Malvern Link Station Adoption Project Report, April 2018-March 2019

The aim of the project is to develop woodland, hedgerow, bumblebee/pollinator, and tree-fruit areas as mini-nature reserves and community environmental resources. It is led by Malvern Community Forest in partnership with the Friends of Malvern Railway Stations/Malvern Civic Society, and was launched on the 3rd May 2017.

Working party volunteers need to be registered with West Midland Rail (WMR), having received health and safety training, and to follow safe working guidelines. Working parties are held weekly, with 4-6 regular attendees, and some who come less regularly.

The woodland and apple trees planted in December 2017 needed regular watering through the long, dry summer of 2018, with wheel-barrow loads of water (in a large for-purpose plastic bag with spouts) taken from the fire-station, and the fountain across the Worcester Road. All the fruit trees survived and most of the woodland trees. Native woodland flower seeds and bulbs were sown in both areas.

The other large need for water was to top up the pond. Native water plants were introduced in the early summer, as well as some snails, to help in its development. All appeared to take, and the growth this year has been impressive.

The wildflower beds along the platform north of the footbridge faltered in the summer heat but some varieties have re-appeared in abundance this spring. The rest of the beds on this part of the platform were mown to remove coarse growth, and in the autumn we started to dig trenches for planting the first hedges. The soil is donated by the Town Council cemetery. It was initially hoped import 80 tons of soil to cover all the undeveloped beds as well, in sponsorships put together for us by Brian Iles from the Town Council and our local County Council Councillor. Such a large operation needed clearance by WMR, but the on-going restructuring from the new franchise caused difficulties in communication and decision making, and delay led to losing the Councillor sponsorship for this year. We therefore concentrated on getting one trench dug - which proved a major challenge - and then organised our own limited soil importing plan. We planted our first mixed hedge of field-maple, hazel, hawthorn and disease-resistant elm this April.

Due to our efforts in transforming the site spring and summer 2018, we received recognition from Worcestershire Wildlife Trust as Wildlife Heroes for habitat creation, and were judged as Outstanding in the Heart of England in Bloom's It's Your Neighbourhood Scheme.

Communication and support from WMR is beginning to resume. We have to re-shape some of our more long-term plans, whilst the most urgent need currently is for information boards about different parts of the project, and for rain-collecting water butts.

Ken Timms, Project Lead

29th May 2019