

Report by Councillor Fiona Ward on Environmental Matters within the Parish
24th July 2020

Whilst East Budleigh Parish has much to appreciate in terms of natural beauty, if this enviable status is to be maintained we need to clearly define what can be done to maintain and enhance the natural amenities of the village.

We have requested CDE to send a large parish map with footpaths, cycleways, trail bike routes, etc, clearly defined. There currently appears to be no cycle routes within the village but funding might be available if we could define a route? It may be that the Otter Valley restoration project has plans for cycle routes and disable access? We do need to ensure that as wide a range of amenities as possible are available and not just concentrate on walkers.

Desirable development should include tree planting, hedge establishment and restoration, areas of wild flowers, etc. Public assess and information are essential.

New paths such as the one up to the mast are actively being planned. Others might include a path from Middletown Lane across the B3178 down to the river (this currently exists but would benefit from improvement).

Tree planting should be done. The pc is currently committed to planting along the skyline and around the Vodaphone mast - planting should take place this autumn to allow trees to establish over winter. Other areas that might benefit from a tree or two could include Wynard Road/Vicarage Road, possibly the recreation ground, down by the water treatment plant, etc.

Hedge renewal along the B3178 from Salem Chapel past the allotments, field borders around the allotments, along Vicarage Road, etc, could be beneficial. We need to ensure that some rough areas of brambles and nettles are kept.

Whilst suggestions have been made recently for the planting of 'free trees' in certain areas trees need to be appropriate so they flourish.

Where trees and hedges are too substantial for certain areas, wild flowers might be an alternative. It would be necessary to look into the restriction (if not elimination) of Himalayan balsam.

Wherever we plan some planting, we must look into the maintenance of these areas and check East Devon District Council's rules and regulations. We would also need the involvement of the community with planting and care.

Public access and information are essential. Signage and information boards could add much, particularly if plans such as a walking route around historic East Budleigh was undertaken. These would need to be carefully considered and should not be too intrusive. Information points, maps, leaflets, photos, could be made available and some form of feedback sought so as to make improvements over time. There are already some leaflets provided by the OVA, which could be more widely promoted or updated if they think it appropriate. One of the aims of these plans should be to encourage outdoor activity so ease of access is important. Maintenance of paths and seating should be considered but we might also look at bird-hides, etc. Consideration needs to be given to maintenance before any proposal is made - the unmetalled lane around the mast is currently used by trail bikes and is not currently maintained..

This is a programme of work that will require much planning. It needs to be undertaken throughout the parish with attention given to Kersbrook, Yettington, the old sawmill (this area would also enable consideration to be given to the beaver project results).

In summary we need

- to obtain the map
- produce a phased plan and seek agreement and cooperation from the parish.
- coordinate with other organisations and groups eg CDE, Pebblebed Heath, OVA, the school, Bicton College
- get the first planting done around the mast this autumn