



Annual Report 2021

Houndwood Community Group

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Background

Covid 19 again affected the work of the Community Group committee in 2021, though the committee continued to meet monthly via Zoom. The restrictions prevented in person meeting and events and it wasn't until July 2021 that restrictions were finally removed with the Covid laws being revoked in September. Many people, especially those in vulnerable groups, were still reluctant to return to normal even then.

Although we had to have another summer without our Fete on the Green - usually the highlight of the Houndwood calendar - we were able to recommence Gardening activities and Litter Picking once outside restrictions were lifted in the first part of the year. We were also able to hold a socially-distanced Halloween event, which was well attended and much appreciated.

As the year came to a close we felt we could start to tentatively plan the Fete on the Green for 2022 and other activities to bring the residents together.

Finance

See attached finance files. We are grateful to Street Parish Council for their generous contribution to our running costs. We also appreciate the support from Mendip District Council in the form of two grants. In August we applied to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Fund to support the wildlife and nature areas on the estate. The other application was to the more general Community Fund Small Grants. We were successful in both funds although they weren't paid to us until late 2021 and early 2022.

Donations from residents are also much appreciated. We receive support in kind from LiveWest, Somerset Active Sports Partnership and Somerset Wildlife Trust. The support of all these people and organisations allowed us to deliver our planned activities and balance the books.

Events

We finally had an overdue **AGM** in March via zoom. We had a great virtual turn-out and a couple of very good speakers: Tom Clark of C and J Clark who spoke about the ethos behind the design of our estate and community, and Matthew Tute from Premier

Estates who manage Houndwood on behalf of the two developers, Crest Nicholson and Barratt Homes.

As previously mentioned, the Fete on the Green was cancelled for a second year due to Covid 19 concerns. However, once Covid restrictions were lifted we had a **Picnic on the Green** in August 2021. We were lucky with the weather and despite short notice many families came along. We also had beautiful flower arrangements from the planters maintained by the Gardening group and a stall explaining the ecological aspect of the estate and the wildlife we have as neighbours.

We recommenced the **Play on the Green** sessions in the Summer Holidays. In July and August, thanks to Jo Smith at SASP (Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership). We had our biggest turnouts ever, with all four sessions well attended. Parents and kids all enjoyed the activities.

In October we had our Spook-tacular **Creepy Cavern** event for Halloween which was enjoyed by literally hundreds of people from the estate and the village more widely. The pumpkin competition was extremely popular and very hard for the judges because of the high standard and so many entries.

Estate Management

In the middle of the year there was a change of personnel at Crest Nicholson, which created a drive to complete unfinished items. This was in preparation for handing over their part of the estate to Premier Estates. Their original target was to be handover ready by the end of 2021 although this has again come and gone. The works completed include: the broken Shoe Tree sculpture has been removed; paths and bridges have been repaired; trees have been trimmed etc. We even have the new yellow path at the end of California Parade that links to the footpath into Cranhill car park.

Road repair is still an outstanding issue on both halves of the estate. The builders will have to repair them before Somerset Council adopts them. We have not seen much progress on this despite our communications.

Communication with residents.

We published and delivered two newsletters in 2021, one in February and one July, to all 400 households. We continue to use the noticeboards updating them on a regular basis.

The Facebook group is very active and the main point of contact for many residents. Our website also has much useful and interesting information.

The Gardening Group has been working for quite a while now and we have formed a new and growing Ecology Group.

Ecology Group

At the **Picnic on the Green** in August we had the marquees up, one of which had an eco-theme showing butterflies and plants that may be seen around the area and some information on what we would like to do around the estate. Our aim was to encourage the formation of an Ecology group to run a series of activities so families can help us do this and learn as we go.

The grant we received from the Climate and Ecological Emergency Fund allows us to repair and replace the many bird and bat boxes we have on the estate, get bug and studying and pond dipping equipment, and to run educational and maintenance activities.

The **Bird Box audit & clean** on Sunday 27th February 2022 was something that was long overdue as this hasn't even been done since they were put up. We may not have had as many volunteers turn up as we hoped, but those that did were enthusiastic and as well as checking and cleaning the existing boxes, we added more at regular sites around the estate. From now on we will be checking and cleaning every year at the end of the breeding season, end September to beginning October.

On 13th April 2022 we worked with LiveWest and Avalon Marshes to do an Easter egg hunt and seed-planting session for the children on the estate. Rain put the dampers on it but those that come really enjoyed themselves.

Gardening Group

The community gardening team is a small group of residents who mainly care for the raised beds on the estate, particularly aiming to encourage bees and butterflies. The group continue to look after most of the planters on the Barratts side of the Estate and cooperate closely with the contracted landscape gardeners. At the **Picnic on the Green** there were stunning flower arrangements created by our wonderful gardening group using flowers grown in our planters.

The main tasks are weeding, pruning, growing new plants from seeds, planting bulbs and taking cuttings, watering, more weeding and while we are out and about, some rubbish clearing. We are also creating wildflower planting areas, especially near the new yellow path where a redundant tarmac area has been dug out and left as bare earth.

The Community Grant we won has allowed us to replace our old greenhouse, buy gardening tools and trolleys and also a mountain of compost.

Conclusion

2021 has been a challenging year for Houndwood as elsewhere. I am proud of the way our residents have again stepped up and supported each other, and the way that good neighborliness has continued through the Facebook group.

Peter Goater

Chair

20th March 2022