

## **BFPC Biodiversity Report April 2020.**

This is the second Biodiversity Report submitted since the lockdown for the Covid 19 pandemic was begun. Understandable, there has not been much activity within the parish in this area of responsibility. However, because of the prolonged dry spell since the tree whips were planted, it was decided to do some targeted watering. This was undertaken on two occasions by volunteers observing social distancing guidelines as part of their allowed daily exercise. The watering was made a lot easier by two nearby residents allowing us to use their domestic water supply via what seemed like miles of hosepipe, buckets and watering cans. Debris from strimming the brambles prior to planting was also used as makeshift mulch to conserve as much moisture as possible. On a positive note, all the whips are now in leaf, so we can only hope for a few good downpours soon to help them on their way!

Still on the tree theme, anyone familiar with St Mary's church in Botus can't fail to have noticed the very large and very old yew tree on the right hand side of the war memorial entrance to the churchyard. This would probably be classed as a veteran tree given its size and age. Its girth is 3.57 metres, and shows evidence of some bark splitting. This is not necessarily a sign of disease, but a natural feature of very old trees. They can live for many hundreds of years in this condition, and continue to be a valuable resource for many species of wildlife. There seems to be a centuries-old association between religious beliefs and sites and yew trees. For the Celts the yew symbolised the connection between death and resurrection. Shakespeare knew of the toxicity of yew berries and leaves, and had Macbeth concoct a poison using: "slips of yew, silvered in the moon's eclipse." In the early Christian era, yew shoots were often buried with the deceased. The UK's oldest yews are to be found in churchyards.

Cornwall Council is conducting a consultation on Biodiversity net gain for the Chief Planning Officer. This document will set out Cornwall Council's approach to how the planning system can ensure that the development process achieves minimum 10% net gains in biodiversity and leave nature in a better state than beforehand. The consultation will be carried out between 9<sup>th</sup> April and 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020. It is likely that the consultation will be conducted entirely on line, given the Covid 19 restrictions on public meetings. The web link for anyone wishing to view the document and comment is:

[www.cornwall.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/biodiversity)

Cllr Malcolm Fletcher, April 2020