

Nature Citizen – Cherishing All Life CHARITY NUMBER 1166223

Charity Commission Annual Return 2023

Annual Trustees Report 10th March 2022 to 9th March 2023

Nature Citizens charitable purposes are to be of public benefit as stated with the Charity Commission, to educate and promote the importance of the Natural World on our lives and action we can take to conserve, protect and improve the natural eco-system.

The Charity is continuing to achieve these objects through **The Nature Citizen Community Project**.

The overall message is as the Charities name implies that we as Citizens are part of Nature, that the solutions are in our hands, that we can all take action and create a Nature Space, whatever the size and by doing so, all those collective efforts will naturally build a Nature Network of connected habitats resulting in an increase in the abundance of biodiversity.

The Nature Citizen Community Project at the moment has three main areas of engagement:

- The Nature Citizen Community Garden – The Head Office and Demonstration Nature Space, to meet and also showcase how we can all provide a habitat for bees and other beneficial insects.
- Together Building a Nature Network – going out to visit the community, encouraging them to create their own Nature Space, which contributes to increasing the abundance of biodiversity locally.
- To promote the importance of Nature Spaces – through talks, online platforms, articles and Information Packs.

The Charities activities (all time spent is voluntary) during the year have been:

- Continued evaluation and updates of The Charities Policies and Procedures
- Continued membership of the Foundation for Social Improvement and Community Action Suffolk
- As the Trustees are so involved in the actual activities of the Charity, we have continued meetings at the Nature Citizen Community Garden with regular updates and reports sent, contributions made and then verified by the Trustees by email in attempts to reduce the Charities carbon footprint.

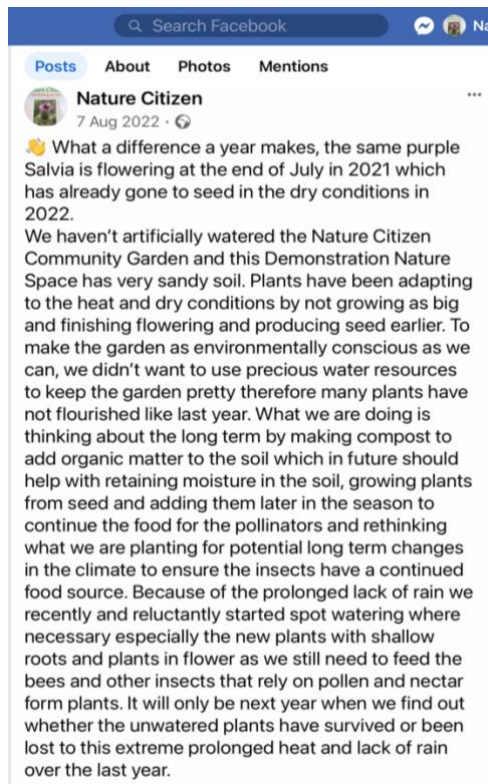
Voluntary hours measured.

Approximately 315 voluntary hours at least has spent at the Nature Citizen Community Garden
Approximately 50 voluntary hours has been spent on the NCNN (Nature Citizen Nature Network)
Approximately 700 voluntary hours NCNN – residents time on their individual Nature Space
Approximately 27 voluntary hours has been spent on the on the Polstead Mini Woodland
Approximately 20 voluntary hours spent on visiting the Farm and Dormouse Survey

Some examples of unmeasured voluntary hours/time spent.

- Raising plants for the Community Garden and to gift out to Parishioners for their Nature Space.
- Delivering plants to for parishioners Nature Spaces that are taking part in the Nature Network.
- Publishing posts on social media and in the Local Newsletter
- Attending Parish Council, Community & Charity Meetings. Having a stand at the Village Christmas Fair. Working with the Parish Council to deliver a green agenda.
- Running the Charity. Writing Policies, risk assessments etc.
- Writing reports, updates and email correspondence
- Curating information packs for the community on 'How to create a Nature Space – Gardening and Farming with Nature In Mind' to distribute electronically or printed if requested.
- Research, attending webinars and virtual events, conferences and courses (online), further education/studying topics such as Soil Regeneration, Soil Food Web, Agroecology, Bee Conservation, AgriTech Conference, Regenerative Farming, National Capital, Clean Rivers etc.
- Continued Professional Development Qualifications
Lisa attaining Level 2 Certificate in Understanding Climate Change and Environmental Awareness
And passed The Field Studies Council Bee Nesting Ecology and Conservation Course.

The Nature Citizen Community Garden (NCCG) - this 'Demonstration Nature Space' is gardened with 'Nature in Mind' to increase the abundance of biodiversity, to share not only with insects and other wildlife, but with the Parishioners and the wider community both online and in the local newsletter. Visitors and passers-by continue to give encouraging comments of how much they enjoy seeing the garden and how lovely its looking. The planting continues to provide food for bees and other



beneficial insects, with an increased variety for as much of the year as possible. This year was particularly harsh with an unusually long period of time without rain and because of the huge amount of water would have been needed to sustain all the plants, we chose to let nature takes its course. As a result, we had plants that were smaller, less productive and some unfortunately were lost and many we will not know until later in the year to see if they come back again. So, we are starting again in some ways.

Luckily around 500 annual plants were grown last year, that were intended to give out into the community, but instead were used on the Garden to continue to stock the established garden, providing a late food source to the bee populations that visit ready for hibernation over winter.



Below are pictures showing the variety in colour and shape of some plants that did grow this year, demonstrating that lots of bees and other insects visited the Garden throughout the year.



With thanks for the kind donation of a Pergola, the Charity now has a Head Office where we can meet whatever the weather. Providing shelter in the rain and protection from the sun, creating a wonderful community hub that's transformed the Garden, 'A Meeting Place in our Nature Space'.



The shed that was already on the plot was moved, the overgrown area was cleared, concrete to act as plinths was poured into holes under the posts to make it secure in all weathers, the pergola was made and as we hadn't appreciated how much of a slope the plot is on a lot of earth had to be excavated to be able to walk underneath it safely. A huge effort all round with a great result!

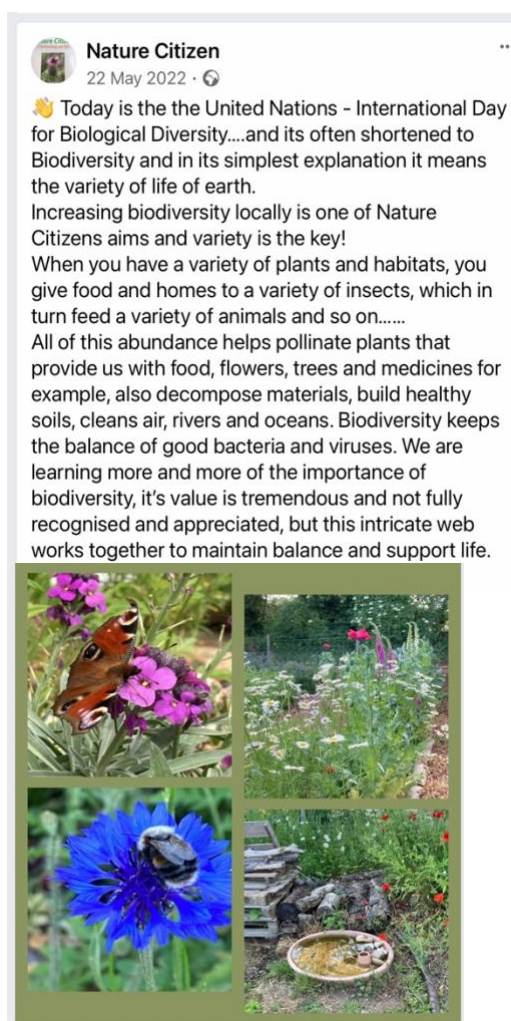
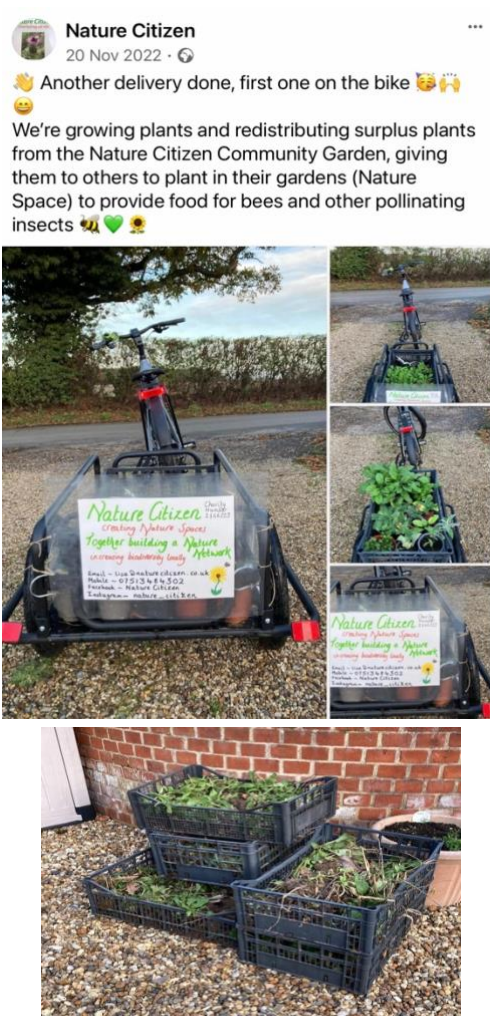
The Nature Citizen 'Together Building a Nature Network'

We continue to visit Parishioners gardens to share information about creating Nature Spaces, offering help with design, sharing information, gifting homegrown plants (trees, hedging, shrubs, wildflower plugs and seeds) to put in their Nature Space, with the wider aim of 'Together Building a Nature Network' across our village, benefitting people and the planet thus increasing the abundance of biodiversity locally.

There are 5 participating gardens this year with the charity's voluntary time communicating, making visits, drawing designs, giving information and gifting plants, trees and shrubs. We estimate around 1,500 plants has been donated/gifted, delivered by car and bicycle using this newly purchased trailer.

As the Charity is very small, we wanted to make the most of the voluntary time to take maximum action to help Nature whilst minimising the time consumed managing all the different aspects of a Charity such as, time spent on acquiring donations, recruiting, training and managing volunteers, DBS checks, covering costs of buildings etc.

Therefore, when we approach Parishioners to take part in the 'Together Building a Nature Network' there is an exchange, we happily give our time, share information and gift plants, shrubs and trees and declined direct offers of donations. In return we ask that they reinvest that money and spend their time on their Nature Space, providing food water and shelter for bees and other beneficial insects. We know that Gardening with bees in mind will in turn attract other wildlife too. Then at the end of the year, we see how many hours they have invested and those are added to the Charities 'Voluntary Hours', they take pictures to show their progress and the hope is that they inspire others and of course have the wellbeing benefits of gardening, being outdoors and being part of a wider project making a contribution to a connected Nature Network across the village.



The Charity asked the residents of one of the participating gardens to kindly let us know if we'd been of any benefit and the feedback was as follows..... 'Last year we were fortunate enough to acquire a small piece of land adjoining our existing garden. It was immediately obvious that we wanted to put the land to use as a Nature Space to encourage wildlife and we reached out to Lisa at Nature Citizen for help. Nature Citizen has been invaluable in providing everything we needed to get started - numerous cuttings for a hedge, a willow tree, many kinds of wildflower plants (we often would arrive home and find a stack of trays filled with all kinds of plants), a forest of butterfly loving buddlia and much more, and of course lots of great ideas (the dead hedge is great example) and advice. Our wildlife garden got off to a good start with help from Nature Citizen, and it's nice to know that it's part of a bigger community of people and nature spaces - sharing ideas, plants and enthusiasm - for the benefit of nature and future generations. As a result, we have put in lots of hours planting trays of plants provided by Lisa - both of us together putting in around 8 hours a week at the weekends and a few more in the lighter evenings of spring summer. I estimate around 700 hours total in the last year. I can't put a figure on how much we have saved financially by virtue of the free plants, advice and friendly visits, except to say that it's been invaluable. Thanks Lisa and Nature Citizen. Mandy and Phill'



Here's some ideas on how can we help them!

- *Have plants in flower for as much of the year as possible. Variety in flower shape, colour and height is the key.

- *Have water available. Any size, I have upturned shells in my plant pot, and recycled jars with stones in them so if they fall in they don't drown.

- *Provide homes (shelter and nesting sites) e.g.hollow stems, drilled holes in wood, undisturbed compost heaps.

- *Give others bee friendly plants to put in their outside space.

- *Encourage your work place to have their own Nature Space.

- *If you have a lawn, cut your grass on the highest setting and allow the low flowering plants to spread, collectively flowering lawns would provide vast amount of food.

- *Plant late autumn and early spring bulbs for bees to stock up before hibernating and when emerging in spring.

- *Avoid using chemicals in your gardens and find natural alternatives where possible.

Our individual actions add up to make a massive collective difference 🙌😊 The solutions are in our hands!

By cherishing the bees we are cherishing ourselves 🍯

Bee a Nature Citizen, create a Nature Space and together we build a Nature Network 🐝💚🌻🌍



A real joy to have four visits (January, April, June and October) over the course of a year to a local Farm. They kindly showed me around their Farm and to participate in the ongoing Dormouse Survey, overseen by an Ecologist. Here is a wonderful example of landowners, working with an Ecologist and volunteers to help a protected species, the Hazel Dormice, on their Farm. The Landowner built by hand and his own design, 50 nest boxes, topped with welsh slate to extend the longevity of the nest boxes and to protect the nests from predators. The coppiced Hazel Trees within the mixed tree woodland provides ideal habitat for these tiny creatures. With each survey, the nest boxes are checked, observations documented, any Hazel Dormouse are weighed, gender and health recorded. The state of the nest boxes are checked and replaced where necessary. This is such vital work as the Hazel Dormouse is considered endangered and each survey is added to the National Recordings.



Together Building a Nature Network- Farmers as well as Gardeners play a large part in protecting species and enhancing biodiversity. As with 'Gardening with Nature in Mind, so there is 'Farming with Nature in Mind' - seeing what areas of the farm could be shared with Nature. Great examples of Nature Spaces on The Farm are : A pond, with sloping banks and a ramp for animals to climb out. Different height grasses. Woodland areas. Double hedgerows to increase density for cover. Ivy growing up trees to provide cover and late food for bees. Deadwood left for beetles. New hedgerows planted. Re wilded area on poor soil areas. Seeded plants left for ground nesting birds.

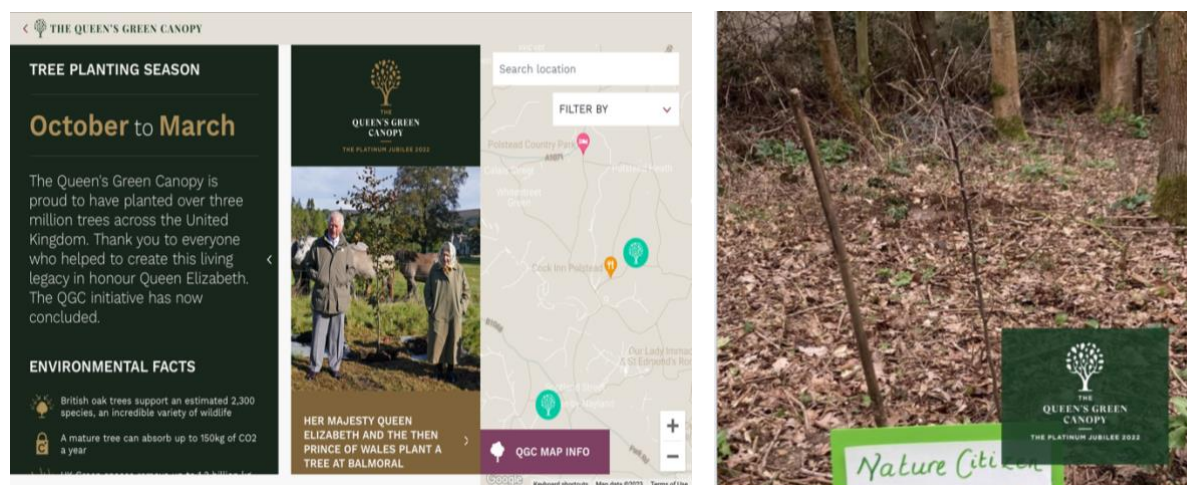


Mini Woodland Area

The Parish Council asked Nature Citizen to manage the Mini Woodland that is on the lower allotment plots next to the Nature Citizen Community Garden. The aim is for it to be managed for the benefit of wildlife. Site visits, meetings and plans were drawn before work commenced in mid-February 2023. The area had become very overgrown. Works on The Woodland started with a risk assessment being formulated, two thirds of the woodland floor has been cleared of bramble, a start has been made to remove the rusty broken wire fencing, at least 150 discarded dog poo bags and litter was collected and binned, some low branches removed, dead hedges started and leaf and branch piles have been made creating an excellent habitat and eliminates the need for bonfires or the removal of it off site saving both time and carbon, planting of plants and seeds has begun, to date 27 voluntary hours have been spent on clearing and planting the woodland so far. Below are pictures of before, during and what has been achieved so far.



We're delighted to have been part of the Queens Green Canopy, fourteen homegrown trees were planted in memoriam to honour Her Majesty adding new varieties and increasing biodiversity in this newly managed woodland area, three Crab Apple, two Hazel, two Hornbeam, one Wild Pear, two Damson, one Holly and three Buckthorn. These have been added to the QGC Map.



Community Engagement

Whether it be in the Community Shop when the Charity was asked to take part in the green button scheme, via newsletters or word of mouth, the main message and invitation that is being distributed amongst Parishioners is **'Nature Citizen – Cherishing All Life'** Nature Citizen is a small local voluntary run Charity with cherishing Nature at its heart. The 'Nature Citizen Community Garden' is a demonstration Nature Space at the Allotments, where we Garden with Nature in mind and all are welcome. We are creating a mosaic of habitats and purposeful planting for pollinators and other beneficial insects for as much of the year as possible. The aim is to encourage others to create Nature Spaces of any size, which will naturally contribute to a Nature Network across the village aiming to increase the abundance of biodiversity locally.'

As well as Community engagement within the village or with The Nature Citizen Community Project, the Charity also puts an article in the local monthly Newsletter delivered to every household in four adjoining villages.

The Charity continues to reach people through Face Book (Nature Citizen) and Instagram (nature_citizen). Gathering information from Facebook Business Suite, NC now has 155 followers. 36 Posts have been written this year and with shares, collectively they have reached 18,123 people. On Instagram we now have 55 followers, have published a further 25 posts. Whilst there's no data available to show how many people the posts have reached; the posts received a total of 369 likes and the 1 video had 46 views.

Sustainability

Sustainability and Net Zero Carbon Emissions are important to the Charity. We re-use plastic plant pots, use home grown compost to grow our own plants and trees from seeds and saplings, do not use chemicals, repurpose materials in the Garden that others were throwing away, leave the seed heads of plants to feed the birds over winter, mulch borders and plant perennials which over time become established both reducing the need to water, collect seeds and surplus plants to redistribute to others which saves them buying new plants and seeds reducing transport miles in the process, we reuse cut branches to make a dead hedge habitat removing the need to have a bonfire or transport miles to the tip, car share and use bicycles, send information packs to Parishioners electronically saving paper and printer ink, make our own posters, focus our activities locally.

A trailer has been purchased for my bicycle to deliver plants around the village for Parishioners Nature Spaces. I am confident that we are a carbon neutral charity as the plants, trees and seeds that we grow in the Garden and give out take in more carbon than we use.

We have regular Charity Trustee meetings when we are working at the garden helping reduce our travel miles and Charities carbon footprint even further.

Conclusion

The Charities main objectives are to be of public benefit, to educate and promote the importance of the Natural World on our lives, that we are part of Nature and rely on the natural processes and cycles of the planet for our survival, that it is in our best interest to preserve what we have and restore what we have lost in a way that allows people and the planet to flourish.

With the continued decline of many habitats, sadly insect, wildlife and wild plant species numbers are still falling. Therefore, one of the main aims of the charity is to keep delivering the simple message... 'if we can all do our little bit in our part of the world' it all adds up to the contribute to local, national and international targets of nature restoration and reversing biodiversity loss. As the Charity's name Nature Citizen implies, we are part of Nature and not separate from it. The solutions really are in our hands, by helping Nature we are in turn helping ourselves too.

With thanks to Simon Goodchild for helping the Charity by keeping the Nature Citizen domain name, hosting, secure certificate and email account at direct cost and donating his time for doing this.

With thanks to the local Parish Council for their ongoing financial contribution that enables the Charity to cover its basic running costs and donating the allotment plots for the Nature Citizen Community Garden

Trustees have verified the Trustee Annual Report via email in support of reducing travel miles and keeping the Charities carbon footprint at net zero.

Rachel White (Chair)

Mary Murdoch (Treasurer)

Clare Reeves (Secretary)

Emma Daniels

Founder and C.E.O – Melissa Matthews (known as Lisa)

TRUSTEE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS MARCH 2022-2023

Nature Citizen – Charity Number 1166223

Receipts and Payments for year ended 9th March 2023

Opening Balance b/f 10/03/2022 £1,934.56

Receipts		Payments	
Donations	£450.00	Charity Insurance.	£112.00
Amazon Smile donation.	£ 44.12	Website and associated costs.	£423.73
Cash Donation	£100.00.	Phone and calls	£275.92
		Promotional exp. & printing	£278.59
		Compost/seeds/plants.	£402.51
		Community Garden equipment.	£319.12
		Community Project equipment.	£140.96
		Travel costs.	£191.20
		Continued Professional Dev.	£164.08
		Closing Balance c/f 09/03/2023	<u>£220.57</u>
TOTALS.	<u>£2,528.</u>		<u>£2,528.68</u>

Trustees have verified accounts via email due to meeting sustainability goals by reducing travel miles minimising the Charities carbon footprint and reducing exposure to covid and winter viruses.

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