

'Mighty oaks from little acorns grow'.

A 14th century proverb aptly describes how the Friends of Higher Brook Meadow developed. A project started by a small group of people has, I believe has strengthened the community of Higher Brook Meadow and its neighbours.

A lot has happened in under 18 months. Many people have been involved, but special mention must go to

Margaret: making links with various parts of local government and providing the hospitality of her home for the committee to meet.

Keith: who has worked tirelessly in planting, watering and maintaining the trees and hedge.

Liz: setting up and managing the financial aspects of the group and grants.

Rachel: arranging free loans of equipment and managing all the donations and fundraising events.

Roger: for setting up the website and doing any design layouts needed.

Brief timeline of our achievements

October 2021 - some neighbours started talking about how we could improve the outlook of the green. The aim was to increase biodiversity and to enable more of the existing and future community to be able to access the space.

November 2021 - we approached EDDC (Housing) and Sidmouth Arboretum, after seeing an article in the Sidmouth Herald about the Queens Green Canopy scheme. We were successfully accepted for inclusion onto the Sidmouth Arboretum's 2022 Queens Green Canopy scheme, pending EDDC permission.

End Nov/ early December 21 – the group of neighbours started meeting regularly to talk to each other and Sidmouth Arboretum about what could be achieved for the green and how we could engage to get all the neighbours in HBM on board.

End of December 21 - we got formal permission from EDDC housing and started sharing draft plans with all the HBM residents. After collecting feedback received from the HBM residents, a final plan was agreed.

January 22 – The small group of neighbours formed as a proper constituted Friends Group, when we realised that if we did, we could formally apply for Grants, hold fundraising

activities and obtain insurance for us to maintain the trees and hedgerows until fully established. A constitution was drawn up and the small group of five/six people met approximately monthly. A website was also set up by one of the neighbours.

5 February 22 - we prepared and planted the trees and hedgerows.

This was a tremendous effort, with over 40 people joining in digging, laughing and getting backache! It also included representatives from EEDC and Sidmouth Arboretum, who have supported us throughout.

The young beautiful trees are beginning to show their true glory this spring.

March - September 22, weeding, mulching etc

July 22 - Community picnic. A lovely sunny day where we met neighbours, some for the first time, a glass was shared, and cake eaten on the green. We had some activities for children such as face painting. We also gathered suggestions on how the green could be improved further.

September 22 – Due to underground pipework, it was not possible to plant trees on the northside. We started discussions with EDDC Housing about placing some planters

October 22 - we were awarded a grant for the planters and got permission to install them. They went in at the end of October 2022.

November 22 to Feb 23 - discussions started in the group on how we could improve the playground. EDDC housing were approached for their support.

March 23 - we asked for our neighbours views on possible improvements to the playground and gave that feedback to EDDC Housing. We are now waiting for their response.

The aims of the Friends of HBM Green group, with the 2022 Queens Green Canopy scheme now complete, is to work with EDDC, and other organisations to initiate and support any future improvement work and assist in maintaining the trees and hedgerow.

The next step is hopefully improving the playground.

Wendy Whitaker
chair of FHBM
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