

## **Environment and Edgewick Farm**

**Cllr. Skelton**

Under sustained pressure of funding cuts, Milton Keynes Council has been negotiating with town and parish councils on the devolution of environmental responsibilities. Woburn Sands TC have opted to retain the baseline provision offered until this year by MKC's contractors, such as mowing the roadside verges twice a year, while expanding what we undertake locally. The landscape maintenance of a few areas remains the responsibility of MKC, however, particularly the adopted open amenity spaces at Parklands. MKC contractors also remain responsible for highway maintenance, gulley clearing and street cleansing and lighting. On the other hand, Town Council contractors now regularly maintain other open areas in the town, such as Mowbray Green, the Recreation Ground, the surrounds of the library and war memorial, the Summerlin Centre, the Old Fire Station and the shoppers' car park off Russell Street, as well as looking after our street planting (including hanging baskets), weeding and hedge trimming of the public rights of way and the emptying of dog bins. Meanwhile, Edgewick Farm is managed on behalf of the Town Council by its volunteers group, with help from The Greensand Trust; and the Friends of Woburn Sands Station likewise look after the planting there. Nevertheless, as numbers of both local residents and visitors from outside increase, so too does the problem of litter – including abandoned dog deposit bags – and combatting that scourge is a responsibility that we must all share!

In response to the increasingly pressing environmental concerns of our day, the Town Council has recently launched two new initiatives. First, Cllr. Rae is planning a Young Environmentalist Award, which will showcase the achievements of young environmentalists in and around Woburn Sands. The current plan is to have a project development period leading up to a final weekend event to display the young environmentalists' achievements. The weekend would culminate in a ceremony to acknowledge and reward participation. The date originally envisaged for this final event (May 2021) has had to be delayed on account of the current Covid-19 emergency, so we hope to announce a new date later this year.

The second initiative is the establishment of a Climate Change Group, chaired by Cllr. Skelton, in support of Milton Keynes Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency. This group will consider local measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to mitigate against the effects of climate change that might be adopted by the Town Council. In due course we intend to hold a public meeting to discuss our plans, the date of which will again depend upon the resolution of the current restrictions.

**Edgewick Farm.** Besides a generous crop of apples in the orchard, to which people were given access to help themselves, 'fairy rings' of large parasol mushrooms put in a spectacular display in the fields last autumn. And looking forward, our efforts to encourage wildflowers at Edgewick continue: thus, sheep will be excluded from top field for the summer to allow the flowers to grow and set seed. In addition, the picnic area above the orchard was seeded last autumn, which should provide a fine showing of wildflowers there in June-July.

During the year, the Volunteers Group have been kept busy with maintenance work such as cutting back the encroaching gorse in the lower field and over-exuberant brambles elsewhere, occasional emergency tree surgery, ongoing repairs to fencing, and path-mowing, as well as our least favourite tasks of litter-picking – up until the imposition of the Covid-19 restrictions, when volunteer sessions were paused. Otherwise, our boardwalk-laying along the

muddy sections of the southern boundary path was only possible up to the onset of the late winter rains, which prevented the necessary vehicular access. Meanwhile, extensive further repairs to fencing are also needed, so we're currently assessing our requirements for that work.

When conditions eventually return to normal, Edgewick Farm will also be the starting point for a planned thematic heritage trail over the Greensand Escarpment based on the local history of fuller's earth working. A walk along the trail is being proposed for the MK Heritage week, 11-20 September, so watch out for details on the TC website later in the year.

As ever, thanks are due to the Town Council for financial support and to the Greensand Trust for their invaluable help with our work, to the organisational management of the Edgewick Farm Volunteers Group committee, chaired by Val Russell – and, last but not least, to the hard-working volunteers themselves. New volunteers are always welcome to join us at our sessions on the first Sunday of every month, starting at 10.00 am – when normal conditions eventually return, of course!