

## Wildflower Trial on Common Land

*Over 97% of British meadows have been eradicated since the 1930s. As a result, many iconic wildflowers such as ragged robin, harebell and wild orchids are threatened. Dr Trevor Dines of Plantlife: "The steady, quiet and under-reported decline of our meadows is one of the biggest tragedies in the history of UK nature conservation." Over 1,400 insect species rely on wildflower meadows for survival. They help to maintain a healthy ecosystem with hedgehogs, birds and bats eating the insects that breed there. There is no doubt that the collapse of biodiversity on our open land has contributed massively to the downward spiral of butterflies, bees and insectivorous birds in the past few decades.*

Many villagers have commented that they have noticed more wildflowers this year. In common with most of the country Waverley Borough Council and the Parish Council, who between them own most of the commons, have stopped mowing much of their land in spring and summer to allow plants to set seed. Shamley Green Environment Group consulted residents earlier in 2021 and almost all said they would like to see more wildflowers on common land; and many longstanding residents were keen to encourage the return of plants that used to be widespread before mowing became more intense.

Professor James Hitchmough of Sheffield University, a world expert on wildflower meadows, visited in April. He thought that much of our common land had been so heavily mown for many years that it was now generally very species-poor. He also thought we had very few orchard trees which encourage greater biodiversity. While some plant species might eventually reappear with less mowing in spring/summer, supplementation mostly with native species would be a good idea. The Environment Group proposal for a trial was approved by the Parish Council in July. This was posted on their website. The idea is that initially we focus on a few areas in different parts of the village for maximum impact. These will include the Bricklayers to Shrubbery (footpath) green, the end of Hullmead by the tree stumps, the Lords Hill triangle plus the end of Nursery Hill by the main road. It is also hoped to plant a number of apple and pear trees on the open land at the edge of Lords Hill green to encourage biodiversity. These would be underplanted with bulbs.

The project is funded by a generous donor and funds held in the Wonersh Foundation. Professional advice has been taken on what to plant in the various areas. It should be emphasised that this is a trial. We will recruit a group of up to 20 volunteers for each day and have set aside Thursday October 14 and Saturday October 16 to do the planting. The volunteers will be professionally supervised and a risk assessment sent to the Parish Council. The trees will be professionally planted in November. If you would like to help plant in October please contact Henrietta Griffiths on [henriettaragriffiths@gmail.com](mailto:henriettaragriffiths@gmail.com).