

Stafford Orchard

A Park for People

This is the second in a series of reports about the forthcoming refurbishment of Stafford Orchard with a Parks for People grant from the Lottery.

An important characteristic of the park will be the development and management of its environment and ecology, particularly trees, hedgerows, new native and sensory shrub and flower/wildflower areas, land by the brook, and of course the brook itself.

The 'greenery'

During the winter months, in the dormant season and before nesting begins, a programme of tree work in Stafford Orchard is planned, based on a comprehensive survey undertaken by an accredited consultant from The Arboricultural Association (a 'tree expert' to you and me).



Don't be dismayed to see a few trees coming down – these have been identified as being diseased, potentially dangerous or, in some cases, at or near the end of their natural lives. Others will be reshaped and have dead wood removed; some will have their crowns raised; self-sown sycamore and elder will be removed from hedgerows; and a diseased horse chestnut by the US memorial entrance on Station Road will be reduced to a four metre stump in preparation for a tree carver to work some magic.

When the landscaping work is complete, 37 new trees will have been planted, willow and reed beds established by the brook near the School Lane bridge, gaps filled in the existing hedgerows and new hedgerows created to maintain and increase the feeding corridors for bats and other wildlife. Volunteers will plant twenty thousand spring bulbs and create a sensory garden at the Station Road end of the park.

Some parts of the park will not be closely mown to provide new wildlife habitats. These areas will be seeded with native wildflowers.

The brook

In recent consultations and surveys, many people identified the brook as one of the most interesting features of the park (unaware that until recently purchased by the Parish Council with lottery funding, the brook and adjacent land were not actually part of Stafford Orchard).

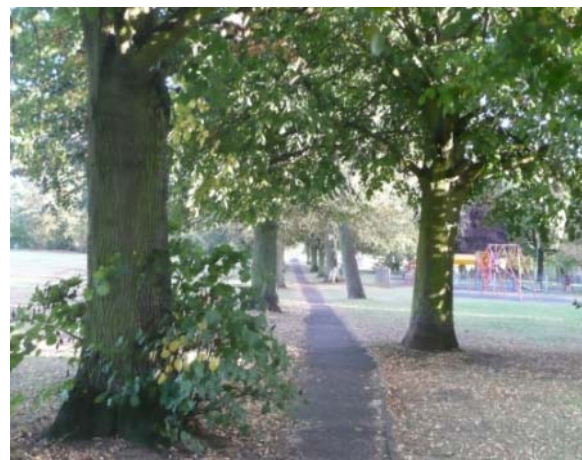


A survey commissioned from the Environment Agency revealed that the water quality in Buddon Brook has improved significantly since the 1990's and is now rated 'good'. However, there is potential for the watercourse to improve to 'very good' or 'high' by looking at habitat improvements and diffuse pollution. Keeping the brook free of litter and detritus will be a high priority in the park and the new reed beds will

provide improved habitats for wildlife. We know that otters have returned to the river Soar and we are hopeful that improved water quality will encourage them back into the brook.

When things have settled down after the construction work in the park is complete, natural play areas by the brook can be developed. Feeding the ducks and swans is also a popular pastime but often the food is inappropriate, pollutes the watercourse and encourages rats. The volunteer park wardens will advise on suitable feed and may even carry 'samples' in their pockets!

Quorn's local wildlife expert Peter Gamble has reported sightings of brook minnow, three-spined stickleback, stony loach, bullheads, roach and perch, which is good news for both water quality and for the occasional kingfishers who feed on them. Peter has also identified many species of birds, bats, dragonflies, insects and wildflowers which all contribute to the biodiversity of the park. An ecology information board will explain what to look for and where to find it.



Access

Access is not just about how to get in and out of the park, although the entrances will be improved and made more welcoming, new paths will be created to allow access to previously inaccessible areas of the park for wheelchairs and pushchairs, and existing paths will be widened, resurfaced and lit. Heritage boards sited in unobtrusive locations will provide information about the history and heritage of Stafford Orchard and the buildings surrounding the park.



In the wider context, access is about providing facilities and interest for all age groups and abilities - walking the dog, relaxing on a bench, picnicking, using play equipment, casual or organised games on the grassed areas or hard play courts, BMX/skateboarding, chilling out with friends, exercising, attending special events, feeding the ducks, looking for wildlife, helping to keep the park in good shape, and so on.

Permanent picnic tables will enable everyone to enjoy the brook-side environment, and benches located throughout the park will provide oases for 'taking the weight off ones feet'. Whether you are walking through the lime tree memorial avenue, supervising children in the play areas, relaxing in the sensory garden, watching a casual game of soccer, or shouting encouragement to friends playing five-a-side football or skateboarding, you'll never be far from a seat.