

Village Pond Annual Report 2023-2024

Following on from a very busy 2022-2023 the past 12 months have been much quieter.

From a personal workload this has been welcome and in a wider context probably no bad thing to have a less active year with the pond being enjoyed by parishioners, without the need to undertake major earth works or raise/spend funds for a large project.

Work/action that has been completed:

- Two small working groups met in early summer and autumn to trim back the perimeter willow.
- Paul Davighi-Edwards, Steve Atwell and myself fine tuned the floatation height of the Duck Houses.
- An additional memorial bench was installed, complete with new concrete base. This was part funded by the family of Brian Robinson, a former Pond Warden.
- 3 new waste bins were sited to replace the previous 2. These are slightly larger and of a better design.
- Following a somewhat protracted 'handover' the new bins are now being emptied directly by MHDC.
- The area adjacent to the former British Legion, previously used to store 2 wheelie bins and 2 steel mesh cages has been cleared.

High rainfall over the winter months has seen the water level close to capacity, highlighting the need to check the overflow system which is clearly not operating as it should. Once the water drops below the outlet pipe during the summer we will engage a drainage specialist to investigate.

Nick Harper – Pond Warden

Café Market 2023-2024

The monthly market and cafe continues to flourish with about 25 stallholders and 200 customers each month. The cafe is a central feature of the event and has become an opportunity for parishioners to meet up in a social context.

Twelve local residents are involved in running the market; there are five committee members, who meet once a month and seven regular volunteers who show up on the day.

In 2020 the committee started a stall selling plastic free household products (dishcloths, cleaning solutions, washing detergents, shampoo etc). It is a 'not for profit' venture with stock being sold at cost price, the aim being to encourage people to try alternative products. Over £3,500 worth of stock has been purchased so far.

Since our last report to the PC, donations from the surplus, have been made to:

1. The Ukraine relief fund
2. The Turkey earthquake appeal

3. MIND.

4. The Hanley Castle Cricket Club for the Pavillon renovations.

Road Safety 2023-2024

Over the past year Sara and myself have been in contact with Highways endeavouring to reduce the speed limit outside the Hanley Castle High School especially from 40 to 30 and have had meetings with them and the school to enable us to move forward on this . As yet it remains at 40 mph but further meetings with the school and Highways are forecast after a meeting with the residents has been arranged and a petition organised to lower the speed .

In other areas of the two villages two new VAS machines have been ordered and asked to be placed one outside the High School and the other along the Worcester Road coming into Haney Swan to again try and reduce the speed of all vehicles travelling through the villages. New poles have been installed ready for the VAS. The newest one reports data back to us and will be crucial for our argument with Highways in lowering the speed limit which we look forward to receiving.

Mr Baker from Hanley Castle produced a presentation for the Parish Council showing the traffic chaos around school times and we are now working with him to help alleviate this situation.

Our life size "Bobbies" have been placed at the Village shop in Hanley Swan and outside a residents house along the Worcester Road road and at school times opposite the High School again to slow vehicles down.

Speeding is and has been an ongoing problem in the villages but we will continue with the crusade with Highways.

Cllrs Beadon & Barkley

Café Tuesday

This initiative has now been running every Tuesday since late 2022 when Warm Spaces were being encouraged as a way to provide a warm environment after the sharp rise in energy costs. In Hanley Swan and Castle the emphasis was on a **warm welcoming** atmosphere rather than focusing on and stigmatizing those who might struggle to keep warm.

With the parish Councils support the small hall is hired each week between 11-2pm and it is served by both WI's and Women's Fellowship, and 2 others covering 4 or 5 weeks each month. Donations are requested and this usually covers very adequately costs. With a donation a Freebruary month was held.

Starting in September a hot lunch was trialed and proved a big hit. It has now become a permanent feature on the second Tuesday of the month. Penny Tennant Thomas is paid to provide the main dishes which includes Vegetarian and Gluten free, and a pudding is also provided . Gravy and Custard are a must!

Around 17- 25 people attend on Tuesdays. Many are living on their own, and a significant number are men which is unusual.

The next challenge is to find a solution to those who cannot get themselves to Café Tuesday of which there are many. However this is perhaps a problem that is a step too far at present with our resources.

Alms Houses

There has been a almost total change in the Alms House Trustees over the last 12 months. As a result of these changes the committee of trustees are trying to establish a way of working which is appropriate to the requirements of the Charity Commission, and best serves the residents of the 3 Alms houses in Hanley Castle.

One action which needs urgent attention is an updating of the Scheme which is the Governance document and completion of a Health Check which is provided by the Alms House Association

The Trustees are Helen Owens, Jane Garner, Caroline Peer, (2 from Malvern Wells) and Revd Sue Adeney

The Cof E Churches in the Parish

We are very fortunate in the Parish that we have two churches which provide the parish with a total of 8 services per month. 3 Sunday services and 1 midweek at St Gabriels and 4 Sunday Services at St Mary's. In addition there is a monthly service at Albion Lodge

Most rural parishes have lost regular services as incumbents restrict the number related to the number of churches in their Benefice. Very often this results in 1 or 2 per month.

The number of weddings taking place in the Parish have increased due to the beautiful wedding venue at Hanley Hall, Barns & Yard. Many couples who wanting a church wedding are from outwith the parish and have to establish a connection with the parish by attending over 6 months.

The Open Gardens and the Quiz, Christmas Fayre, Nativity Exhibition, and Heritage Open Days exhibitions are popular events which serve as outreach as well as fund raisers for the churches, with out which the church would struggle to pay its Ministry Share to the Diocese.(which goes to pay for incumbents).

Cllr Adeney

Environmental Report 2023-24

This group was pioneering when set up initially and led the way in parish councils. It is gratifying to know that others have followed our example and now we are sharing ideas and giving support to each other in different ways. The Councils Policy for the Environment was updated and reviewed with a reminder of the members of their responsibility of what is their policy e.g. reducing paper use, looking at applications through environmental eyes and supporting businesses which promote this.

In addition the terms of reference and the relationship of this group to the Council are being reviewed.

The group consists of passionate people for the environment most of whom are not parish councillors but report to the council on a regular basis and have a sum of money provided for the activities they perform and organize. This is an inclusive group to which anyone can join.

The following include the activities which have been carried out or planned;

Trees and Hedges

We continue to receive free trees from a local contact and they are given to locals as well as near by land owners . To date about 1500 trees this year have been distributed. Our desire is to contribute to a wider project Severnscape, set up by the three counties of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire Wildlife Trusts to establish a 60 mile corridor of enhanced tree cover creating a climate resilient landscape.

To this end we have identified land owners who would plant more trees and a grant application has been made through Severn Trent . One part of this would be a hedging at the Glebe in Hanley Castle in conjunction with the school.

Water Quality of Pool Brook

For some time there has been concern about the poor quality of the brook. Severn Trent and the Environment agency have been contacted but to little effect. David Johnson of The Rivers Trust has examined Environment Agency Test results for us and made some suggestions how we can take this further.

Toad Crossing on Gilberts End

Between the months of February to April a section of Gilberts End is crossed by 1000s of toads. We have registered the crossing with Frog Life, set up a team of 20 volunteers who turn out with buckets and high viz to protect and assist the toads have a safe crossing. Signs were bought but one expensive one was stolen. There is a Whatsapp group too!

Bats

Janet Lomas is holding a bat evening in June which will include a short talk and then a walk around the village to observe and listen using bat detectors .

Electric Bikes

We have had one bike for a couple of years which is mainly hired out in the summer months but it is bike most suitable for tall people and so we have purchased an additional one which is lighter and has no cross bar and it will be soon available for borrowing, on a "try before you buy" basis. We hope to have this come under the larger and well established scheme already running in Malvern.

Worcestershire on Demand Bus service

This scheme has a 2 year life and after a slow and quiet start it is becoming very successful and well used . It can be booked in advance on an app, or by phone, from inside a zone which includes our parish and take people to Malvern, Upton , Worcestershire Parkway etc

It does not run where there is an existing service ie not to Worcester.

Plastic Free Stall run by the WI at Café Market & refill washing up liquid

Seed discount through Suttons to encourage people to grow their own.

Other ideas for the future include harvesting cob trees in the Nuttery and running workshops on hurdle making etc with the cut wood.

A led discussion on ethical investments.

Providing customer friendly good information on Recycling of materials which particularly are not in our domestic scheme.

Cllr Sue Adeney

Hanley Community Orchard – Parish Council report 2023-24

In common with Clive's Fruit Farm and other apple growers, the Community Orchard had a bad harvest last year due to a sudden frost in April. As a result, the apples picked in the orchard in October produced only 192 bottles of juice, to which another 108 bottles came from apples donated by nearby orchards, making a total of 300.

Bottling costs at Clive's rose to almost £2 per bottle and we needed to buy a new batch of labels with updated information. So we had to put the price up to £3 per bottle. The juice sells steadily at Hanley Swan Village Stores and the monthly market.

At the beginning of this year, Howard Hutchings made nesting boxes for tawny owls, blue tits and bats. Janet Lomas picked out three trees in the orchard as suitable locations and in April David Tennant-Thomas installed them. In addition, a couple of bee keepers took over the hive area on the north side of the orchard and have set about installing two new hives.

In January Vera Mortimer, who donated the orchard to the community, died at the age of 92. A beautiful new bench commemorates her life and that of her late husband John, who planted the orchard more than 40 years ago to the benefit of us all. Made from green oak by a local carpenter, the bench was installed by Vera's neighbour Colin Rowley.

Malcolm Fare

Hanley Habitats – Update for AGM

We now have 8 trial sites, with additional verge areas roped off at the request of individual residents. Nigel Hawthornthwaite, Verge Warden, keeps an eye on all

the sites and ensures that they are roped off/signed. Most of these sites have been managed for wildflowers since 2020 and surveyed routinely to see what wildflowers are present.

Janet Lomas reviewed the trial sites again in 2023 and observed varied results. As each site has different ground conditions, this is to be expected, but more extreme weather conditions (i.e. periods of drought and prolonged wet) have adversely affected wildflower growth.

Janet has recommending doing the summer grass cut a month earlier, in late July/early August, and then applying yellow rattle seed in the autumn to reduce grass vigour. No one approach fits all, so we are trying to adapt what we do in different sites.

Chapman's Orchard

Hanley Habitats was approached by Chris Kent, resident, to assess a large open space at the end of the close with a view to introducing wildflowers. We visited the site and saw that the area had been seeded with grass and planted with 5 trees by the developers but was otherwise unplanted. Several of the trees had been damaged and one had died due to strimming damage. Aware that the site was being managed by a maintenance company, before committing HH resources to the project I looked up the original planning documents to check what should have been done and discovered that the agreed landscaping plan had not been followed at all. I queried the matter with MDHC, which has now issued an enforcement notice to the developers to implement the plan in full. Work started in late March and involved significant wildflower, hedge and tree planting.

Networking

Hanley Habitats has become an example for other parishes looking to start similar initiatives. I have met with residents from Cradley, Castlemorton and Welland, sharing our experience and knowledge as well as mowing guidelines and other documentation.

Going Forward

I think the Parish Council should be proud of its support for Hanley Habitats but it needs to decide how it would like to promote this scheme in the future, i.e. do we stick with what we have got or seek more/different sites, encourage greater take up by parishioners? All the indications are that our summers are only going to get hotter and our winters much wetter, posing significant challenges to people and wildlife. Wildflowers, areas of long grass, hedges and trees all help provide relief from heat and help soak up water, so my recommendation would be the latter.

Jane Jordan

Neighbourhood Plan – Report.

Our work is coming to a close. At the time of writing, we are poised to make a regulation 15 submission to MHDC concluding our part in the process.

This submission presents the final version of our modified plan along with a series of other supporting documents to an examiner. The externally appointed examiner will decide if the plan is acceptable in terms of the current planning policies and if the plan can be updated in accordance with the criteria set out for a material review or if changes are required that will trigger a referendum.

The process has been lengthy involving the consultation of almost 80 institutions most of which did not reply but where response have been received, they have been considered and the plan adjusted accordingly.

As a reminder we have made no changes to the policies or the site allocations within the plan, which we believe has served the community well over the years. Updates have been made for example the closure of the British Legion being an obvious example.

It was interesting to note that responses from parishioners during this review largely agreed with the residential survey which underpinned the original plan. Namely, that there remains a need for smaller homes to allow people with local connections to remain in the villages or for people already living in the villages wishing to downsize.

In terms of values of the parish and its distinctiveness, the need to keep a rural aspect to the parish was stressed as was the importance of the strong historical connections we are fortunate enough to enjoy.

If the plan is deemed to be acceptable (and this is by no means guaranteed) it will have weight in any planning application over the next five years surpassing that of the conditions set out under sustainable development. Once the SWDP is made we will need to consider if a further review is required.

The examination process will take six weeks – if a referendum is required by the examiner, then this could add another 12 weeks to the process

Finally, I must thank the members of the committee; Sue Roberts, Sue Adeney, Angela Hartland and Tim Feest all of whom have added enormous value at different stages of the process.

S.Gogerty 12/05/24

Parish Path Warden's Annual Report - 2023-24

The usual maintenance tasks were carried out throughout the year, these being checking and replacing waymark signs, clearing brambles and nettles from around signs, stiles, gates and footbridges and cutting back overhanging branches. During the Summer the paths requiring most attention are often the ones which run between hedges and fences as they do not get grazed. The usual programme of strimming was carried out on the heaviest vegetation growth

sections, these being the Riverside path, the Glebe, the path across the fields north of the Community Orchard, the path alongside the incinerator, part of the bridleway at Merebrook and part of Arles Wood, amounting to some 1900 metres in all. The work was funded by a grant from the County Council and carried out by Nick Harper in June. Sections not covered by the grant were cut with a grass hook, such as The Gorse, Castle Lodge, the Old Rectory, and part of Maisies Wood. Further work with the hook was necessary later on because of the heavy grass growth.

The County Council arranged for the removal of dead oak tree branches overhanging Park Lane which constituted a danger to walkers in high winds. The footbridge between Orchard House and Broadacres had lost several boards which had rotted through and in November a new bridge was installed by the County Council together with a pedestrian gate to replace a broken stile on the same path.

Autumn and Winter have been exceptionally wet leaving many paths having sections and gateways under water and the mud has made walking difficult. The path leading to the Community Orchard flooded several times, there being no available outfall. The other very muddy path is the south half of the Picken End path, 75 metres between a hedge and a fence, which is in need of surfacing with gravel to make it walkable throughout the year. Both paths are well used by villagers and visitors, and it is hoped that a plan can be made this Summer to improve things.

Thanks are due to Ben Cartwright for carrying out inspections and helping with maintenance tasks.

Peter Goodyear

PLAYING FIELDS REPORT

1. The field continues to be well used by the children after school and in the holidays; Hanley football team on Saturdays and children of village generally.
2. Following a ROSPA inspection the 'Toddler Swings' had to be taken down. Parents regularly ask what is happening so a decision is needed as soon as possible on whether they can be repaired or replaced.
3. New waste bins have been installed and this has significantly reduced the amount of litter particularly around the Youth Shelter.
4. A significant amount of work has been undertaken to improve the quality of the playing field as an assessment showed that virtually 90% of the area was covered in weeds. The improvement work has been funded mainly by the Parish Council but the Football Club contributed and also obtained 'Pitch Maintenance' sponsorship from three local companies, Black Swan Windows; TDH Roofing and Ross Tudge Landscaping and Fencing. Going forward with the formal agreement of the Parish Council the Football Club have applied to the Football Foundation

for a grant to further improve the Playing Field. If successful this will provide significant funding over a six-year period.

5. To help avoid potential conflicts of use, I continue to keep a diary of bookings for the field:

- Hanley Swan Cafe and Market (which is held each month) have used the side of the field (near the lane) for extra parking when needed and there have been no problems.
- Hanley Show August 2024
- New football season due to commence beginning September 2024.

Graham Holmes, Playing Field Warden

Financial Report 2023-2024

The Council started the year with £63,550 of funds. A Precept of £22,000 was applied for following an approved budget expenditure of £40,250.

£25,813 was received over the year with an expenditure of £36,457 meaning the Council ending the year with funds of £52,997.

Bank as at 31st March 2023

	Current Account	£11,973.80	
Less unrepresented cheques		£969.78	
Add late receipts		£450.00	
	Business 30 day	£52,096.79	£63,550.81

Plus	YTD Receipts 23/24	£25,812.73	
Less	YTD Payments 23/24	£36,457.01	£52,997.34

Bank as at 31st March 2024

	Current Account	£2,403.90	
Less unrepresented cheques/payments		£1,534.60	
Less unclear deposits		£2,072.00	
	Business 30 day	£50,056.04	£52,997.34

Rebecca Abunassar
Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer

31st March 2024

Main Expenditure:

Grass Cutting = £5704

Open Spaces = £4090 (including £1657 on bins)

VAS = £2700

PCC Grass Cutting Donation = £2400

Playing Field Maintenance = £2590

Lengthsman = £2044

Climate = £675

Pond = £1018

Projector = £599

Staff Cost = £6700

A List of all payments follows:

Date	Payee	Details	AMOUNT
APRIL	WCALC	Annual Subscription	£847.02
APRIL	Peter Sauntson	March's Lengthsman	£420.00
APRIL	New Farm Ground Maintenance	March Cuts	£335.54
APRIL	Hanley Swan Memorial Hall	Annual Hall Hire inc Toasty Tuesdays	£285.00
APRIL	Jane Jordan	Word Press Subscription - website	£13.20
APRIL	Paul D-Edwards	Screws	£24.47
APRIL	Nick Harper	Bin Bags	£16.45
APRIL	Sue Roberts	Coronation Mugs	£686.63
May	WDBF	Rent	£125.00
May	Rebecca Abunassar	Benches/ Nuyard	£486.82
May	Rebecca Abunassar	April Salary	£519.20
May	New Farm Ground Maintenance	April Cuts	£671.04
May	Oracle Environmental Experts	Water Monitoring	£300.00
May	ROSPA	Annual Risk Assessment	£150.00
May	Colin Smith	Fence repair	£40.00
June	New Farm Ground Maintenance	may cuts	£1,006.62
June	Rebecca Abunassar	May Salary	£519.20
June	Rebecca Abunassar	McAfee Annual Subscription	£109.99
June	Richard Billett	Playing Field Maintenance	£2,590.00
June	A Sparkes	Volunteer Refreshments	£10.13
June	Peter Jordan	Carbon Sensors	£25.40
july	Rebecca Abunassar	June Salary	£606.40
july	Nick Harper	PROW Strimming	£450.00

july	New Farm Ground Maintenance	June Cuts	£671.08
july	HMRC Q1 payment		£35.44
August	Rebecca Abunassar	July Salary	£606.40
August	WDBF GLEBE	Rent	£125.00
August	New Farm Ground Maintenance	July Cuts	£671.08
August	Peter Sauntson	July Lengthsman	£56.00
August	Zurich Insurance	Annual Premium	£499.92
August	Nick Harper	Blades	£24.95
August	P Davighi-Edwards	Sky Plastics	£84.80
August	P Davighi-Edwards	Metals 4U	£161.52
August	N A Taylor	Steel for Duck Houses	£140.00
August	Streetmaster	Phipps Bench	£738.00
August	Rebecca Abunassar	Projector - Argos check VAT	£599.99
August	Hanley Swan Flower Show	Prize money	£25.00
August	Zurich Insurance	Additional Premium	£57.76
August	rebecca abunassar	August Salary	£606.20
August	A J Gammond	Underground Pipe	£75.00
August	PKF	Annual Audit	£210.00
August	Nick Harper	Duck House Maintenance	£86.35
August	New Farm Ground Maintenance	August Cuts Inc Hanley Habitat	£959.08
August	P Davighi-Edwards	Sky Plastics - additional caps	£94.36
August	MHDC	Uncontested Election	£50.00
October	Rebecca Abunassar	September Salary	£606.20
October	New Farm Ground Maintenance	September Cuts	£671.08
October	NFU Mutual	Orchard Insurance	£226.68
October	PA Tennant Thomas	Food for Toastie Tuesdays	£84.93
October	Hanley Castle High School	Verti-draining	£375.00
November	HMRC	PAYE Q2	£67.93
November	Rebecca Abunassar	October Salary	£606.40
November	Hanley Castle High School	October Grounds Work	£375.00
November	New Farm Ground Maintenance	October Cuts	£671.08
November	Peter Sauntson	Lengthsman Training	£140.00
December	Streetmaster	Bench	£885.60
December	Glasdon	Bins	£1,656.57
December	Rebecca Abunassar	November Salary	£606.20
January	WCAL	Finance Training Course	£30.00
January	Rebecca Abunassar	December Salary	£606.40
January	Nick Harper	Bench Base Installation	£387.28
January	Nick Harper	Bin Bags	£25.99
February	Elan City	VAS	£2,700.00
February	Tim Feest	NHDP Printing	£424.80
February	Jane Lomas	Toad Signs	£135.84
February	PCC	Grass Cutting Donation	£2,400.00
February	Sue Roberts	Chairman's Allowance	£75.00
February	Steve Gogerty	NHDP Postage	£19.99
February	Suzanne Bennett	Toad Campaign Printing	£224.80
February	Peter Sauntson	January Lengthsman	£210.00
February	Rebecca Abunassar	January Salary	£606.40
March	Peter Sauntson	February Lengthsman	£490.00
March	Rebecca Abunassar	February Salary	£606.40
March	Rebecca Abunassar	March Salary	£606.40

March	Jane Jordan	WIX Website Invoices	£52.39
March	New Farm Ground	November 2023 Invoice	£335.54
March	HMRC	PAYE	£45.20
March	WDBF Glebe	Rent	£125.00
March	Malcolm Waggett	Playing Field Fence Repair	£155.00
March	Peter Sauntson	March Lengthsman	£728.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE Ex VAT			£34,779.14