

Lover Green Wildlife Pond Restoration Project Update January 2016

Lover Green was formerly the playing-fields of Lover & Redlynch Primary School which closed in 2006. The Lover Green Association (LGA) was formed in 2012 when the Parish Council handed over responsibility for running and maintaining the Green to a committee made up of volunteers from the community.

The LGA, with help from the local community, set about transforming the Green into what has now become a much loved and thriving centre of the village.

Tucked away, in the corner of the Green, behind a locked fence was a very sad looking 'former pond'. Having been originally installed by the Primary School in 1994, it had fallen into total disrepair since the closure of the school. The area was completely overgrown and the liner had perished meaning there was rarely any water in it.

Fortunately, LGA were awarded a grant from the Sustainable Communities Development Fund to finance the restoration of the 10x6 metre wildlife pond.

Expert advice regarding design was sought from Dr Naomi Ewald of the Freshwater Habitats Trust and Craig Daters, New Forest Ranger, was on hand with practical advice regarding the processes involved (which was far more complicated than we had first imagined!)

The Project, much of which was carried out during 2015, really brought the community together. The bulk of the work was completed during two 'Working Parties' both held on a Saturday in May. We were thrilled to have in excess of 30 men, women and children turn up to help profile the pond, spread the 4 tonnes of sand, lay the underlay and then the deceptively heavy butyl liner. There was a real sense of community spirit and one lady, who was unable to help physically, provided much appreciated refreshments!

The Project also provided work for two local businesses who carried out the tree surgeon work and excavation of the pond.

The restoration of the pond has hugely increased the biodiversity of the Green. Only 24 hours after partially filling the pond with water, newts were discovered already in residence! Whilst 'backfilling' the trenches around the pond both a frog and toad were spotted. Eight months on there are countless aquatic insects like water beetles and water boatmen darting around on the surface. A dragonfly nymph, the size of a thumbnail was spotted and we have added native pond plants to further enhance and support the biodiversity.

We have purposely left much of the area surrounding the pond wild with log piles and areas of brambles to encourage small mammals and invertebrates. Wild flowers have seeded amongst the grass making it perfect for bees and insects.

As well as enhancing the biodiversity and natural beauty of the Green, the pond is also providing enjoyment and education for the community. The Green is used by children of all ages for sport and recreation and they never fail to go and 'check on the pond' to see what is developing – there is a real sense of ownership as many of the local children helped to create it. Lover & Redlynch Pre-school occupies an enviable position on Lover Green and are looking forward to the onset of Spring and arrival of frog spawn which will be fantastic for them to be able to monitor first-hand (supervised of course!). As the pond develops we anticipate that local schools will use it for teaching purposes.

The highlight of the Project had to be the 'Grand Opening' of the pond at Lover Fayre in July 2015. One of the children had rescued a frog who had taken up residence in the ninth hole of the crazy golf.. He was named 'Jeff' and released into the pond. A perfect and very fitting end to a very worthwhile Project.

Thank you to the Sustainable Communities Fund for making it possible and to the NF NPA for all their help, advice and support.

Mar Copp
Project Leader &
Secretary to LGA