



## Chair's annual report 2019

It is very satisfying to be able to report that this year has been all about increasing biodiversity on the CREOS site. Within the space of one year the new management plan has been prepared, presented and also largely implemented!

Throughout a summer of surveying insects, birds, spiders, flora and trees many interesting discoveries were made. Then, as many of you will recall, the plan itself was presented to us by Matthew Frith and Mike Waller of the London Wildlife Trust at a meeting here in November. The plan gave us an easy-to-use guide on what to do and we have made an energetic start.

The main focus has been the creation of a hazel coppice in the area next to the allotments access road. This was not an easy task as this area was once a tennis court and pickaxes were needed to cut through tarmac and hard-core to create holes large enough to plant the hazel whips.

To allow more light into the area, a large poplar and an ash tree next to the sports field fence had to be felled, but the logs have now been used to make a rather attractive edging to the path. The hazels are already doing well and will be coppiced on a rotating basis when they are sufficiently grown.

A smaller hazel coppice area has been created at the side of the meadow where the Japanese Knotweed has been largely eradicated. This has been fenced off not only to stop the new planting being trampled but also to deter people from walking in the area, which could lead to any remaining Japanese Knotweed being spread to other areas. A small stand of JK has in fact arisen near the North London path and this is to be treated soon.

Hedgerows are excellent for wildlife and the one planted last year near our main entrance is developing nicely. We have also planted wildlife hedging plants around part of the Hanley carpark, consisting of goat willow, hawthorn, hazel and dogwood.

Also near the Hanley car park there has been some planting of Alder Buckthorn trees to attract brimstone butterflies.

Another important task completed this winter has been improvement of the area around the ancient boundary oaks which line the path from North London Cricket Club towards the hazel coppice. We were assisted in this with advice from Jonathan Meares, an expert on oak trees from the City of London Corporation's tree services team, who normally tend to the trees of Hampstead Heath and Highgate Wood. Jonathan advised that the large oak

situated at the junction of the NLCC path and the path into the meadow was becoming stressed by too much footfall. To remedy this, we erected a protective dead-hedge around the tree and re-routed the paths.

Our veteran oaks also benefitted from the extremely generous donation of a whole day's work: five men with chainsaws from the Hampstead Heath team came to cut back holly, ivy and a few saplings around the oaks, to allow in more light and air.

The other major project this spring has been the creation of a wildflower meadow at the back of the school sports field occupying approximately 200 square metres. This was a major task, involving removal of the turf and digging over the clay soil. Sand was then mixed in before the seeds were sown. It is thanks to grants from the Tesco Bags of Help scheme and the generosity of our local ward councillors that this has been made possible. We are now eagerly waiting to see some signs of growth. Meanwhile we have arranged for a more relaxed mowing at the back and edges of the field, a regime that has already yielded more buttercups and daisies

In addition to this, we have tried another method of encouraging wildflowers by planting flower plugs in the existing CREOS meadow. Three or four plugs of 18 different varieties have been planted and all are doing well so far. The hope is that the increase in wild flowers on the CREOS site will encourage different species, especially bees and butterflies.

Regular maintenance tasks have been necessary this year as always. In March a tree fell blocking the boundary oak walk. While we waited in vain for the council to come and remove it, Good Gym members built us a good old-fashioned stile which caused a lot of fun.

Three gardens backing onto the CREOS site have had new fences installed in recent months, which has inevitably caused a certain amount of disturbance. On the whole, the new fences look attractive and sturdy, but at the start of the Woodland Walk the work exposed some lethal-looking spiked railings. Fortunately we have had excellent support this year from John Flaherty who found a way of taking the spikes off the railings so that dogs and adventurous humans will not get impaled.

One problem we have not yet been able to solve is the rough sleeper who has been living in the CREOS bushes for two years now. His tents, bikes and rubbish proliferate, while he has refused all help from Haringey's social services. He has been taken to court and evicted but in practice he is still there, apparently awaiting bailiffs.

To end on a positive note we had a most enjoyable picnic on the meadow last summer. This year we hope it will be even bigger and better, as part of a nationwide event, the Great Get Together in memory of Jo Cox, which will take place on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

Glenys Law

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