

To Andrew Hartley Chairman Kingskerswell Parish Council

Report on Conservation Work Kerswell Downs Winter 2018

The programme of conservation work days continued each month through to April. Volunteer numbers vary with each work day, extreme weather has sometimes affected the turnout . We welcome more volunteers

The thickets in Browns Meadow have been reduced to limit the shade to ground flora, while maintaining a variety of height and habitat for wildlife. This will extend the reach of winter mowing. On the woodland edge, dense Blackthorn has been cut back to allow fresh re growth, leaving some of the mature shrubs for bird nest sites, such as Bullfinch and Blackcap.

Large quantity of Ash and Sycamore seedlings have been lifted with roots from the meadow, this will lessen the need for repeat cutting. Some fallen tree debris brought down by gales was cleared from paths leading off the meadow. More Ivy has been stripped from trees, which if top heavy are vulnerable to strong winds.

More Hazel and Spindle was coppiced, which will soon regrow and increase the variety of tree height, while leaving a more open canopy. The paths have been very slippery in an extremely wet winter, aggravated by the regular footfall on well used routes.

Brash from the work days has been used to reinforce and extend the dead hedges along the boundary and the woodland edge .

The winter mowing could be brought forward, that is not later than February to avoid chopping early flowering plants which are important for nectaring insects such as Bumble Bees.

Proposed work during the growing season: knocking back bracken where necessary to prevent shading of flora. Trimming back bramble and overhangs affecting paths in the meadow.

Selective regular clearing of bramble from the middle area in Strawberry Fields glade to encourage the short turf and flora.

Litter is collected where possible on work days and occasionally from the car park.

The Mowing of a limited area of grass, again in late June or July would be beneficial for the flora in maintaining a range of sward height and this has been well received by the public .

Continuing from last year, guided walks will be arranged in May, June and July , to explain and point out the seasonal wildlife on Kerswell Downs.

A return visit by Butterfly Conservation, Devon Branch has been arranged for 22<sup>nd</sup> July. The last event was very well attended and has raised awareness of the wildlife value of Kerswell Downs.

Wildlife information will displayed on the car park notice board for the interest of visitors.

The proposed work days on the second Saturday of each month are: 12<sup>th</sup> May, 9<sup>th</sup> June, 14<sup>th</sup> July, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 8<sup>th</sup> September, 13<sup>th</sup> October.

Good comments continue to come from the public.

David Poole on behalf of KNHS

9<sup>th</sup> April 2018

