

## Amenities & Leisure Committee Meeting – 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025

### **Agenda Item 5.2 – Biodiversity Projects**

*A wide ranging project to measure and record the natural world at various ETC sites in order to inform actions which will improve the biodiversity at these sites and across Earley.*

*We will use the evidence and knowledge gained to develop and carry out both short term and long term initiatives in a variety of areas including: habitat development; collaborative working with other groups and organisations; educational and recreational activities for residents and so on.*

*We will aim to apply this project to all sites that ETC either owns or has control of. We will encourage others (residents, businesses, organisations) to follow our lead in their own physical spaces.*

*The biodiversity project will help ETC achieve the aims of its Green Infrastructure and Climate Emergency agendas. This project is open ended and flexible. Results will be measured by observable and recorded improvements to the biodiversity of a site or location.*

*We will promote and celebrate the work of the biodiversity project and any improvements achieved as a result of ETC's commitment to this body of work.*

The Town Clerk, Operations Manager and both Park Rangers meet monthly to plan and discuss ideas to improve local biodiversity.

Work carried out since last report:

#### **Surveys**

The Park Rangers have drawn up a Survey Timeline which illustrates the optimal and sub-optimal survey seasons for various types of survey. This guide will be used when planning further survey works.

Botanical survey – Officers are scheduling a botanical survey of the conservation corridor at Sibly (Collins Drive) in May 2025. Information gathered from this will inform future site management plans.

Species survey – The Berks and South Bucks Bat Group have confirmed they would be interested in assisting ETC in conducting formal bat surveys at MELNR and possibly other ETC sites. Officers are meeting with them soon to discuss this further. We will also be looking at whether it would be beneficial to install new bat boxes, maybe using a variety of designs.

#### **Hedgehogs**

Officers have obtained hedgehog check reminder stickers from the British Hedgehog Preservation Society. These stickers will be placed on all ETC trimmers, hedge cutters and lawn mowers to remind the operator to check for hedgehogs before commencing work. We will take a photograph of ETC staff with their stickered equipment and post it on the Society's Hedgehog Heroes Roll of Honour website page to promote ETC's involvement with this scheme. We plan to publicise our use of these stickers and hope to have a small supply of them available for residents from our Helpshop.

#### **Redhatch Copse**

A tree survey has been completed, some remedial works will be carried out by our tree surgeons. This is an ancient woodland which should, ideally be regenerative. To assist with this goal, the Park Rangers will be carrying out some coppicing to allow more light into the wood and we will not be introducing any new plants or bulbs onto site for the foreseeable future to allow regeneration to take place. Increasing the light into the woods and around the edges will be beneficial for various insects, especially butterflies and moths.

**Wild Flower Bed**

A new wildflower bed is to be created on a patch of grass close to the duck feeding platform at MELNR. As part of the design, we will also be installing one of the boulders from the original Collins Drive play area as a basking site for reptiles.

**Tree Register**

The Rangers have added all new plants to this register not just new trees as originally reported.

Jo Friend, Town Clerk  
20<sup>th</sup> February 2025



Blunt Blades? Broken Tools? Damaged Ornaments? Wobbly Chairs?  
Get your garden ready for spring with...

## EARLEY REPAIR CAFE

Upcoming Dates: 9th March, 13th April & 11th May

10am - 1pm, Centrepont Community Centre

(next to Lower Earley Library on Chalfont Close)



We have volunteers skilled in electronic items such as phones, laptops, printers, speakers, radios etc. Get your gadgets working again with...

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**Agenda Item 9.1 – COLLABORATIVE WORKING - Silverdale Road Telephone Box**

The chair of the Amenities and Leisure Committee and the Town Clerk met with the University of Reading's community engagement officer and 3 members of their education department to discuss a possible collaborative project for ETC's adopted red telephone box in Silverdale Road.

We discussed the challenges the location of this second ETC red phone box posed (too close to other defibs to be suitable for that purpose; previously vandalised; very close to schools and shops etc) but also looked at the opportunities this location could provide once the phone box itself had been refurbished.

The UoR attendees were all very keen and full of ideas – it was an excellent meeting. Some of the ideas and points discussed included:

Uses:

- Making it a closed box, ie public wouldn't have access to the inside
- A rotating exhibition space, refreshing the displays or themes every six or twelve months
- Using it as an historical monument, having displays which reflect the history of the local area and local community – displaying a sense of pride in the community
- Involving UoR students (PGCE) in the project – have them working with local schools to create individual segments within the phone box
- Sharing photographs and memories from local residents of the local area/community; could include memories of the phone box itself and people's use of it

Potential themes:

- Climate – climate activism; sustainability; climate anxiety
- Modern/social history – including history of the schools, local neighbourhood & communities
- Storytelling – past, present, future

It was also suggested that an **interim project** could be set up to run whilst the refurbishment work takes place and the displays are being created. This would take the form of voice recordings, accessed via a QR code, of school children and local residents. They could be asked what their memories of the local area are, do they have any specific memories linked to red telephone boxes and, in the case of young children, what do they think this box may have been used for in the past? The QR code would be displayed on the phone box, and elsewhere if needed.

We spoke of the difficulties in engaging local schools in community projects – one of the attendees has direct links with ME school and others so she will start talking to her contacts there. The work could be carried out with the PGCE students on placements at the schools being our conduits to the pupils.

Members of the Committee are asked to consider and discuss the suggestions made, expressing any preferences. The chair of Amenities & Leisure Committee and the Town Clerk will feed Members' views back to the university and progress the project.



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**Agenda Item 11 – CONNECTING COMMUNITIES in BERKSHIRE (CCB)**

Connecting Communities in Berkshire (CCB) is a charitable organisation that focuses on improving communities. Earley Town Council is a member of CCB, this entitles ETC officers to attend training courses and access other resources.

I attended the CCB AGM on 30th January 2025 and also took part in a training session – ‘Managing Risk in Your Community Building’ – led by Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue. The training covered all aspects of managing community buildings including law and governance, fire safety and finance.

Three future action strands have come out of my interactions with CCB officers and other attendees at the event:

- Safe & Well Visits – Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue conduct free home visits to check fire safety plus health & wellbeing. They are keen for ETC to promote this service to its residents, especially those who may be older or who may be vulnerable.
- Fuel Poverty Advice – a CCB officer specialises in delivering fuel poverty advice to low income and/or vulnerable groups. They are keen to work with ETC to identify groups they could visit where this advice may be needed. We have also discussed the possibility of ETC facilitating a fuel poverty advice training session for front line workers, the session itself will be led by CCB, it is envisaged that attendees would be from health care providers, local charities or appropriate community groups and from the principal authority. Discussions are currently taking place.
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Halls & Community Buildings Advice Service – I am discussing with CCB the possibility of them assisting ETC with an assessment of one of our community centres in relation to our net zero project. They have worked on smaller projects and are keen to get involved in something larger. It’s early days but it’s possible they may be able to arrange for us to receive professional, and more importantly, independent advice on the most suitable solutions to improve the energy efficiency at our community centres.

Jo Friend, Town Clerk  
21st February 2025