



Environment Topic Paper

What information has been collected?

- **We have been given a report on the 'Wildlife of Ruishton & Thornfalcon' by Russell and Sara Gomm, which was undertaken as a *Millenium Project*.** The report contains details of sightings and habitats of flowering plants, mosses, lichens, liverworts and fungi as well as fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and many invertebrates.
- **We do have a number of protected (Red List) species within our two Parishes; these include :-**
 - **European Otter (*Lutra lutra*)**
 - **Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)**
 - **Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)**
 - **Brown Hairstreak (*Thecla betulae*)**
 - **Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentoni*)**
 - **Black Poplar (*Populus nigra*)** – surveys suggest that only a few thousand of these trees remain in the UK. A study in 1994 showed that there were about 150 in Taunton Deane, of which at least 14 occurred within the Parishes of Ruishton, Thornfalcon and Creech St Michael.
- **Otter Survey Records held at SERC and undertaken by members of Somerset Otter Group** – useful for a letter recently sent to TDBC.
- **Having studied maps of the area, there are no designated conservation areas in either Parish at present, although Henlade Wood (bordering on Stoke Hill and a small part of which is incorporated into Ruishton Parish) does belong to the Woodland Trust.**
- **An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is currently being carried out in Henlade Wood; over 100 dormouse boxes were placed in trees throughout the wood during the winter of 2016/2017** – this EIA is being carried out by Highways England.



- **Air Pollution Data has been received and analysed (May 2017) and we are very concerned that pollutant levels are above the government's set limits. Local Authorities are under an obligation to take measures to improve air quality – what is being done about this ?**

- On Village Day, we built an Insect Hotel with help from Pete & Sue Sherry, Julia Curtis and many local children. It is now positioned in St George's Churchyard.



What have we learned from the Survey?

Q 4. How satisfied are you with the following issues relating to your local environment ?

295 replies were received to this question; some were very positive :-

- **access to the countryside** - 78% of respondents were completely or very satisfied
- **access to the river** - 60% of respondents were completely or very satisfied
- **wildlife conservation** - 41% of respondents were completely or very satisfied
- **rights of way** - 37% of respondents were completely or very satisfied
- **bridleways** - evenly balanced

Respondents were generally far less satisfied with :-

- **flood prevention** - 37% of respondents were slightly/not at all satisfied
- **areas needing special protection** – 37% of respondents were slightly/not at all satisfied
- **level of air pollution** - 42% of respondents were slightly/not at all satisfied

The issue which appears to be causing most concern is :-

- **safe cycle routes** - 59% of respondents were slightly/not at all satisfied

Later on in the survey, when asked what mode of transport they regularly used, 36% of respondents indicated that they cycled.

Q 5. Concerns for local environment and what change is needed ?

135 people responded to this question (45% of the participants). Comments related mainly to the following issues :-

- **traffic**
- **air and noise pollution** – largely in relation to traffic/HGVs
- **development on green belt land**
- **changing character of the villages**
- **flooding and drainage** – need for regular maintenance
- **increased flooding resulting from new developments**

Other issues which were mentioned, included **footpaths, cycle paths, dog mess, litter, fly tipping, wildlife, river bank protection and canal & bridge preservation.**

What further information do we need to start thinking about a plan for the future ?

- **carry out a noise pollution survey or acquire details of noise pollution surveys previously carried out**
- **compile and retain records of river levels and flood incidents**
- **analyse wildlife data from Russell and Sara's report – identify locations of key/rare species**
- **carry out further wildlife surveys – reptile/bat species or consult records already at SERC**
- **consider how to work with Highways/TDBC/building developers to influence**
 - **reduction of air pollution**
 - **flood prevention schemes**
 - **use of SUDS**
 - **eco- building projects**
 - **use of bunds/ tree screens to reduce noise pollution**
- **liaise with Parish Council ? to improve footpath/bridleway signs in and around our villages**
- **work with developers to ensure biological corridors to existing areas of countryside are maintained through all new developments, thus ensuring that wildlife biodiversity is not threatened**

Sue Sherry 25/09/17