Update**

Here is a list of the year’s developments since Anthea Smithies and I started at the beginning of the year.

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Thank you to our Community friends

**Finances to 30th November 2024**

**(Currently managed through Banstead Horticultural Society)**

**Income Received**

Epsom College donation £ 500

CIL funding (allocated) £8,472.47

Total in £8,972.47

**Outgoings**

Rotary P4P Crocus bulbs £185

Leaflets £ 34.95

Banner £ 30\_\_\_

Total out \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-£249.95

Balance £8,722.52\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Year : 2024 Achievements**

The original aim was to learn about the field, make friends (develop a Friends group), to get the meadow cut (with the Greenspaces team) and to replace the raised beds. With the help of the community, we have achieved much, much more. We have

* Obtained the history with original planting plans and clarified the field as being an *urban set aside site* planted with mixed native and ornamental plants to encourage wildlife. It is our policy to ensure that non-native plants are kept to the perimeter of the field, and only allowed if they are non-invasive, non-toxic to wildlife, and extend the season or food sources for pollinators and other ‘resident’ wildlife species.
* Established that it is the only public access education facility in Surrey. With so many local sites of Special Scientific Interest focussed on purely native plants, the field has a point of contrast, as well as offering research opportunities in the future.
* Lead 10 weeks of supervised activity classes with Epsom College students, for which we received a generous donation. This has informed our vision for field use in the future. We have had an excellent response from several local schools (see crocus planting).
* With the help of Brian Ransom and the Winkworth Woodland project volunteers cleared the invading saplings in the meadow, removed seedling trees from around the skirts of the meadow trees, and thinned a little stand of Poplar trees near the pond.
* Ensured a successful full meadow cut and cleared arisings for the first time in several years (we think 4). It is currently allocated one cut in every two years at present, but we are advocating for the proper management routine of annual cutting to enable a richer diversity of wildflowers by removing thatch and dominant vigorous grasses. This provides greater food sources for a more biodiverse population of wildlife.
* Gratefully received professional advice, guidance and support from Peter Wakeham from the Downland Trust, Cllr. Nadean Moses (Banstead Commons Conservators Trustee (BCC) and Banstead Village Ward counsellor with executive responsibility for the Environment), Thomas Carmona from the Greenspaces team, David Hatcher from the Woodland Trust and BCC, from Harriet Trueman from the Surrey Wildlife Trust.
* Ensured a successful bid from the Community Infrastructure Fund of approximately £8,500 for the restructuring for the dilapidated raised beds, for some replanting and for core tools for our proposed work group. We have had the kind offer of nearby garage storage space from a local resident. The work is scheduled for January 2025.
* Hosted a fantastic community crocus planting involving 4 local schools, a local care home and Surrey choices (support services for disabled and those in need) at which the Mayor, RBBC Councillors and MP Rebecca Paul, and Thomas Carmona of the Green spaces team attended, as well as members of the public. It was a joint effort between the Friends of the Field, BHS, Rotary and BVIB
* Established a growing group of volunteer Friends for the Field conservation, a WhatsApp group and a Facebook page. We have had three work group meetings in the field so far**. If you would like to join us, or just find out more, we meet at on the first and third Wednesday of the month at 930 (a cuppa at 1030) and work on for a further short time after that. Contact us via the BHS website. Our 2025 dates will be published soon.**

**Year 2: 2025 What happens next?**

We will continue to actively build on our partnership with the Reigate and Banstead Greenspaces team to identify and work on agreed projects within the field. We will continue to liaise with Banstead Village local Councillors responsible for environmental matters.

As well as establishing and consolidating our new work group, we have lots of ideas for developing community involvement and interest but need to attract more like-minded people to assist with the rewarding tasks required to make friends and learn from this precious space. In 2025 therefore we will continue with existing plans to conserve, protect and develop the field to benefit both the community of Banstead and as a facility of local and wider educational value.

We hope to effect the following

* **Practical activities and projects**
  + Replace raised beds and replant (January) CIL Funding and arrangements in place (Agreed Greenspaces)
  + Purchase tools for group (CIL Funding received)
  + Develop teaching area with full recycling of the felled tree (discussions in hand, agreed with Greenspaces): benches, toadstool seats, shreddings ‘carpet’, minibeast habitats
  + Seek support from the Downland Partnership for stump removal, refurbishment of fully accessible path system, and maintenance of perimeter fence and pond viewing platform (approach agreed with Greenspaces) Action from summer
  + Obtain the necessary funding for the above (CIL bid Phase two)
  + Continue to advocate for an annual meadow cut in line with correct wildflower management for plant diversity. (To be agreed with Greenspaces)
* **Community and education**
  + Provision of an information Board (Banstead Men in sheds)
  + Continue community liaison for spring and summer leisure and education activities
  + Continue to update our Facebook and Whatsapp pages
  + Continue to publish reports in the Banstead Village Residents Newssheet, the Banstead Horticultural Society website and Bulletin, and in the Banstead Rotary website as part of their responsible support for the Environment.
  + Continue to promote the mutual benefit and support from local voluntary groups and businesses where possible.
* **Conservation**
  + Consolidate and augment our conservation team (Field volunteers)
  + Continue to meet twice monthly during the winter/early spring months
  + Review and consider work practices for the summer months in March
  + Review and consider additional days/opportunities for volunteers
  + Establish and implement skills training/educational and safety policies for volunteers
  + Proceed to thin and clear overgrown woodland fringe and areas (as agreed with Greenspaces)
  + Replant as affordable, as required, and as advised. Planting will be kept to native wildflowers in the central meadow areas, but in the peripheral areas non-invasive ornamental plants may be selected for their wildlife enhancing benefits.
* **Governance and Volunteering**

Our eventual aim is to separate from the Horticultural Society by attracting a group of ‘management’ team volunteers to support a self-determining group. Self-governance will consolidate and protect the long-term future of this field. Volunteers are needed in the following areas:

* + Fundraising
  + Treasurer (for the Wildlife Field only)
  + School liaison
  + Admin volunteer (membership, publicity and record keeping)
  + Conservation/Education Volunteer

We will continue to promote these opportunities locally and will additionally seek recruitment from the Volunteer centre with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council via Banstead Horticultural Society.

**The inspiration behind Volunteering**

Contributing to a team effort is a satisfying pastime. In sharing and contributing to a beautiful outside space, enjoying the seasons in each other’s company, and slowly but surely seeing an improving environment, is surely the very best way to make friends and achieve a sense of well-being and belonging.

**A big thank you to our Community Friends in 2024.**

We are grateful for the late David Graddidge’s vision, tenacity, and years of dedicated hard work in establishing the Banstead Wildlife Field as an inspirational legacy for all, especially the People of Banstead.

At its core Banstead has a helpful community spirit which comes together for good. The proof can be seen in the fantastic response from local communities to the field project this year. Thank you all for your generosity and belief in this project as a worthwhile investment for the future. We would not have made such progress without your help.

First to our new group of fantastic volunteers. What a difference everyone has made already. We look forward to sharing this lovely space with you all again in 2025.

Banstead Community Infants School for crocus planting,

Banstead Community Junior School for crocus planting,

Banstead Manor Luxury Care Home for crocus planting, support and regular visiting,

Banstead Downs Lawn Tennis Club for supporting our crocus planting event

Banstead Horticultural Society (our umbrella support group)

BVIB David Martin and Sally Hale and your wonderful volunteers

BVRA, (Winkworth Woodland project) Brian Ransom and your wonderful volunteers

The Beacon School for crocus planting

Broadleaf Tree Services [www.broadleaftreeservices.co.uk](http://www.broadleaftreeservices.co.uk) for committing your creative and generous skills to our new teaching area.

Cllr’s Eddie Humphreys (Mayor) and Nadean Moses for supporting our aims and applications

Downland Trust: Peter Wakeham for your valuable and generous advice and experience

Emma Sears from <https://reelfeelproductions.pixieset.com> Emma Sears (wonderful photography and videos

Epsom College: Roshie Watkins, activity teachers and pupils for their enthusiasm and learning

Reigate and Banstead Greenspaces team: Thomas Carmona and Seb for putting your trust in us and collaborating so encouragingly

Rotary: Jane Illingworth, David Martin (Banstead), John Chamberlain (Sutton Nonsuch) and members for their interest and support of the projects and crocus planting

St Annes’s Catholic Primary School for crocus planting,

Surrey Choices for crocus planting,

Surrey Wildlife Trust: Harriet Trueman for her enthusiastic and inspirational advice

Woodland Trust: David Hatcher (Woodland Trust, BCC) for his generous interest, knowledgeable advice and sheer hard work in the field