



Background

Wivelsfield Lunch Bunch are a local parent, carer and toddler group who meet at the Wivelsfield Parish Church, church hall. The key volunteer, Sheila Blair, was keen to make better use of the green space – leased to the Church by a local land owner and raise awareness and encourage families and children of all ages to improve their well-being by enjoying the space - learning to grow fresh vegetables, learn more about wildlife and encourage more wildlife into the space.



Their first support from Village Agents was with Gill Blackwood in 2017, and as a result of this support they went on to develop a small project based on their ideas and submitted a bid for Seedcorn funding to create a raised bed for the families to grow vegetables and prepare the area for growing wildflowers.



In 2018 the key volunteer had discussions with the new Village Agent in the area, Chiara Vagnarelli, relating the enjoyment and resulting health and well-being benefits gained by the members of the Lunch Bunch and the desire to reach a wider audience, particularly families from some of the newer housing developments on the perimeters of the village.

The idea of a community event was facilitated by Chiara and the key volunteer came up with the idea of having an Open Day. This was taken back to the PCC of Wivelsfield Parish Church, who support the Lunch Bunch, and an event date was set for September 14th and a plan evolved.

Getting Started

The aim of the event was to encourage existing and new families 'to access and enjoy the countryside around them as well as introduce them to local clubs and organisations where they can make new friendship bonds'.

Sheila Blair, lead volunteer

With regards funding the event, the group were already planning to use some of their donations and informal membership money and ask for volunteer help from the wider community in running different activities, but the money did not meet the full cost of running the event, so they were made aware of the further Seedcorn funding pot and put in a bid, which was successful.

The event was advertised in the Parish Magazine, flyers were posted through letterboxes in all the new housing and information and the flyer was posed on local FB pages.

On the Day

The day was a great success and the sunny dry weather certainly helped, as did the barbecue lunch on offer. All the children & a lot of the adults tried most of the wide range of activities on offer. These included bug hunting, watching honey bees in a glass fronted bee hive & honey tasting, decorating plant pots & planting bulbs in them, making bug hotels, birdseed feeders, wind chimes, egg box caterpillars, pinecone butterflies, clay hedgehogs and painting and working on a wildlife collage.



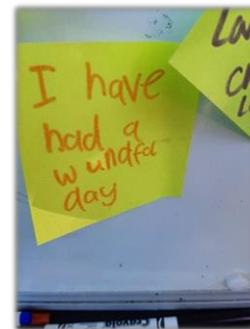
These activities were run by local volunteers with the support of Chiara and Suzi, AirS Village Agents. There were 19 volunteers running activities and helping with stalls and refreshments. A lot of relevant wildlife information was on offer and delivered through the activities and information stalls provided by RSPB volunteers, Mid-Sussex Beekeepers & Monday Club bird boxes & hedgehog hotels.



The day was enjoyed by 80 local residents, with 30 children and young people taking part in the activities and learning new facts and new ideas for encouraging wildlife and spending time outdoors, particularly in the surrounding countryside.

Evaluation on the Day

Sheila and I came up with two simple evaluation ideas – a 'Tell Us About Your Day' board for posting messages and a 'fill the buckets up' practical exercise where we set up 3 buckets with different statements and encouraged children – and adults – to put a pebbles (and some large stones!!!) in the bucket with the statement that matched how they felt about the day.



Outcomes

The event has had excellent outcomes with Sheila been asked by a number of participants to organise another Open Day and this is provisionally planned for 1st Feb 2020. A nucleus of interested people have come forward to help explore ideas for Wildlife projects and there has been an increase in church members supporting the vision for the wildflower meadow resulting in a small group coming together to manage the area.

The learning and skills gained by adults, children and young people were also evident:

“Some visitors expressed serious interest in becoming bee keepers, bought bird boxes, learnt how to build bug hotels, took information leaflets about making their gardens hedgehog friendly, have learnt how to identify a number of insects & their role in the wildlife web”. Sheila Blair, lead volunteer.

