

Climate and Ecological Emergency Report, March 2022.

1. Hatt Roundabout.

For the past 3 years the Parish Council has been managing Hatt roundabout in such a way as to encourage the growth of native wildflowers. There have been some promising results, with several new species being noted. This is not simply for the visual spectacle, but also to provide a source of food, shelter and breeding opportunities for wild pollinators that have suffered a near catastrophic decline in the past decades. Without these invertebrates the security of our food supply would be in jeopardy.

The usually recommended mowing regime to achieve wildflower growth is for one cut in March and another in September. The cuttings should then be removed to prevent enrichment of the soil, which would favour the growth of grass rather than wildflowers. However, this has proved very difficult to do. After 6 months of growth the amount of cut grass to be removed in September is taxing, especially when this requires crossing and recrossing to the roundabout many times via a major road.

The Parish Council has therefore decided to modify the management of the roundabout in the following way in order to lessen the workload:

- There will be one cut of the whole roundabout at the end of May, and another one at the end of September. Although total amount of clippings will probably be very similar, each cut should be more manageable.
- There will still be a 2-monthly 2-metre safety cut around the perimeter and across the north-south diagonal to ensure good visibility for pedestrians crossing the A388.

We will evaluate this regime at the end of the year.

2. Clearance of Debris from Old Botus Lane.

The old lane that used to join Botus to the A388 is now a footpath for residents to use as a short cut if they wish. For many years the leaf debris had collected there uncleared and made the walk something of a quagmire. Many thanks to Brian Worth who gave of his time to use his tractor and bucket to scrape it all up into a corner, leaving an unobstructed way for residents to walk. Please take the opportunity over the next few weeks to use it and admire the succession of wild flowers on the banks. The snowdrops have finished, but we now have primroses, soon to be followed by bluebells, campions, stitchwort and early purple orchids. Please resist the temptation to pick the orchids as they need to set seed to reproduce and spread.

3. A388 Tree Plantation.

As the buds on young trees now start to open, we'd like to keep on top of the brambles this year. Not because we're anti-bramble (just think of blackberry and apple crumble!), but because we have no shortage of brambles, and if left unchecked they will smother the young trees. Therefore, we've asked for volunteers to help with a quick strim once per month before the brambles take over. Three volunteers so far. Still hoping for more!

Cllr Malcolm Fletcher.