

The Wiltshire Council Community Environmental Toolkit

The Wiltshire Community Environmental Toolkit has been developed in partnership with [Natural England](#) to allow communities to take the lead in defining and restoring biodiversity in their community.

Designed for use by community groups, local landowners, Parish and Town Councils, schools and youth groups it provides a structure for how local communities can better understand what they already have in terms of biodiverse habitats as well as how to plan for developing greater biodiversity and nature-based carbon sequestration in the future.

The Toolkit also signposts to many other organisations which can assist communities in delivering their aims and objectives. The Toolkit forms part of a suite of documents that Wiltshire Council has produced as part of the [Green Blue Infrastructure Strategy](#).

You may not realise that several ‘environmental’ projects that have already taken place in Ansty over recent years fall into the remit of this excellent toolkit document, although we perhaps don’t yet see it as our own community driven initiatives because so few of us actively become involved!

The recent restoration of the ancient Frogpond in Ansty Coombe as part of a wider drainage scheme; the restoring of wildflower meadows in Ansty Coombe and the changing of farming practices; two woodland surveys over a decade or more which have highlighted the sorry state of many of our parish copses and woodland areas; the erection of a wild beehive near Ansty Coombe and the maintenance of the medieval Ansty Pond.

For several years small but enthusiastic working parties have been active in maintaining and improving the 6 miles of the parish’s ancient public footpaths so that people can easily access them to walk and enabling them to really appreciate our magnificent countryside. Ten years ago, our footpaths were often very difficult to access and more than a third were virtually impassable. Most of our public footpaths which once linked a medieval open-field system with roots as far back as Saxon times, are in effect, today’s mini ‘green’ corridors. Some of us have been trying to encourage folk not to stray from the

footpaths and keep dogs on short leads to protect sensitive habitats and wildlife species in fields and elsewhere.

Only a few people can pursue a self-sustaining (and therefore ecologically sound) smallholding or allotment enterprise before retirement as mainstream occupations are usually required to support a growing family. Nevertheless, our local Ansty farmers, fruit growers (Ansty PYO) and smallholders do encompass several schemes to do with the ecological benefits of managing their land with habitats and wildlife in mind. One or two local individuals have adopted a much greener and bluer approach to their entire lifestyle – and one of the best known are Robert and Jaci Baker at North Cottage: they make the most of their wet woodland site.

Our village website also highlights the understanding of our local landscape and the environment, with its rich history and geography; it reflects on the fantastic variety of habitat types within our parish - ranging from grasslands governed by the base rock type (chalk, greensand, or clay) and the land management/utilisation of the same.

Click to view: [Ansty in Maps, Diagrams and Pictures](#)

Just leaving it all to ‘rewild’ is not really the answer! The same applies to our woodlands, scrub habitats; wet zones, including streams and ditches; our gardens, even roadside verges – all need managing appropriately to provide the much-needed support to the environment, maintaining the diversity of species whilst reducing our own carbon footprint.

Our [Ansty flood zone 3 plan](#) (which we had to develop back in 2017) recognises that climate change is likely to bring flooding issues to parts of Ansty over the next few decades if we don’t manage wet landscape properly – the responsibility falls on all watercourse owners and not just Wiltshire Council.

Just leaving it all to ‘nature’ is not the answer, nor is carrying on doing all the things we like doing (travelling; holidays abroad etc). Neither can we all change overnight because practically all our environment (including the ‘green and

blue' countryside), our oceans and even our atmosphere has been built on or shaped by mankind over thousands of years. We therefore must find the delicate balance of managing the way forward to support the way we want live today whilst maintaining and restoring our precious environments together and by taking steps to reducing our individual and collective carbon footprint. It isn't going to be easy, but we have little choice but to just do it!

We may be a small village but surely as a whole community we could come up with a long-lasting plan to improve, conserve and enhance our parish environments in terms of planning developments, climate change, landscapes,

habitats, and diversity? Or do we leave it 'somebody else? Plenty of time and effort can be found when people want to 'improve and expand their own home environment' but when it comes to a whole community effort to really look out for our own community environment we seem to be less than forthcoming!

The [Wiltshire Community Environmental Toolkit](#) clearly shows a way forward. It would be a shame for us not to take up the opportunity. The next generation of villagers will be thankful for it.



Aileen's Bridge (2018/2019)

Aileen's Bridge A very good turnout of Ansty villagers and friends of Ansty gathered together on a Sunday afternoon (January 13th 2019) to witness the official opening of a new footbridge in the parish and its dedication to the memory of much loved parishioner Aileen Fisher-Rowe who died exactly a year ago to the day aged 95. Tap the footbridge picture for the full report. You might like to read the story behind the footbridge and its construction.



A survey of our trees in Ansty Parish (2007 and 2019)

The relentless wet and sometimes windy weather over the last 4 months has brought more than a few problems to various locations in the parish. The upper Coombe area has endured several incidents of flash flooding – although there was no damage to private property – and some of these issues are now being sorted out by Wiltshire Council. Elsewhere we have had several trees or large branches falling along the south of the High Street as well as other local lanes. All local landowners are politely requested to check the condition of their trees and hedgerows and assess their safety, particularly if they border a road or are located near a building and take the necessary remedial action if they are not. Click image to read in depth more about our trees and woodland in Ansty.



The Restoration of Frogpond (September 2020)

For many years the Frogpond lane area of Ansty Coombe suffered from the effects of flash flooding between the junction of Kings Lane and the low sharp bend on Ansty Coombe Lane. This was partly due to the natural terrain; partly to do with climate change with more extreme rainfall events and wetter winters but mainly due to a built drainage system that was not able to cope with excess water after heavy rain.



A Plan for Ansty Coombe Meadows! (10-03-2021)

There is a plan afoot to restore pasture meadows above Ansty Coombe back to their former glory restoring and conserving the historical character of these ancient hay and wildflower meadows. This will be achieved by employing very old, tried, and tested livestock grazing patterns with careful pasture bracken and scrub at bay. Click on the image to learn more.

Local installation arouses much curiosity! (07-04-2021)

A new installation that has recently appeared on what we all know as 'Aileen's paddock' has certainly aroused some local curiosity. Some thought it was a kind of bird box, perhaps to attract owls. Others thought it might be a squirrels' hideout. A few suggested even more fanciful ideas: it was a piece of modern 'sculpture' or even something to ward off aliens from outer space. Most agreed that whatever it was it was extremely well made from natural materials. But what exactly is it? Click on the image to find out more!



These pages posted October 24th 2021