

CHELMER BLACKWATER RESERVE

SHAREHOLDER NEWSLETTER # 9 - April 2024



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 unpaid volunteers and work is funded by a combination of grants and donations. Over 200 members of the public have so far become shareholders- the CIC is open to all and everyone is encouraged to participate in activities to support the management of the reserve.

SPRING IS SPRUNG!



It has been great to see the blossom spreading over the reserve, a clear sign that spring is here (even if recent weather has tended to suggest the opposite!). This picture is of one of our apple trees, that grace either side of the path along the western edge of the meadow.

MIDSUMMER'S EVE AGM

The Annual General Meeting of The Chelmer Blackwater Reserve Community Interest Company will take place on the Ironworks Meadow Reserve on 20th June at 7pm, the Midsummer Solstice. Please feel free to make an evening of it. Picnics allowed on the green land as a special exception for the occasion! The success of the event will obviously very much depend on the weather but we think it is worth the experiment. We can always adjourn to the Muddy Duck if it turns inclement.

WORK PARTIES

Three work parties in January and February achieved what was required in the way of sapling and sucker clearance and the first River Rats work party, in March, will hopefully have done enough by way of reed removal to keep the Kingsmere visible for the summer. A few summer work parties will be needed to keep the paths clear and these will be notified as the need arises.



We met up with Maldon and Dengie Ramblers and it has been good to see the work they have done in clearing the public footpath parallel to the bypass. The plan is to monitor the footpath over the next few months to see if more major work is required.

BLOCKED CULVERTS

Unfortunately, the River Rats were unable to make any impact on the silted-up culvert under the footpath and we have gone back to Essex Highways renewing our earlier request for them to do something about that and the main culvert under the road. The ECC Footpaths Officer, Roy Read, and our County Councillor, Jane Fleming have weighed in with their support and a review is allegedly in hand. Until this is done, the water flow in the Kingsmere is likely to remain sluggish or non-existent.

NEW KIT

In February, we invested in a brush-cutter, which has already assisted with some of the clearance jobs on the Reserve.



The new brush-cutter in action

UK POWER NETWORKS

After six months of chasing, we finally had a meeting on site with UK Power networks in March. They agreed to pay some compensation for the damage caused last October and to return to site, if required, in the Autumn to do some re-levelling.

WILDLIFE NOTES

During early spring there were a number of interesting wildlife sightings, including a **Marsh Harrier**, seen by Tony Kennelly, and, more exotically, a **Ring-necked Parakeet**, on one of the work party days. As those who have visited any park in London will know, parakeets are now firmly established there - they are now spreading east at a rapid rate. There is already a sizeable population near Brentwood and it is to be expected that they will be breeding here soon! (One pair did breed a few years ago by Fitch's Crescent but did not survive, perhaps due to the attention of the local Sparrowhawk.) Other species recorded in the first few months of the year were **Kingfisher**, **Water Rail** and **Grey Heron**,

A number of migrant warblers have now arrived to set up territories around the reserve, including **Common Whitethroat**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Blackcap** and **Reed Warbler**. We are now keeping our fingers crossed that our Cuckoo will return soon!



Common Whitethroat singing on the reserve

NEST-BOX MONITORING

Sarah Henson-Webb has provided the following report on behalf of the nest-box monitoring team:

“Initially, there was a good deal of interest from a number of pairs of Blue Tits, paying particular attention to a couple of boxes – removing nesting material, and then adding to it – but disappointingly, did not result in any actual nesting or chicks.

“The cold spell we have been experiencing recently has not been conducive to a lot of activity, however the watchers have enjoyed listening to the arrival of the first Chiffchaffs at the reserve (easily identified by their distinctive ‘chiff chaff’ call – although certainly harder to spot!) and watching the imperious Kestrel, sitting on the telegraph wires, surveying the site although failing to take much interest in the kestrel box ready and waiting for its residency.

“Hopefully, the change in weather will encourage more nesting activities from our resident birds. Please do comment or post pictures on our Facebook page if you spot anything of interest!”



2024 batch of Marsh Sow-thistles now planted on the reserve

MARSH SOW-THISTLES

It was good to see that the majority of the Marsh Sow-thistles that were planted last year have survived the winter. You may recall that this is a rare plant in our part of the world and we were privileged to be given some with the hope that they might colonise our reserve. As we were deemed to have been trustworthy keepers of these plants, we were pleased that Paul Fletcher, whose project this is, has given us some more!

INTERESTED IN JOINING THE BOARD?

If you are interested in taking a more active role in the management of the reserve then do consider applying to join the board of directors of the CIC. We currently have eleven directors and whilst none of us are currently planning to resign, there is room for additional support and it is always good to have fresh ideas and energy! If you would like to find out more about what is involved, please contact our chair, Patrick Ellum (patrick@ellum.co.uk) to discuss the details and to perhaps attend one of our meetings as an observer before making a final decision.

STANDING ORDERS

A number of members have now entered into standing orders to make an annual contribution to the reserve. Thank you to them.

Your share purchase makes you a member of The Chelmer Blackwater Reserve Community Interest Company for life and you do not need to make any further payment. However, to help the CIC meet the inevitable expenses which we incur going forward, we are inviting shareholders to enter into standing orders on a voluntary basis. We suggest five pounds a year but if you want to pay more that would be very much appreciated. The bank details are:

The Chelmer Blackwater Reserve CIC Sort Code 60-13-37 Account No. 49715534

It will help if you also e-mail the Treasurer cpryke@clara.co.uk and tell him you have set it up.

THANK YOU EVERYONE FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT!



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>