

We have had an interesting year, with a mix of highlights and challenges.

Bridges

Our bridges have certainly provided some challenges.

We had to replace the handrails on the weir bridge, after they were removed by vandals, but the replacements have fared well and blend in nicely.

The wooden bridge by the wildflower meadow was also vandalised. Someone went to a lot of trouble over multiple visits to destroy the handrails and take a chunk out of the floor. We have now found someone who is prepared to take on the rebuilding of the bridge, so watch that space over the next few months.

And finally, the central stone of the sarsen bridge gave up and had to be replaced. The Parish Council and the Environment Agency were both part of getting that one sorted, with a replacement stone put in last month.

Sunflowers

Last year we did a one-off event to plant sunflowers as a small show of solidarity with the people of Ukraine. It was so popular that we did it again, and we've had great display of flowers over the past couple of months. It was touch and go with the extremely dry May & June that we had, so I'm not sure if my nerves would stand doing it again next year.

Volunteer Days

Attendance at our volunteer days has fallen off a bit. We took part in the King's Big Help Out to try and attract more people, but the maintenance jobs that need to be done throughout the year are not as appealing as tree planting.

Youth Engagement

We started to cultivate relationships between young people and the forest last year, with the local Scouts and Swindon Academy school coming to visit.

That has continued again this year. We had some very enthusiastic young people with saws and loppers helping to prune the trees in the picnic field, rebuilding the dead-hedging around the badger setts, and shifting a ton of woodchips onto some of the paths.

Individual Volunteers

Once again, we owe a great debt of thanks to all the people, like Mike and David, who help in their own time with the litter picking. If it wasn't for them,

we'd be spending all our time collecting rubbish instead of looking after the trees, the plants, and the wildlife.

Fresh Discoveries

Our greatest achievement this year was no doubt the discovery of some new residents. Our friends at Wiltshire Wildlife did a couple of surveys and turned up evidence of *Micromys minutus* and *Thecla betulae*. More commonly known as the Harvest mouse and Brown Hairstreak butterfly. There are various levels of concern and protection for UK wildlife, and they are both considered priority species. It's the first time that the Brown Hairstreak has been found in this area, and according to Wiltshire Wildlife "The work that has been undertaken at HBUF has left the blackthorn in a perfect state for Brown Hairstreak. Great news that this butterfly seems to be spreading into the heart of Swindon". Both are great signs that the work we are doing is paying off.

Blackberries

One of the things we spoke about at last year's AGM was managing the big patch of blackberries that runs up the middle of the Ballman field. The aim is to cut that back in sections over a four- or five-year period, so we get a more varied habitat and encourage greater biodiversity.

The first section was cut down this year, with fresh growth of brambles and other plants already in abundance. It will be interesting to see how it develops over the coming years. We still have a *lot* of untouched brambles around the edge of that field and elsewhere, so jam makers need not fear any lack of fruit.

Plans

One of the other suggestions we took away from our last AGM was to cut a new path through from the picnic field to the Ballman field, through a big patch of blackberries and undergrowth. It revealed a small patch of bluebells under the big oak at the picnic field end. That has inspired us to plant a larger patch of English Bluebells in that area to give us another interesting feature to enjoy. We have started to clear the area, but a lack of volunteers and encountering a lot of fly-tipped rubbish has made it slow work. If we can clear it in time to plant later this year, we will, otherwise we might have to delay until next year.

Hreod Burna Urban Forest
Charity Number 1155603
Income and Expenditure Account 2022/23

	£	
Balance b/fwd		
as at 1 July 2022	4357.38	
Income 2022/23	242.00	
	<u>4599.38</u>	
Less expenditure 2022/23	<u>2157.98</u>	
	<u>2441.40</u>	
Balance of funds at 30 June 2023	2441.40	Bank Account
	<u>91.76</u>	Petty cash held
Total funds	<u>2533.16</u>	

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Charity Number 1155603
Income and Expenditure 2022/2023

Income

Members subs & donations	242.00
	242.00

Expenditure

Trees, compost etc	1204.05
Machinery repairs	675.45
Insurance	257.48
Rent	1.00
Room Hire	20.00
	2157.98