

Selby Meadow, Uckfield – A Green Sanctuary for People and Wildlife.

I first visited Selby Meadow in 2015 and met the local people who as members of Newtown Action Group, (NAG) a residents' association, became its guardians in 2010, successfully putting forward a case to lease the land from Uckfield Town Council.



Selby Meadow is located to the south of the town and west of Uckfield Hospital. In 2010 it was a neglected allotment site which was becoming clogged with refuse and other dumped materials and was due to become part of a planned housing development site. Through community action the site was saved and Newtown Action Group, together with other local residents, worked to clear the site of rubbish and created a wildlife haven and a peaceful and relaxing green space for all.

In the words of its chair Velda Reed ***"We aspire to keep the place chemical free, keeping it diverse in native plants and wildlife and people friendly, creating areas for natural imaginative play, restful reflection and for nature to thrive."***

Funded to work in the area for a couple of years, I supported Velda and Linda and other members of the association to plan and deliver community events that would encourage new families to visit and enjoy the space and hopefully encourage new volunteers to help care for the space. To this end, Selby Meadow and NAG were recipients of an Airs allocated Reaching Communities grant. Now five years later I have the privilege to work with them again via the ESCC Making it Happen funded programme and last week myself and my manager Community Based Service Lead Steve Lewes visited Selby Meadow.

It was indeed like re-visiting old friends and it was wonderful to see the site is well used by families and by wildlife. It's a two-way relationship, benefitting all. Residents and neighbours, many who's homes and gardens back on to Selby Meadow are always willing to lend a hand, make donations of plants and seeds, etc. so it feels like it's supported by a real community effort. In fact more recently a neighbour who keeps bees has benefitted from the flowers grown especially for the bees by Velda and crew, and of course the flowers have benefitted too.

"When we need help on a project we ask the neighbours. "

"Families use it for kids parties. It's not posh, we don't charge, so everyone can use it".

Velda and Linda told us about their new plans and they are going to submit an application for our Making it Happen Programme Small Sparks Grant.

Velda explained that a monumental oak tree growing on the site is 180 years old and that many different species of birds and insects enjoy the sanctuary of this incredible tree and the many living trees and old tree trunks on site and they wish to encourage more activities for children and young people so they can learn about these and other natural habitats in the meadow. There are also plans to have willow fencing erected around the site, as the new mixed hedge to be planted by Uckfield Council will need time to grow.

Alongside the existing small herb garden and play areas, Velda is hoping to develop a forest time space and associated activities for children. Another popular activity on site is the Mud Kitchen. It's now showing wear and tear, so needs replacing and through my contact with Uckfield Men's Shed, Selby Meadow will now be the recipients of a new Mud Kitchen, built by members of the Men's Shed.

The grant will be of great help to kick start the new activities and alongside this, Selby Meadow needs new volunteers, to continue to build on the wonderful legacy, bringing new energy and ideas. Velda, Linda and the crew would welcome new faces and especially love to hear from young people and parents and carers about what they would like to see happen and what they could contribute.

Visit the Selby Meadow Face Book page to get in touch: <https://www.facebook.com/Selby-Meadow-213401622014644/>