

NEWS LETTER – WINTER 2021-22



The Litter Leaders Award Certificate

LITTER LEADERSHIP

The Litter Leadership program has been introduced. Aimed at young people, who up to year 6 are “Little Litter Leaders” and then beyond that become “Junior Litter Leaders”, who mentor and support the younger team members.

Alongside instilling respect for our woodlands and open space, the program aims to build confidence and competence, testing skills in ‘wild terrain’.

The environment is also kept much cleaner and safer for all users.

FORESTRY SCHOOL

This includes the Forest School, who meet once a month, giving families, especially the young people, opportunities to engage actively with nature.

“Come along to one of our sessions. Get out and enjoy the natural world. Come and join us on our adventures in the woods!” says facilitator, Tanya Dickson.

Seniors

FoGA continue the social learning for those of us who are a bit older! We also have adventures in the woods by joining Countryside Management Services (CMS) on regular excursions around the county to learn new skills. For example, Coppicing is the woodland management technique of repeatedly felling trees at the base (or stool), and allowing them to regrow, to provide a sustainable supply of timber.

As seniors, we normally have time to hang about after an event and enjoy a cup of tea and a cake.



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In the coming months our plans include branching out to work with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust <https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/> and the River Beane Restoration Association (RBRA) <https://www.riverbeane.org.uk/> monitoring wildlife (also known as ‘snoozing’ 😊) on the River Beane. This feels exciting for us.



Round Diamond School Nature Garden Project

Led by FoGA Quality & Design Manager, Martin Morgan, the Seniors worked to install a safety rail and carve out a solid path for the children to use through and in their nature garden.

The project started in June 2020, during Covid Lockdown, and so was challenging in so much as the teams needed to be small and the amount of work was large.

Community spirit was in evidence, with our residents rallying around to provide equipment, materials and, of course time and labour.

Quality remained paramount.



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In April 2021, the project was completed and passed over to the school.

FoGA patrons, Stevenage Mayor, Sandra Barr, and Tim Lee, met with FoGA's project team, Martin Morgan, Anne Lowe, Terry Butchart, Ian Dollison, Stacey Mason, Andy Rixon, Stephen Jaynes & Keith Abrahams, with sponsor, Adept Living Foundation (ALF) CIC Chair, Peter Bays met to view the work.

FoGA are also grateful to Herts County Councillor, Steve Jarvis and the Great Ashby Community Council for their grants. A big thank

you to Ex-FoGA Chair, Terry Tyler too.



It has been such fun for the FoGA volunteers to engage co-operatively across Stevenage, for example with the St Nicholas Councillors and the Food Rescue team – FoGA contributors Sandra Barr, Andy Rixon, and Bonnie Brazil.

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The co-operative team also get out and about, collecting for the food bank at Budgens, promoting mental health at local events and having 'Elf & Santa' fun with our little people.



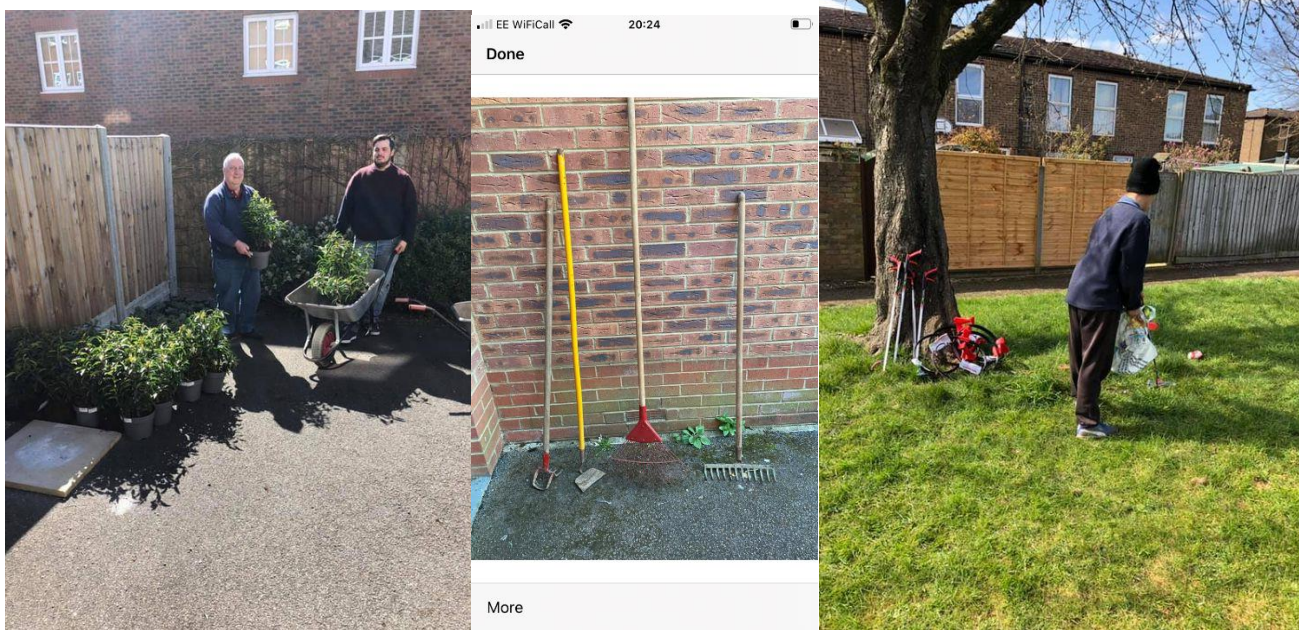
As well as volunteering to support Herts County Council (HCC) with their road crossing patrols, Health Walks and clearing encroaching vegetation that hampers parks, FoGA also enjoyed the support of HCC experts on their volunteering - this member of expert HCC staff is marking out another school project that is currently pending.

Thanks for donating us time, equipment & materials

FoGA have been able to get together all their necessary tools and equipment by way of donation; with thanks to Anne Lowe, Darren Hughes, Ed Wright, Bayley Cullen, Jonathan Flood, Currie's, Ringway, CRoW, NHDC & SBC for their setting out pins!

We have received Hi-Viz vests, spades, shovels, rakes & saws, barrows, cones, and in fact almost all the equipment that we need to do the straightforward projects that we undertake.

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As well as receiving, we have been able to lend the Stevenage Wombles five sets of hoops and litter pickers to support the clearing up throughout Great Ashby and the wider area.

The other costs amount to about £500, which has been kindly raised and provided by FoGASG16 CIC.

This means the Friends of Great Ashby can continue to develop its support the Green Spaces Action plan in Great Ashby District Park & Woodlands.

<https://friends-of-great-ashby.org/foga-work-on-green-spaces-action-plan-2020-2025/>



Clearing vegetation that encroaches on to pathways

It also means that we have been able to get permission from some owners to clear paths that have been hampered, for example Mendip Way to the left.

FoGA can offer help to vulnerable residents who cannot meet their legal obligations to trim overgrown hedges, but we are still waiting for support from HCC with locating who owners are. We have raised a campaign to solve this nuisance.

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Campaigns

In support of making Great Ashby an even better place to live, work, play and learn FoGA advocate on behalf of the Great Ashby Community, without having any preferred solutions, but simply to create as much local engagement and influence as is sensible. Our campaigns and their updates can be located here:

<https://friends-of-great-ashby.org/current-campaigns/>

They include:

- Looking at speed & parking management
- Managing vegetation that grows across and blocks pathways
- Improving active travel by better walking and cycling provision
- Easing Anti-Social Behaviour
- Seeking more access to service such as schools, doctors, and dentists
- Encouraging diversity in council representation
- Developing more community active engagement in decision making

In working towards the County Council strategies, FoGA are pleased to have worked in co-operated with the St Nicholas Councillors, the Ahmadiyya Community, invis-Ability CIC, POWERS SEN, CultureWood and the Adept Living Foundation CIC, and of course Countryside Rights of Way (CRoW). We are also grateful for the support of the Green Spaces & Environmental teams at NHDC & SBC, whose backing is vital to our efforts.

Management Committee & Patrons

During 2020 & 2021, despite Covid, we managed to keep activities going with a small core of volunteers. One of the key priorities was, and remains, to ensure that FoGA develops its governance and remains representative of a cross section of our diverse and growing community.

To do this, FoGA has asked it's Chair, Keith Abrahams, to set out clear priorities for the next five years. <https://friends-of-great-ashby.org/chairs-aims-focuses>.

One priority is to secure a total of five patrons. In late December 2021, local resident, Usman Butt, who serves as Minister of Religion for the Stevenage branch of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, accepted an invite, and became a patron. This leaves just one patron opportunity available.

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At the same time Faiza & Adam Spittles joined and strengthened the Management Committee.



With thanks to our Co-patrons, Tim Lee, Ex-Chair, Terry Tyler, and Sandra Barr, who were delighted to receive recognition by way of a Christmas card from Bim Afolami, who is supportive of and sends cards to many similar community-based organisations.

Keith Abrahams

Chair,

for and on behalf of:

Friends of Great Ashby, Management Committee

3rd January 2022