Willingham Action Group

WAG Annual report to WPC – May 2020

This has been a quieter year for WAG with no new projects but just maintaining existing commitments.

We continued supporting or working with other groups in our community so in summer 2019 some of our volunteers helped with the Fen Gallop as well as helping in the QEII café at the youth centre and assisting the Gardening Club with the Horticultural Show.

We continued our role as organisers of the village Feast in October 2019 so we contacted many other groups in the village to see how they might want to be involved and then drew up a programme. In 2018 we had reverted to delivering the programme to every home in the village but this is labour intensive so in 2019 we asked permission to use the front cover of the Willingham News as the programme and this was granted and successful. Our thanks go to the WN organisers. The main event continues to be the Beer Festival held at Willingham Social Club. WAG usually has the task of advertising the festival and running the door, selling tokens and selling glasses so as to raise funds for WAG but in 2019 we passed these tasks on to the Willingham Bee Group as they were in need of finance for storage for all their equipment. Other events were the Jam Night, Photography and Art exhibitions, the Wine Quiz, Comedy and Music nights run by Willingham Social Club and a Family Disco run by Willingham Youth Trust, with the help of WAG volunteers.

During the year the ‘dog-walking’ field near the recreation ground was closed to dog walkers and this caused much consternation in the village. The dog walkers and WPC did their best to find a suitable alternative for both parties but none could be found. The orchard was suggested as a temporary solution and this was agreed. Several bins have been placed there in the hope of preventing fouling as it remains a place for all residents to use. WAG continues to liaise with the dog-walkers as to any requests they may have.

There is a small group of volunteers who help maintain the orchard but more help is always welcome. Mostly this involves checking the support posts and ties on trees and some pruning to keep a good shape. Ray Manning has kindly assisted this process by giving expert tuition on pruning to our volunteers and Ed Gilbert cuts the grass for us and assists with any tasks requiring tractor power.

The Community Orchard is definitely ‘on the village map’ as more dog walkers are walking there, and using the bridleway, and it has become a popular place to have a wander during the current restrictions on movement. Families are also increasingly appreciating the natural space the orchard provides. We continue to see strong growth of the trees in woodland area of the orchard enhancing the autumn display of colour. Also, the trees on the bridleway are making progress despite their windswept position and attention from deer. A network of meandering pathways has been established which has improved access and created the illusion of space in the woodland area. As the trees develop laterally it will be important to maintain access otherwise the area will become impenetrable. Fruit production was variable last year due to spring frosts and the natural fruiting cycles but yields are increasing. There was evidence of people picking fruit, which is what it is there for. The only replacements required were a crab apple which died inexplicably and a pear with a graft failure. Two barn owl nesting boxes plus one for a red kite were set up last year with small bird nesting boxes placed on the trees along the southern boundary with Bumpy Drove. We await developments. WPC funded an improved dog proof fence down the west side bordering Earith Road to stop dogs getting onto the road and hopefully funds are also in the pipeline to extend the footpath as far as the orchard, which will improve safety for all. WPC continue to maintain the boundary hedge.

The Bee Group continue to look after their hives and sell honey in the village. The orchard continues to flourish and will be an excellent place to have a picnic later in the year and subsequent years once the restrictions due to Covid-19 have passed.

The trees will grow well and bear much fruit after the Wassail held on 12 January! The traditional activities were observed – the crowning of the Wassail King and Queen, the waking of the trees to the clang of pots and pans, the druidical incantation and the downing of quite a lot of warming cider.

And finally, we welcomed a new member to WAG at the beginning of 2020 who works for the Environment Agency and so we have a formed a new WAG subgroup – Environment Sustainability – WAGES. Our progress was halted somewhat due to the pandemic but when it becomes possible we hope to work with WPC promoting issues such as recycling and energy saving throughout the village.

Mike Tidball

Secretary – Willingham Action Group

**WAG Accounts to WPC (2019-2020)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Income |  | Expenditure |
| **Balance April 1 2019** | **3649.53** |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **General Account** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  | FECA Membership cost | 15.00 |
|  |  | PLI | 227.57 |
|  |  | AGM costs (Octagon) | 31.49 |
|  |  | Expenses – printing, etc. | 28.42 |
|  |  | Website Hosting | 15.00 |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Enviro Account** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Orchard maintenance | 197.68 |
|  |  | Orchard grass cutting | 48.23 |
|  |  | EEAOP membership | 15.00 |
|  |  | Bench installation on QEII | 62.80 |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Feast** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Donation from Beerfest | 180.00 | Feast/Beerfest Advertising | 256.76 |
| Donation from Wine Quiz | 80.00 | Bar staff cost Wine Quiz | 35.00 |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Total with income | **3941.29** | Expenditure | **932.95** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Balance April 1 2020** | **2976.58** |  |  |