

Bleasby Green Spaces/ Grasshoppers 2025 report

The Bleasby Grasshoppers volunteer group, which started in 2021 continues to grow and we are now an established group of more than 30 local volunteers. The group emerged from the first Bleasby Green Spaces Management plan which was put together to better understand and capture existing knowledge of the various practices/tasks associated with managing the greenspaces owned by the parish. The plan was approved by Bleasby Parish Council in July 2022 and has been made accessible to the public on the Bleasby Community website; the intention being to provide the PC and the community with a sustainable plan to manage these greenspaces, not only in their present form, but to enhance and develop them for a sustainable future. Hopefully it will serve as a rolling public-terms-of-reference and apart from providing parish residents with visibility, it will also stimulate feedback and contribution to help evolve and improve the Plan to meet future needs.

Complete management of the green spaces within the Parish was always deemed to be far beyond the scope of the volunteering group and as such BPC also employs 2 contactors, Ulyetts and Green Oak Gardening Services, to carry out the routine and labour-intensive tasks such as grass cutting and hedge management. This has allowed the Grasshopper volunteers to focus on specific conservation and restorative projects that enhance our green spaces in ways that improve flora and fauna as well as making them more enjoyable for community use.

The Grasshopper volunteering group continue to meet on the third Saturday of every month at 9am with ad hoc sessions added when needed – these have proved invaluable throughout the last couple of years and also suit a lot of Grasshoppers who can't make the weekend sessions.

We held a nature event in May last year that focused on local bee species and wildlife ponds. It was well attended with ~70 people joining throughout the afternoon and besides making solitary bee hotels to take home and learning how beekeepers look after their honeybees, the young attendees enjoyed trying to identify the pond critters in the samples of water taken from one of the lakes at JP; it was reassuring to see a large and diverse number of aquatic invertebrates present, indicative of a healthy ecosystem. We also held a Christmas wreath making session for Grasshopper families at St Marys in December.

We're hoping to run another nature event later this summer that will focus on building bat boxes and learning about the invertebrates inhabiting the meadow at JP. The great thing about these events has been the level of engagement from young families in the local community and knowing that our neighbours are making and taking home suitable wildlife habitat such as bird boxes, solitary bee hotels and bug hotels to put up in their gardens which is further increasing the availability of suitable habitats within our community.

Some of the tasks undertaken last year by the grasshoppers include:

1. **Continued management of the meadow habitats owned by the Parish Council;** we're already starting to see an increase in the diversity of plants within both the main meadow at JP and the small coronation meadow in the corner of GF.
2. **Coppicing of hazel trees in Centenary Wood at Jubilee Ponds** in line with the original plan that was set out for Centenary Woods. Coppicing is a pruning method where a tree is cut to ground level, resulting in regeneration of new stems from the base. It's recommended that hazel be coppiced on an 8yr cycle to improve the health of the individual shrubs and the neighbouring woodland area by allowing in more light and preventing 'overcrowding'. The different avenues of hazel will be cut on rotation in the next few years.
3. **Continued maintenance and upkeep of the Den Building Area at Jubilee Ponds.** This area was established by Bleasby Grasshoppers in 2021 and continues to be a favourite spot for local children to come and play. Maintaining the area for safety and continuing to build up the dead-hedge boundaries are ongoing tasks. Branches resulting from coppicing of the hazel were relocated to the den area and used as material for dead hedge boundary and den making.
4. **Ongoing maintenance of Orchards** - since planting the new fruit trees last year at Jubilee Ponds, we now have two orchards in Bleasby for residents to enjoy, the original being on Glebe Field. Both require ongoing maintenance of the surrounding grass area and ensuring that the trees are kept in good condition.

5. Various tasks including painting benches and fencing in Glebe field.

This year, we have also helped with some maintenance of the Churchyard at St Marys and we will be holding a session at Bleasby School to help with maintenance of the nature area. The great thing about these projects is that we are helping to enhance and connect local green spaces whilst engaging with the broader local community.

Longer term Projects

- A couple of other big projects that should be mentioned are the **Bleasby Swifts Project** that Mike Fryer has spearheaded in the village and is being done in conjunction with other villages around Southwell. Last year 24 swift boxes were fitted around the Parish and this year we have been granted permission to install one in the tower of St Marys. We're just waiting for the swifts to arrive back in the village now but there were a large number of swift sightings last year so we know they are here and will return. This is a long term mission as it can take up to 5yrs for a pair to set up home but the more nesting sites there are, the more likely the swifts will return and start to expand – if you would like to add a box to your house further info can be found on the Community website.
- We have been in discussion with the Parish Council to undertake a major project to **refurbish the existing reed bed at Jubilee Ponds** before it dries up completely and an important habitat is lost. This is a significant project and one which we are in consultation with Notts Wildlife Trust and other local nature conservancy groups. It presents a wonderful opportunity for community engagement, over a long period of time, with the outcome of creating a valuable, enhanced wildlife area at Jubilee Ponds which can be utilised by the local community. The addition of a wildlife pond, bird viewing points, improved pathways, to name but a few, would all be attractive to our parishioners.
 - This project has been put on hold due to ownership of the fishing/sporting rights to the ponds changing hands recently. The documents detailing both the conveyance of land to the BPC and the fishing rights are somewhat vague and contradictory – the main issue being that much of the finer detail and nuances have been omitted from both. This ambiguity has precluded us from raising the external funding which we know is available for a project such as this and we're pleased to hear that the BPC is working with the new owner of the fishing rights to come to a formal agreement.
- A couple of other projects emerging on the back of Grasshoppers include some wildlife survey activity – e.g. Joe Edinborough has been surveying bats in the village and we also hope to carry out some other wildlife surveys this year. There is another project starting to coalesce around the idea of creating and maintaining wildlife corridors which will tie in with the NCC Nature Recovery Strategy.

If you are interested in helping out, meeting new friends and old, having some fun and getting some exercise, please get in touch to find out more.

None of this would happen without the time and commitment of the Grasshopper volunteers and, as the representative of grasshoppers standing here today, I'd like to say thank you to all of my fellow grasshoppers!

Additional info:

Scheduled Grasshopper working parties: 3rd Sat of each month - 9am - 11pm. All welcome.

Contact details:

Community website: Bleasby Grasshoppers - Bleasby Community Website - Bleasby Parish Council, Bleasby, Nottingham or contact Jo Dunseath or Mike Fryer on bleasbygrasshoppers@outlook.com

Bleasby Swift Boxes

If you are interested in providing a site next year, please get in touch with Mike Fryer on bleasbygrasshoppers@outlook.com. General information can be found on the swift conservation website www.swift-conservation.org.

Community Website page: [Bleasby Grasshoppers - Bleasby Community Website - Bleasby Parish Council, Bleasby, Nottingham](#)