

CHELMER BLACKWATER RESERVE

SHAREHOLDER NEWSLETTER # 4 March 2023



BACKGROUND

The Chelmer Blackwater Reserve Community Interest Company (CIC) was formed by a group of residents concerned as to future plans for the land adjacent to the Tesco Supermarket in Maldon. In Feb 2022, the CIC signed a long-term lease with Tesco Stores Ltd to take control of the land and to develop it as a community nature reserve. All members of the CIC are un-paid volunteers and work is funded by a combination of grants and donations. Members of the public are actively encouraged to become shareholders and to participate in activities to support the management of the reserve.

PHASE 2 NOW COMPLETE!

Our contractors Pearl, returned after Christmas to finish the boardwalk section leading from the bridge to the meadow area and construct the viewing platform. Unfortunately the weather was pretty miserable but Russ and Charlie again did an amazing job for us- the quality of their workmanship is impressive!

The viewing platform has been very generously funded by the Essex Birdwatching Society and is intended to be furnished with an information board and become the main point where visiting groups can gather to appreciate the different habitats of the reserve and to watch for wildlife along Kings Mere.

Work parties have marked out the meadow path and identified the route with posts so that it is now possible to walk from the boardwalk all the way through to the public footpath along the western boundary of the reserve.

It is good to see local people now using the new pathways and to hear positive comments about the work being done.



As the meadow area hosts vulnerable wildlife species, such as lizards and voles, we have erected signs to remind people to keep to the paths and that dogs should be on leads at all times on the boardwalk sections and the meadow path.

PHASE 3 PLANS

The main content of the next phase will be laying down an all-weather surface along the meadow walk. This work will be dependent on further fundraising, but we hope to be able to carry it out later in the year, after the nesting season.

NESTBOXES

We are very grateful to Richard Stanley who has made and donated some nest boxes for the reserve. He has made 5 with holes suitable for tits as well as a much larger open-fronted nest box, that will hopefully attract the Kestrel regularly seen around the reserve! Richard, and friend Ted, have been putting them up on the willows along the northern edge of the reserve.



SITE MAINTENANCE

After recent scrub clearance, there will be no more major works until the autumn. However, there will be maintenance tasks to be done over the coming months, such as cutting back vegetation to paths/boardwalks, removing suckers and saplings in areas previously cleared of scrub, checking over paths/boardwalks for damage, litter picking etc. We are looking at a fortnightly schedule and help will be welcome! More details will be put out by email/Facebook.

Working on the reserve does have its rewards. Many of those who helped out on the last work party had close views of a Peregrine that passed by at low level.

CHANGING SEASONS

Blossom is now appearing across the reserve as a welcome sign that Spring is on its way. The birdsong at the moment is mainly from resident species that are establishing their territories and beginning to breed before the bulk of the migrants arrive. The first Chiffchaffs have already been heard and we are looking forward to more of the returning warblers. Hopefully last year's Cuckoo will also make a return! The first local Swallow has already been spotted, at Heybridge Gravel Pits on 16th March.



Veronica Smith

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Veronica Smith (1st March 1943 – 30th December 2022) the Chelmer Blackwater Reserve's most generous individual donor. Veronica, a retired school teacher with a particular interest in botany, was an enthusiastic supporter of the Reserve. While regretting her inability to participate in physical work on site, she made a substantial contribution with suggestions and funding. The Board has unanimously voted to name the new bridge over the Kings Mere "Veronica's Bridge" in her memory.

VERONICA'S BRIDGE

RESERVE LAUNCH EVENT

Now that the main boardwalks and the viewing platform are in place, we are looking forward to being able to properly launch the reserve. Planning is in progress for a date within the next few months. Full details will be announced to our shareholder community once they are confirmed.

Donations: <https://chelmerblackwatercic.uk/index.php/donations/>

This newsletter is published by the Chelmer Blackwater Reserve Community Interest Company (Registered in England No 13239317).

Website: <https://chelmerblackwatercic.uk> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/336060201176650>