

## **Faversham and how we are becoming a wilder town.**

In June 2019 Faversham Town Council declared an Environmental, Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency. This declaration reflected the need to bring biodiversity into the same urgency to the climate emergency, giving strong and bold targets and actions to work towards.

### **2. The Town Council's first ever Climate and Biodiversity committee was set up**

Having a dedicated committee to focus on tackling the climate and biodiversity emergency was important to firstly give it a high importance within policy making, but also to allow community involvement in the conversation and in decision making.

### **3. A bold target of becoming a carbon neutral town by 2030 was agreed.**

This target is to encompass many factors including creating more protection for wildlife, but also to change the way we manage our spaces so that the activities carried out by people don't adversely affect the biodiversity and contribute to increasing levels of carbon emissions. This of course is working with the community, businesses, organisations and various levels of government. We are on track to reach this target, in fact should reach it earlier than predicted.

### **4. An Annual action plan was implemented to work towards achieving the steps highlighted in the Climate Declaration.**

This action plans allows us to track progress, change and add important issues, particularly if it is raised by local people, so that we can reach the overall goal set out in our climate emergency.

### **5. A 3-year Pesticide Free Towns action plan was adopted, to aim for the town to become Pesticide free by 2023.**

It is recognized within the council and the community groups in Faversham, that to develop a better net gain in Biodiversity and protect and enhance the projects we are creating, that a bold action needs to be taking against pesticide use. Working with Pesticide Action Network (PAN), we developed a 3-year plan to eradicate pesticides in Faversham. This works on seeing a phasing out of the use of pesticides within local authority contracts, to a point of eradication altogether. This also focuses on working with businesses, schools, housing associations and residents to educate, encourage and create maintenance plans that avoid the use of damaging pesticides.

**6. A tree giveaway was organised in winter 2020/2021 of 1000 trees to residents of Faversham to plant in their gardens.**

Encouraging residents to plant trees has a whole host of benefits. There are certain areas of the town that are devoid of tree canopy, and we felt an effective project was to fund trees for residents to plant in their gardens or community spaces, to add tree cover to the urban areas of Faversham and help with the creation of more habitat for wildlife. We created a booking system for residents to claim their free tree and then asked them to photograph or film their planting. We then mapped where all the trees have gone, which can help see areas where there has been less take up.

**7. Faversham was awarded 'Neighbourhood with the Best Buzz' in 2020 by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Kent Wildlife Trust.**

This award was given to the town, recognizing the importance of habitat and pollinating opportunities for Bumblebees. Many community projects throughout the town, businesses and councils contributed to an overall award which created a boost to the grassroot organisations and projects of which there are many, including inspiring a change in demonstrating what can be achieved locally, but also opens up opportunities to new projects to increase the potential for biodiversity gain. This really helped in the public perception of how our amenity areas should be maintained and what individuals can do in their gardens.

**8. A community garden initiative was created called 'Keep Faversham Buzzing' to create net gain in Biodiversity in public spaces and private gardens.**

To continue from the success of Neighbourhood with the Best Buzz, we decided to launch into a community gardening initiative called, 'Keep Faversham Buzzing'. This provides an overarching framework for carrying out projects purposely to help preserve and create space for biodiversity whilst linking in with existing projects and the wider environment. These projects will range from additional planters, tree planting, new planting schemes and changes to verges and greenspace. At the heart of this is working with community and young people, giving the opportunity to learn and educate.

**9. April 2021, a seed giveaway has been organised to coincide with Earth Day, giving away 300 packs of wildlife seed balls for people to grow at home.**

As part of the 'Keep Faversham Buzzing' project, Faversham Town Council organized a seed giveaway to encourage people to grow pollinating friendly plants in their gardens. We purchased 500 'Seedballs' and then distributed them on Earth Day with information about how to plant and advice on other ways to increase biodiversity in their gardens.

## **10. A Youth Climate Panel has been set up to engage and work with young people in the town, help to shape the council's decisions and involve young people in volunteering roles.**

Working with young people is important in all aspects of tackling the climate emergency. We have seen large turnouts for the climate strikes and several actions being taken in the town's schools. A Youth Climate Panel is to give power to young people to challenge, discuss and influence decisions made by the local authorities. This will also offer opportunities for projects being created and volunteer roles within existing groups around the town. This will especially be good for community gardening. One initial idea is to create Seed Libraries around the town, to encourage people to grow plants from seed and donate unwanted seed for others to use.

## **11. Community projects and Faversham in Bloom**

As part of Swale in Bloom, Faversham has a 'in bloom' group which acts as a place for lots of community gardening coordinators to come together to share their work, get support and work to enter the town and specific projects into 'South East in Bloom'. Many of the projects are well established and are providing a patchwork of important habitat and pollinator feeding areas, from small verge side beds to large open greenspaces. All are being gardened to showcase interest and colour from planting but with a sustainable planting scheme, less water reliance and planting that has the ideal mix of seasonal flowering potential. Most of these projects are run under the Faversham in Bloom umbrella providing insurances and dealing with licenses to cultivate.

## **12. Working with schools on projects.**

There are 2 secondary schools and multiple primary schools in Faversham. All have an interest in working with their students on areas around climate change, biodiversity and creating opportunities for students to be outside and understand the benefits that has to their mental and physical wellbeing but helping to educate about the good and bad practices when it comes to looking after our environment. A recent example was a project with the Abbey School, which is a secondary school, with plenty of greenspace surrounding the buildings. We worked with a Geography teacher who pulled together a mix of students, of different ages, to work on a tree and hedge planting project within the school grounds. 400 saplings were planted, from the Woodlands Trust, and 20 more mature trees were planted along the A2, London Road. The process included talking about the benefits of planting a diverse range of species, how this helps create habitat and food for a range of wildlife and how it can help improve air quality. The project will continue with additional plantings and maintenance. We have started this with the other schools and will develop further over the coming year.

## **13. Allotments**

Faversham Town Council have 4 allotment sites, with a 5<sup>th</sup> site becoming available soon. Some have committees which oversee the management of them, whilst have more direct management by the council. We have been working to create a precedent that we see

pesticides banned from being used on allotment sites and encouragement of a diversification of crops and plants to help with pollinators. This includes planting more hedges along the perimeters, wilding areas of communal space and carrying out workshops and events (when restrictions allow) about growing organically and planting for pollinators. 2 of the sites have won awards for efforts to support wildlife, reduce plastics and chemicals and carrying out community projects.

#### **14. Two new living roof bus shelters are to be installed in the Town Centre by the end of the year.**

This was inspired by work done in countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark, where they are utilizing urban structures to mitigate pollution problems and the lack of greenspace and insect habitat, by creating planting opportunities. Working with Clear Channel, who own some of the bus shelters in the town, we have decided to fund 2 new shelters, within the town centre, along busy roads where pollution and lack of greenspace is a problem. The shelters will have a living roof, planted with sustainable plants such as sedum, which will flower for pollinators, create a habitat for smaller insects and help tackle air pollution. If this is successful, further sites will be identified.

#### **15. Wilding the Rec**

A project has been set up called 'Wilding the Rec' by Swale Friends of the Earth and Faversham Town Council which is to change how Faversham Recreation Ground is managed and see the creation of better planting, habitat, and educational opportunities for local primary schools. Lots of projects have already started such as the 'Bee Garden', mass bulb planting, hedge, and tree planting (including a small orchard) and areas that grass is left to grow longer. All this is done by volunteers and the park ranger.