

NetworkNews

Spring 2022

Issue 2



Moorcroft Wood

Page 5



Saltwells NNR

Page 2



Holloway Street

Page 3



Ward Street

Page 4



Fowlers Park

Page 4



European Union

European Regional
Development Fund



The Black Country Blue Network 2 (BCBN2) project is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with an investment of £1.6m and a total project value of £3.5m. Following the successful delivery of phase 1, BCBN2 commenced in September 2020 with a 3 year project in place to assist with the priority of preserving and protecting the environment.

The project aims to create a high-quality ecological network with a diverse range of habitats, centred on the area's historically important waterways and associated green spaces. This will be achieved through a programme of infrastructure and habitat improvements along canals and rivers and other key nature greenspaces linked into this blue network. The project will look to improve over 114 hectares of green space and rehabilitate over 4 hectares of land. Improvements will facilitate better visitor management and improved access for local communities.

The project is a partnership between the City of Wolverhampton Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, Canal and River Trust and Severn Rivers Trust. Each delivery partner is delivering sub-projects which together make up the Black Country Blue Network.



Hawne Park

A small un-named watercourse that flows through the wooded Hawne Park just outside of Halesowen is the focus of our next exciting Black Country Blue Networks project. Four artificial weirs made from galvanised steel gabion baskets, filled with stone, lined in plastic, and topped in concrete are causing habitat fragmentation in this hidden gem of a site. The Severn Rivers Trust have gained consents to remove these weirs and enrich the habitat with some large woody debris whilst working alongside the Friends group and Dudley Council. Once the weirs are removed the riverbed shall be regraded to create a natural restored channel. The large woody debris we shall be adding into the river offers a wealth of habitat for macroinvertebrates and shall slow down the flow of water. This shall help reduce flooding in a process we call Natural Flood Management (NFM).



Saltwells NNR

Severn Rivers Trust are currently undertaking flood modelling for an exciting concept of creating a Zero stage channel within the Saltwells NNR. This will see a once straightened river allowed to top the banks and braid its way through the reach, creating a lovely wet woodland. In the process of doing this, we shall be able to bypass two weirs which are currently acting as barriers to all species within the Black Brook.

Castle Hill

All environmental surveys and levels of key footpaths and entrances to Castle Hill have been completed. Later in the year you will start to see work to improve a key route through site from Gervase Drive through to new Black Country Living Museum car park. All entrances to Castle Hill will be visually improved and strengthened to prevent illegal access. There will also be badly needed clearance of fly tipping.

Unfortunately, a large number of the trees on Castle Hill are Ash trees and are suffering from Ash dieback which will probably kill these trees over the next few years. Our aim is to fell diseased trees in key areas to prevent accidental injury and protect visitors. Also, we plan to plant a number of new native trees which will eventually replace losses on the woodland.

Peggy's Meadow

In conjunction with Metro contractors, the land at the bottom of Castle Hill called Peggy's meadow will be returned to its historical use. The long grass and scrubby trees will be removed, and the area will have a new fence. The site has orchids which flower in late spring and this work will enable the orchids to thrive. It is Dudley Councils intention to graze animals on Peggy's meadow and we are in contact with Dudley Zoo in assisting the process.



Turls Hill

Plans are progressing to get the existing grazing land on Turls Hill back to use. Works to include agricultural fencing and new hedgerows. The land will be low intensely grazed to encourage traditional meadow plants to re-establish.

Turls Hill Rd, will have areas of invasive species treated, it is proposed that some hedge laying can be carried out along this route and generally the unmaintained signage and other waymarking will be improved.

Holloway Street



There is surveying work being carried out to Holloway Street. Planned works on the ground are expected to start in Spring 2022. The work will address

issues with flooding and aims to create new small ponds and other measures to hold water on the site in certain areas to reduce the chance of flash flooding. These areas should improve the wildlife diversity and create new habitats.

Further work will improve main footpaths through the site, making the area more accessible at all times of the year. There will also be some clearance work to create more open areas that can be used for informal games and picnics.

Sedgley Beacon

The first phase of the work will involve part of the grazing land at the bottom part of the site near to Woverhampton Road. All survey work is completed. The plan is to create a proper footpath from Wolverhampton Road up the side of this grazing land towards the hill top and fence off the horses from pedestrians.

Furthermore new small ponds and hollows will be created to take some of the water running down the hill and relieve pressure on the brook. It is intended that these wetland areas will increase biodiversity and the ecological value of this part of the site.

In a further phase woodland areas will be improved and existing rare plants will have their seeds collected and resown in other parts of the site.

Cannon Drive

Work is progressing with plans to improve the area known locally as Teddy Bear park, the small open spaces off Cannon Drive and Anvil Crescent.

The smaller open space which borders the canal will have a number of trees planted with the intention to have a small woodland copse.

The larger area will have native bulb planting such as snowdrops and wild daffodils There will be wildflower planting and further improvements to the planting on the perimeter of the site.

Ward Street Railway Cutting

Work is now well underway to develop the former railway cutting into an attractive and wildlife friendly green space for local people to enjoy. Much of the grading and levelling works have now been completed in preparation for the site to be planted up with a flowing blend of wildflower meadows, mown grass, young trees, wooded areas and seasonal bulbs. Recent weeks have seen significant progress with tree planting and the installation of new fencing, paths and access control barriers.



Pendeford Park

Work is well underway to improve the attractiveness and wildlife value of Pendeford Park. The work includes native woodland planting, hedge planting, woodland management and the creation of attractive wildflower meadows. Significant progress has taken place recently to remove unstable trees and clear overgrown vegetation to allow more light and encourage a greater diversity of plant life to flourish. 20,000 daffodil bulbs have been planted recently and path bases have been constructed in preparation for final surfacing work.



Fowlers Park

The programme of improvements in Fowlers Park is now well underway. The improvements include woodland management, meadow creation, hedgerow planting, access improvements and a complete renovation of the pond. Much of the woodland management has taken place and work is currently underway on pathway improvements. The pond is gradually filling with rainwater following a major de-silting operation, which saw an enormous amount of debris removed from its base. The pond is now well on its way to becoming a healthier and more wildlife friendly wetland attraction.

Wonderful Meadows

During the late winter and early spring areas have been prepared for wildflower meadows at George Rose Park, Kingshill Park and Victoria Park in Darlaston. Over the next few months these meadows will establish, and a wonderful display of flowers will abound for park users and pollinating insects to enjoy.

Trees are Good

An additional 18 heavy standard trees have been planted at Kingshill Park and Walsall Canal, the trees that have been planted are great for pollinators and will store approximately 54,000 tonnes of carbon by maturity.

Letting the light in

Woodland management work has been carried out at Walsall Canal and Moorcroft Wood. The work at Walsall Canal will improve visitor welcome and some of the areas cleared of scrub will be seeded with a woodland flora mix to boost biodiversity. The woodland management work at Moorcroft Wood has exposed some of the interesting geology and past industrial heritage of the area, as well as clearing scrub from an area of acidic grassland, a rare habitat for the area.

