

## **Haslingfield and Harlton Eco Group**

### **Report for the Harlton Annual Parish Meeting, 30 April 2024**

**April 2023 – April 2024**

#### **Summary**

The Has and Harl Eco Group, which formed in February 2021, has now entered its fourth year. Our third year has once again been full of activity and events, including reaching out to other groups and organisations across the region. We have worked with Cambridge Carbon Footprint, the Cambs Climate Leaders Group, and the Countryside Regeneration Trust, among others. We now have a lovely website, [hheco.co.uk](http://hheco.co.uk), and our newsletter has 146 subscribers. Chair Michelle Golder and Vice Chair Lisa Redrup, who is also our local District Councillor, attend most Haslingfield Parish Council meetings and we are working together with the Parish Council on biodiversity and neighbourhood planning projects. Our Harlton group is also working with its Parish Council to reduce mowing and encourage eco initiatives.

Over the course of the past year we have: installed a new signpost by the side of the River Rhee; co-organised several events; ran a stall at the Methodist Church Charity Christmas Fair; organised regular pruning and mulching sessions at the Haslingfield Community Orchard as well as other planting and raking activities; drafted a biodiversity strategy which was accepted by the Haslingfield Parish Council; took part in the first Cambridge Nature Festival with an Orchid Walk led by Parish Councillor Clive Blower and a Bioblitz at Harlton Clunch pit; organised and ran a Community Share Fair event for the Coronation Bank Holiday Monday on 8<sup>th</sup> May; and held our first Repair Café.

We also had a stall at the Village Society event in April 2023 and our team successfully defended its trophy at the second annual Village Society Quiz.

#### **Let it Grow Project**

The Let it Grow project continues to grow on WhatsApp and to advocate for education about wild plants and encourage people to leave a space for nature in their gardens.

#### **Climate Leaders**

Members of the Eco Group regularly attend the monthly online Climate Leaders Group, which has 83 members from all around the County and beyond, many of whom are Parish Councillors. Members share the activities and ideas from their parishes so that we can avoid reinventing the wheel every time an opportunity arises. Information shared includes how to run a repair café, requests for volunteers or advice, how to host an eco event, offers of speakers on various topics, how to write a biodiversity strategy, and much more. Recently we were inspired by Bassingbourn's Tree trail to create a new tree trail for Haslingfield, which will be launched on June 23<sup>rd</sup> as part of our Neighbourhood Plan event, Small Village, Big Conversation.



**Coronation Share Fair – 8 May 2023** To celebrate the “Big Help Out” suggested by the royal coronation planners, we partnered with the Haslingfield Parish Council and organised a Share Fair at the Village Hall and Rec. The goals of the event were to celebrate the resources we have within our own community, resources we can draw upon to supply our needs, entertain our children, and enjoy ourselves; demonstrate planet and pocket friendly family activities in a child friendly environment; encourage low emissions fun by using natural and upcycled materials, and raise funds for local and national charities.

The event included stalls from the PTFA, local crafters, makers, upcyclers and artists, a shared meal, and a family play tent with planet and pocket friendly activities. One of the stalls was organised entirely by Year 6 students from Haslingfield Primary School, who created games and activities to raise funds for UNICEF, Save the Children and RSPB.

### **Harlton Bioblitz – July 2023**



As one of our two contributions to the first Cambridge Nature Festival, we organised a Bioblitz survey of Harlton woods, with the help of local ecologists Vince Lea, of the Countryside

Regeneration Trust, Pippa Keynes, and botanist Ashley Arbon. This survey identified 82 different species of herbaceous plants/shrubs as well as trees, fungi, invertebrates and small mammals. All the data was shared with CPERC, the local authority which collects information on the environment.

We are taking part in the Nature Festival again this year, with a guided walk to Haslingfield Clunch Pit on June 16<sup>th</sup> at 10.30 am.

<https://www.hheco.co.uk/whatson/2024/naturefestwalkhaslingfield>

### **Christmas Stall - November 18<sup>th</sup> 2023**



For this year’s Christmas Market, we made wildflower seed balls from seed collected from local meadows and teamed up with the Harlton Crafting group to upcycle decorated hessian bags to sell them in. Harlton Crafters also donated a variety of upcycled gifts. We donated half of our profits to the breast milk charity, Hearts Milk.

## Re-Imagining Community Energy – October 22nd 2023

In October, our second Re-Imagining event, in partnership with Cambridge Carbon Footprint, Net Zero Now and 2G3S, focused on community energy and hosted 69 representatives from around South Cambs. Community energy projects have begun to emerge from the event, with eco group and parish council members keeping in touch to share knowledge and information. A follow up, online event on microgrids took place online on April 11<sup>th</sup>. We continue to explore the options for community renewable energy for our communities, and have recently helped Haslingfield School get on the county council list for a possible energy upgrade.

## Repair Café – February 2024



The first Haslingfield Repair Café, organised by group members and friends from Harlton, Barton Eversden, and Haslingfield, was a great success. We had a go at repairing 48 items - from a sewing machine and an electric piano keyboard to a broken bracelet and a shirt with a missing button! Nearly everything was successfully mended, or the next steps identified, free of charge, by an amazing team of 10 volunteer repairers from the Cambridgeshire Repair Café Network. Feedback was very positive, including: "Very helpful! "Relaxing and kind cafe,"

and "Excellent Result!" Tea and cakes were provided by Little Owls. As well as saving money, repairing things helps reduce waste and save resources and so helps protect the planet. We hope to run the café annually from now on.

## Haslingfield Parish Council Draft Biodiversity Strategy

Members of the Eco group provided a draft plans for a biodiversity strategy for the Haslingfield Parish Council. The biodiversity strategy was adopted January 2024, and the next step for the council is turn the strategy into an action plan.

## Green Spaces – Well House Meadow



We continue to look after the Community Orchard in Haslingfield's Wellhouse Meadow, organising pruning sessions led by orchardist Charlotte Synge which also allowed some of us to learn the basics of fruit tree pruning. We continue to experiment with different strategies to increase biodiversity in the meadow, and are now focusing on two smaller areas of the meadow rather than the whole thing.

## Friends of the Rhee



We lost one of our keenest river folk to another county in 2022, with the result that the Friends of the Rhee is no longer meeting regularly. However, before leaving Jane helped us organise the beautiful signpost which we have installed on the banks of the Rhee. In addition, we wrote and published a piece for Church and Village on how what we put in our drains affects sewage overflows. This was included in the biodiversity strategy submitted to the Parish Council, with the suggestion that it be published on their website and/or newsletter.

While the Friends group is now dormant, the door is open for it to start work again when the energy is there.

## Communication

Getting the word out is one of the most important jobs we think we can do. People are often too busy to engage with the many ideas and solutions there are out there which could help us avoid further climate change and environmental damage and be more resilient to the changes already built in. In addition to our busy WhatsApp group, with 38 members, we have a website, <https://www.hheco.co.uk/>, produce a regular Mailchimp Newsletter, and have a Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/HnHEco>. We regularly contribute articles to Church and Village and the Haslingfield Parish Council newsletter. We have also just started hosting a regular (3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month) social meetup at the Hare and Hounds pub at 8 pm.

*Report prepared by Chair, Michelle Golder April 2024*