



**LUSCOMBE LEA:
AN URBAN BIODIVERSITY PROJECT**

INTRODUCTION:

Luscombe Lea is a 5.5 hectare village green in the Henley Green area of Coventry. The site presently comprises 2 ha improved amenity grassland, 2 ha semi-improved (rank in places) grassland part of which is temporarily wet, and 0.5 ha of young copse exhibiting low diversity around flora.

HOW WE WENT ABOUT IT:

Henley Green Residents Association has been keen to enhance the value of its village green for wildlife for some time. The site was mooted for development under a local regeneration scheme. Despite this threat, local residents have remained passionate about their greenspace to the extent that they fought a legal battle to win a designation for Luscombe Fields as "village green". Although negotiations with CCC for permission to undertake enhancements on the site are ongoing, the premise of the project is to enhance the existing habitats on site, creating an urban wildlife haven, and to improve access to the village green thus enabling more residents to enjoy the site. Proposed habitat enhancements include: 1) creation of a wild flower meadow in the semi-improved grassland area; 2) a wetland area of scrapes, ponds, and associated terrestrial habitats; 3) selective felling and planting within the copse to improve the vigour and diversity of ground flora; 4) benches and interpretation boards (designed by local youth groups) to be erected.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED:

- Community awareness, involvement, pride and ownership of the area.
- Skills development through training in biodiversity surveying, monitoring, practical conservation techniques and project management.
- Friendships will be formed and people will develop a long-term relationship with their high quality local greenspace.
- The potential for this project (and hopefully others if we can secure the funding) to deliver cumulatively sizeable local biodiversity benefits is great, as we "fix" the extensive green habitat corridors which branch out from the River Sowe and into our urban landscape.

WHAT THE BENEFITS TO BIODIVERSITY WILL BE:

- Whole ecosystem improvements: the mosaic of habitats and their floral species richness, diversity, and structural heterogeneity will attract invertebrates, birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals!

ADVICE AND CONTACT

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My advice to others – especially Local Authorities - would be to surrender your scepticism and work together with the local residents who know their patch, know their neighbours, and have the long-term commitment to deliver sustainable biodiversity benefits, and you WILL see results! To get biodiversity gain we must involve communities.