

Report from Station Adopters Group for January Parish Council Meetings

At our Transition Group meeting in October, four members ie Mary, Ken, Dawne and Dan agreed to take over responsibility for the station garden and its upkeep. We then invited any volunteers to join our group and at the end of November, I had confirmation that there were six people interested, so our group has now increased in number to ten! The volunteers include Tricia Box, Bill Box, Jay Sergeant, Jan Hughes, Vanessa Hearnden and Christine Morgan.

At the end of October, we were handed a £50 Garden Voucher from David and Anne Taylor which they had been given for attending the Rail Partnership Awards Ceremony. Ken and I spent this money buying bulbs, viola, stock, wallflowers and compost which we planted in the boxes attached to the station railings and also three tubs next to the steps leading to the platform. A further £50 was given to us by Bures Hamlet Parish Council in November to purchase more plants and bulbs which we have since spent. David and Ann advised that they had lifted all the bulbs which they had planted and had taken them all with them when they moved, hence we have had to purchase completely new stock.

We had our first station adopters group on the platform on 14th dec where we met with Alan Neville and Jayne Sumner and everyone introduced themselves and we discussed the role etc of the station adopter while enjoying some non alcoholic mulled wine and home made mince pies which we provided as a welcome! Our meeting continued as we were invited to get on the train to Marks Tey when it returned from Sudbury! Alan and Jayne said they had never had such a unique meeting before!

Jayne Sumner recently provided us with four tubs from Anglia Rail which Vanessa Jan and I planted today with daffodils, polyanthus and wallflowers. There are some more daffodils left over which we will be planting on Friday 11th Jan when we will have our next working party and as a group we will decide whether there are other areas of the garden that we would like to plant up. Because of holidays intervening, there has been a delay in getting the group organised! It is planned that on Friday we will put a rota together of helpers and jobs to be done, and decide whether we work in pairs or small groups. It is hoped that we will be able to manage weekly attendance to check on the plants etc. We are all mindful that at certain times of the year there will be more tasks to do requiring a much larger group of helpers.

We have spoken with Alan and Jayne about possibly entering the station garden in to the Open Gardens weekend on May bank holiday this year. Alan is very keen to help promote this if we decide to go ahead with the idea.

We have not yet made contact with the garden centre at Greenstead Green where David and Ann went for the plants. However one idea we have had is to approach Perrywoods in Sudbury to see if they would be willing to sponsor plants for our tubs as they are our most local garden centre.

Watering the station garden and tubs needs attention as the neighbours who previously provided free water via a hose pie to the platform, have also moved away and we need to speak to the new owners to find out whether they are willing to continue this service. However we have discussed purchasing a water tub and it has met with the agreement of Alan Neville and Jayne Sumner who will pay the cost also for guttering on the waiting room. Measurements need to be taken before this is ordered and a decision needs to be made about the exact siting so that it doesn't interfere with wiring etc. on the outside wall of the

waiting room. The water butt in question is 800 litres capacity and is square in shape and when full should really help with any long dry summers.

The issue of padlocking tubs to the fence of the platform has been raised but now they are full, they are really quite heavy and will pose a difficulty to be moved however there is always the issue of possible vandalism but we will just have to hope they don't get damaged! However when the water butt is in situ, it will be a good idea to have it secured.

Below are some photographs of some of our group, and the tubs we planted today. Consideration can be given to whether in future we obtain rectangular planters like the ones David and Ann obtained from the garden centre in Greenstead Green so they can be placed right up to the railings. This will all be work in progress!

Mary Turner