



**EYNSFORD**

**ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE**

**2024**

**EYNSFORD IN BLOOM & EYNSFORD GREEN TEAM**



## **INTRODUCTION**

**Eynsford is a rural village, just 22 miles from London. It is situated in the North Downs Area of National Landscape (formally AONB) and Green Belt. It is situated in a chalk valley along the A225 and parallel to the River Darent. The village gardens, flood relief pasture, the river and its banks are an oasis for wildlife, surrounded by arable farming .**

**Eynsford In Bloom (EiB) is a volunteer group that maintains a number of floral sites including the war memorial at the centre of the village. Their gardening includes weeding, composting, pruning, cutting hedges, and planting throughout the year.**

**The Green Team is a Parish Council Working Group made up of councillors and members of the public/local residents who meet to discuss and where possible initiate schemes to improve the environmental aspects of life in the village and to help decarbonise and combat global warming.**

**The River Darent and its banks are maintained by the Environment Agency and riparian owners. DRiPS is the Darent River Protection Society who work to maintain the chalk river ecosystem and flow from its source in Westerham to the Thames.**

**Wild life and wild flower sites of note around the village are Nine Hole Wood, Millfield, Austin Lodge Valley, A225 roadside nature reserve, Preston Hill Country Park, Chalkhurst and Oliver Shaw Woods, Lullingstone Country Park and Pedham Place Golf Course**

**The village currently faces the threat of a 2,500 house new town and 35,000 seater rugby stadium being built on the site of Pedham Place Golf Course within the parish of Eynsford and overlooking the village at the top of The Darent Valley. An overwhelming majority of residents oppose this development and have been actively campaigning against the proposals. Not least because of the catastrophic environmental impact it would have on the locality in the form of light and noise pollution, increased traffic congestion, water demands and destruction of an existing wild life area. The district council propose to remove the designated area from being Green Belt despite it being National Landscape (previously AONB) and performing extremely well against Green Belt criteria.**

# **1. Is there an understanding of what biodiversity means locally?**

- **The Parish council supports biodiversity in establishing the Green Team working group and helping to fund Eynsford in Bloom's work.**
- **Trident is the monthly church magazine for the village and includes an Eynsford In Bloom report. EiB also post every week about their activities on the local village Facebook page. In both cases EiB inform people about how their work links to the environment, wildlife and biodiversity. The local farmer Robert Alexander also writes a report each month in Trident focusing a lot on the farm's work in relation to the environment.**
- **The village has two designated tree wardens who help maintain and advise on the health, maintenance and new planting of trees. One warden John Gee initiated the planting of a new tree acrostic spelling out "Save The Planet" in different tree names planted in the fields above the village last year. Each tree displaying the name of the species giving the spelling it's letter.**
- **Signs around the village support education of wildlife and their habitats such as the wildlife notice board at Station Triangle wildlife area which illustrates wild flowers and wildlife you can see there for each season.**
- **The local primary school Anthony Roper has an outdoor wildlife teaching space to help educate all their pupils in biodiversity and the natural world. They also have an allotment to involve the children in growing fruit and vegetables as does the separate Anthony Roper Pre school.**
- **Eynsford in Bloom organisers have visited Anthony Roper School to talk to the classes about bio diversity and helping to protect nature around the area.**
- **St. Martin's churchyard is a wildlife haven in the middle of the village and subject of a year long wildlife survey.**
- **We have 5 young peoples groups:- Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Brownies and Rainbows who are all tutored in biodiversity in their activities particularly during their camping, hikes and sleepovers. Outside the**



*A new leaf bay to create leaf mulch was created by Eynsford in Bloom near to the station*



*Eynsford in Bloom collect fallen leaves to create leaf mulch on their allotment for use though out the village*



*Protected species Roman Snails in their log pile created in St Martin's churchyard*



*Crushed egg shells used as a natural guard against slugs by an allotment holder*

Scout hut there are two solitary bee houses, bird and bat boxes. The Scouts have their “Grow Together“ raised bed in their ground for planting vegetables.

## **2. Have efforts been made to create, restore or maintain appropriate habitats to support wildlife?**

- **Station triangle is given over as a wildlife space. In April it gives a lovely primrose display. It has 15 or more wild flowers during the year including the English Bluebell, Fritillary, Snowdrop and Cowslip. A new notice board funded by the Parish Council was added last year to display information as to what wildflowers and wildlife might be seen for that season.**
- **Millfield (7acres) was bought by the village at auction in 2000. The lower level by the R. Darent is covered in wild flowers every summer and is partly flooded in winter. The grass upper level is mown by a farmer every year. There is a 28 tree orchard of 14 types of apple tree planted 10 years ago. A dead hedge was added recently and is maintained and added to by volunteers. Cowslips and white dead nettle are spreading annually. The cowslips are increasing annually. There are 11 home-made bird boxes.**
- **The Old Manse, Priory Lane has two paddocks left uncultivated for 20 years. On the flat one a mixed flora is flourishing. On the undulating one a different flora includes pyramidal and bee orchid in abundance.**
- **Some private residences have given over a large proportion of their back garden space to create wildlife friendly areas where grass is not cut and wildflowers and wildlife are given free reign. Friars Garth, Sparepenny Lane has been managed for the benefit of wildlife for approximately 15 years and areas of the garden continue to be enhanced as wildlife friendly each year. Friars Garth won Gold in the RHS desktop entry for wildflower and weeds last year.**
- **Hollyhurst cottage has a large area left wild with wildlife trails and meadow area with bee hives. It has a pond with frogs, mature trees, composting, many wild flowers, bug hotels and badger sets.**

- **An increasing number of residents are creating mini meadows in their gardens. On one site a resident puts twine round the growing pyramidal orchid patch and their landlords West Kent Housing stop mowing there for 3 months. Other residents cordon off parts of their lawn and mark twigs where orchids are growing.**
- **No Mow May is widely practised through the village. Many residents stop mowing all their grass from May to August looking for orchids, lady's slipper and other wild flowers.**
- **The farmers leave headland unploughed. Skylarks nest in the cultivated fields annually. Round the outside of most arable fields there is a grass margin of six metres which keeps the crop areas away from hedges and water courses. These environmental strips are wildlife corridors and many are linked to extend their benefit beyond just one field.**
- **Under the Countryside Stewardship scheme small plots at various locations on the Alexander's farm have been designed to be attractive to bees and butterflies. Each has a particular mix of seed for sowing to attract the exact species for which the mixture has been designed. During the growing season there will be an abundant supply of pollen and nectar rich flowers.**
- **St. Martin's Church have reduced grass cutting and sectioned off areas to encourage wild flower areas. Pyramidal orchids have appeared. Many creatures live near the compost heap and bug hotel including the stag beetles and Roman snails(both protected), slow worms and lizards. A new log pile has been established as a home for insects and Roman Snails**
- **The flood meadows are a mile long and belong to the farm. Every year the hay is removed and cows brought on to graze. There are wonderful displays of wild flowers and butterflies near the River, hedgerows, pasture fields and woodland last Spring and Summer. Flowers are blooming every month.**
- **DRiPS work managing the river Darent is ongoing with annual talks that EiB members attended.**

- **There are six Bug hotels in public places around the village and many villagers have their own bug hotels, bee houses and insect refuges in their gardens.**
- **Preston Hill is a newly restored small country park where wild goats are being used to maintain grass levels.**
- **The main local farm in the village are setting traps to eliminate wild mink as the first steps to improving habitat for native species like water voles along the river.**
- **Austin Lodge old golf course is an area being “re wilded” by the owner who is using wool covers around tree saplings. The 325 acre site is being managed in a nature positive way with flowers and wildlife typical of a chalk down landscape allowed to flourish.**

### **3. Is nature being considered in all activities, rather than just restricting wildlife-friendly practices to a specific project or area?**

- **When considering the new village hall development and realigning of the football pitch at Harrow Meadow it was decided to incorporate a new hedge and tree planting around the site. The Green Team have planted 420 native hedging plants and 15 new trees around the perimeter of the site. The planting is on chalk soil and will provide new refuge for wild life once established. In addition log piles and a bug hotel were established on the site**
- **The Woodland Trust is allowing local woodland like Nine Hole Wood to develop and wild flowers to spread**
- **Chalkhurst Wood (private) has carried out the felling of very old trees leaving hard wood standards, removing felled timber and opening up the area for wild flowers including wood anemone, primrose and English bluebell**
- **Eynsford in Bloom encourages wildlife friendly practice in all their communication to the village through Trident, parish newsletters and**

**Facebook in order to spread the word to individuals gardening in their own private gardens.**

**4. Have steps been taken to employ sustainable or ecological gardening practices? E.g. Avoiding chemicals like pesticides and using other biological and physical controls like hand weeding or companion planting.**

- **Eynsford in Bloom work parties on Tuesday mornings and first Saturday of the month do lots of hand weeding and avoid use of pesticides and chemicals on the 13 sites we manage in the village. For instance we often use Ecover washing up liquid in sprayers instead of insecticide to combat aphids at the Memorial Rose Garden. We practice organic pest control and natural slug prevention ( coffee grounds and eggshell) , sheep wool and gravel and beer traps**
- **Some private gardens have big front hedges to reduce noise and absorb fumes from the A225 eg Walnut Close, Station Rd. The Primary School is protected from the adjacent A225 by a 5ft high hawthorn hedge beside the playing field and a woodland classroom in front of the building to reduce noise and air pollution.**
- **The farmer maintains a half mile bank of elm along Lullingstone Lane cutting back the elm every 10 to 15 years when the Dutch elm beetle and fungus returns. Local farmers have been filling gaps in old hedgerows and planting new boundary hedges around several fields.**
- **New tree planting happens every winter in the village. Some is to commemorate events and people. A new oak was planted by John Gee in the Station wildlife triangle**
- **The Green Team used natural sheep wool as a suppressant for weeds around the new hedge whips and trees planted at Harrow Meadow**
- **The main car park (18 spaces) has 8 ft. tall shrubs along the back fence, a 10ft high sycamore hedge and 8 flowering cherry trees to one side, 6 tall Cotoneaster and a buddleia to one side and 3 birches in tubs. They all help to absorb particulates from a busy traffic road - the A225.**



*The Green team organise Litter Picking days which attracts volunteers from all over the village*



*Our youngest member of the Green Team with the latest bug hotel built in the village on Harrow Meadow*

- **At the village allotments you can see examples of companion planting such as Marigolds planted with tomatoes which repel aphids and Sweet peas and other flowers grown very near to crops to encourage pollinators.**
- **The School use companion planting with marigolds amongst the vegetables and teachers and children do lots of hand weeding.**

**5. Has the use of peat been reduced and solutions implemented like composting, reducing the use of plastics and recycling those used.**

- **Eynsford in Bloom maintain their own allotment to make compost and leaf mould and keep plants for the village. We have 4 compost bays lined with weed suppressant. The top bay is to accommodate the very heavy leaf fall in the village and the adjacent bay is for leaf turning. One bay is for fresh organic waste from the village borders and road sides to make compost. The 4th bay is for bagged up compost ready to take to village sites.**
- **Horse manure is available in reused sacks from one family with 3 horses. The horses, are kept on wood shavings and straw. This fertilises the soil and organic material increases the water retention.**
- **Parish Council allotment holders order in mushroom compost and wood chippings for mulching and footpaths. All allotment holders have their own composting facilities.**
- **Sevenoaks District Council have a fortnightly collection on green bins costing residents £40 a year and brown sacks. The contents collected is composted for their own use and sold to the public.**
- **There is a large compost mound at the back of St. Martin's Church yard. It is regularly tidied (rubbish removed). Some compost is used in the Church yard, in the car park and to replace soil washed away by the River opposite the Tea Rooms.**
- **A new leaf bay to create leaf mulch was created by EiB this year near to the station**

- **Most residents have composting in their own gardens. Some gardens have quite extensive facilities including up to 4 separate bays. Eynsford Green Team survey 2020 identified residents actively working on composting and water saving, making garden ponds and one resident was working on a rainwater harvesting system.**
- **The Anthony Roper Nursery School have a compost bin where waste food is added every day. The Primary School have a compost corner made with pallets on their Class Allotment Plot**
- **Eynsford in Bloom reuse old plastic pots. Newer plastic pots are recycled at their plant suppliers L Mills, Creswick Nursery, DA4 9HY. Plastic drinks cups are recycled by EiB and many allotment holders as propagating plant pots. They are used by the Brownies and Rainbows for model making and used by The W.I. for bird feeders**

## **6. Have you reduced the need for mains water for irrigation, daily and or weekly watering?**

- **Eynsford is in a chalk valley with some alluvium on the valley floor. Many gardens have very little top soil so cultivation is limited. If the grass dies due to drought it regenerates when the rain returns. Very few gardeners would water the grass.**
- **The Parish Council have reduced the cutting of grass verges to encourage wild flowers. They say mowing the verges less reduces the compaction of the soil by the mowers and less compacted soil is better at retaining water.**
- **St.Martin's eco-Church has a water butt. The Church provide tapped water, watering cans, brown SDC sack for green waste and a black SDC sack for rubbish for visitors to the graveyard. The sacks are put out for Sevenoaks District Council collection fort-nightly.**
- **Local fruit farmers at Wested Farm have created a small reservoir for rain water while Alexander's farm have a rainwater harvesting system. This gathers rain from two adjacent buildings and is ducted into two large storage tanks after going through a filter. The two tanks hold 44,000 litres and gather 7,000 litres from every inch of rainfall. The**

**water is kept in black plastic tanks inside a building to keep the water away from uv light that would cause early deterioration. The water is used to fill a crop sprayer.**

- **Telegraph Pole Corner at Riverside has an Amberol container with water reservoir in the base reducing the need for frequent watering. Three similar Amberol containers have been installed to replace the old planter barrels at Eynsford station.**
- **EiB use Watergel water storing crystals in urns, pots, mangers and tubs around the village.**
- **Many houses practice shower timers, reducing toilet flushing with a brick or bag of water, saving water from shower and baths, using washing up bowls so water can be used on plants afterwards. Many residents save grey water from washing up, showers and baths to water flower beds and transporting it to flower borders and allotments**
- **The use of gravel, slate, ornamental stone, paving to display pots reduces watering e.g. back of Old paper shop, front of The Plough,**
- **Eynsford in Bloom dip watering cans into the river for watering at the village centre and waste bath/shower, grey water in plastic milk bottles when needed elsewhere. Eynsford in Bloom have 2 watering systems - for the War Memorial and recently restored Village Hall Drive- timed to water at 1.00 am for 20 mins**
- **Eynsford has two allotment sites. The private allotments near Walnut Close have no water pipes and rely solely on rain water butts and rain capture. Allotment holders on the Parish council site also have water butts and while there is mains water this is limited to filling watering cans from the three cattle troughs not hose use.**
- **Most residents never water their front gardens but maintain colour throughout the year with drought tolerant plants especially shrubs**
- **Particular gardens of note are Alton cottages, a gravel garden at Eynsford House (opposite Norman's butchers), a number of gardens in Old Mill Close including a Mediterranean style garden on the island itself and a wildflower garden just before, St. Martin's drive there's a**



*A new hedge and fifteen trees were planted around the site for the new village hall and football field which in time will provide a wild life habitat*



*Sheeps wool was used as weed suppressant on a new hedge around the football field*



*A new border design for the village car park using drought resistant planting*



*Bird boxes, owl boxes and bat boxes are situated throughout the village at various sites.*

**front garden with drought tolerant shrubs, Corner of Saddler's park a Mediterranean style front garden with three olive trees gravel and lavender. There are examples of gravel front gardens in Polyhaugh and a slate garden in Station Road. Other examples are found at Darent Lee, Windmill Cottage, Willow Terrace , lavender on the ground and window boxes, behind the Newsagents planting is all in**

- **Many homes and allotments have several linked water butts to collect rain water**

## **7. Has there been a change in plants and planting design to reflect this, such as using drought tolerant plants and those that reduce air pollution?**

- **To reduce watering EiB are ordering less summer bedding and making more use of shrubs and hardy perennials. Planting this last year includes Heucheras, Potentilla, Phlomis, Alchemilla, Gaura, Ajuga, hardy Geranium, Kniphofia and Salvia. Some of these have been donated by our volunteers and their friends. They are all rooted and will spread to cover bigger areas.**
- **Eynsford in Bloom this year redesigned the front beds of the village car park to be a drought resistant area with grasses, alliums and dogwood providing a variety of year round colour.**
- **Other borders worked by Eynsford in Bloom that have no watering system are the A225 gap site opposite the station (all small shrubs, iris and early bulbs), the top border at the station, Fern bank, Butchers Lane and Church walk**
- **Crockenhill Road/ Sparepenny Lane junction along the wall. Because of the wall and overhanging trees this site gets very little rain even in wet months so the planting along both sides is all drought tolerant. There are plans to remove some of large rain-blocking hedges here but we will continue to use drought tolerant planting.**
- **Many residents have converted their front gardens or parts of their garden to gravel or slate gardens with drought resistant planting and Mediterranean style gardens and planting.**

## **8. What actions are being taken to support the local native flora and fauna especially invertebrates, and pollinators.**

- **A series of barn owl boxes have been put up in trees in the surrounding fields initiated by Kent Wildlife trust with volunteers from Eynsford in Bloom. Three have been adopted by Owls.**
- **Scouts make bird houses and feeders and Brownies made a hedgehog box and positioned it in the Scout hut grounds as part of their activities.**
- **Anthony Roper school has a Woodland classroom with Hedgehog boxes, bug hotel, outdoor classroom for teaching about wildlife and flora and fauna**
- **There are Bat boxes and bird boxes in the trees in Millfield. Owl, Bat and Bird boxes have been placed by the tree wardens in many of the villages open spaces like Millfield, St. Martin's churchyard and the school woodland classroom.**
- **St Martin's churchyard are promoting the re-wilding of the churchyard as part of the "Blue Heart" campaign to restore habitats for the benefit of wildlife and encouraging ecosystem health and restore biodiversity. The churchyard has areas left wild for wildlife with toads in the gullies of the church building, Roman Snails and Stag beetles in the log pile. There are Pond Mud Snails living in the small pond at the back of the church yard**
- **The Green Team are initiating the landscaping and planting of a native chalk wildflower space on the chalk spoil created by the excavation of the land for the new football pitch.**
- **Planting at the Riverside Club by EiB will use night scented plants to attract moths which in turn will attract bats.**
- **The Woodland Trust own and help to maintain Nine Hole Wood which has displays of wild flowers through the year including orchids ( over 700 counted there this year) and primrose.**



*The Green Team organised a week of activities to encourage environmental awareness*



*Arbor day was revived in the village to celebrate our trees with guided walks and an afternoon of wassailing including hanging toast on the apple trees*



*Eynsford in Bloom use all their own compost produced on their allotment on the sites they garden around the village*



*The Green team run a Repair cafe four times a year for people to bring their broken items to be repaired by a villager*

- **Water is available to wildlife all year from the River Darent but many households provide water in their gardens for birds, mammals, insects and invertebrates. These include birdbaths, dishes of water at ground level.**
- **In Friars Garth, Sparepenny Lane certain plants have been added to the garden to benefit wildlife. These are Yellow Rattle and *Ornithogalum nutans* and *Fritillaria meleagris* bulbs grown successfully following Autumn planting. The main area of the garden to the back and side of the house is cut back once a year in early Autumn creating a natural growth of wildflowers and weeds and allowing the insects and butterflies to benefit from the nectar. *Anacamptis pyramidalis* orchids grow in this area and there is a large section of *Organum vulgare* for butterflies.**
- **Many gardens have natural ponds, that contain frog spawn, newts, Damsel flies and pond skaters. Stag beetles, slow worms and grass snakes have been found in village gardens and compost heaps.**
- **Lullingstone Country Park has areas of chalk grassland that fill with displays of orchids and other wild flowers in spring and summer. The Poppy display this year was spectacular and featured on BBC South East TV news reports.**

## **9. Any other initiatives you think are making a contribution to sustaining our home or community gardens and or local area.**

- **The Green Team ran The Big Green Week in June featuring a week of events for family and individuals to participate in all with an environmental theme. There were guided walks, creative workshops, interactive sound pieces and films and a community litter pick.**
- **The Green team run a community litter pick four times a year around areas of the village encouraging people to participate in clearing up rubbish. A young member of the team also undertakes a weekly litter pick as part of her D of E award work.**

- **The Green Team re instated an Arbor day with different walks and activities centred around trees in the village. Eynsford being the site of the first ever arbor day held in this country and initiated by local man Elliot Tills Down 1897.**
- **Sevenoaks District Council provide recycling bins for glass, card, paper and clothes for Eynsford in a lay by on the A225 south of the village. They are emptied fortnightly. S.D.C. collect household rubbish for recycling in clear sacks weekly. This includes : papers, magazines, cardboard and packaging, cans including empty aerosol cans, tins, metal bottle tops, jar lids, Tetra Pak and other food, drink and long- life cartons, aluminium take-away and ready-meal trays and clean kitchen foil, plastic bottles and tops, yoghurt pots, margarine and ice cream tubs, fruit baskets and trays. Black plastic and rubbish is put into black rubbish sacks for weekly collection. Green garden waste in brown paper sacks are collected fortnightly.**
- **Recycling information and other green initiative articles are included in the monthly Trident our Church magazine, quarterly Parish Council newsletter, and Parish Council and S.D.C. website/blog**
- **The local supermarkets in Swanley, Dartford and Sevenoaks have bins to recycle plastic bags and some food wrapping**
- **St.Martin's Church collect some wrapping including crisp, biscuit and pet food pouches, Pringle containers with lids etc for a resident raising money for a charity. They are part of the Eco Church movement and have achieved levels between bronze and silver.**
- **A smart recycling bin has been installed by S.D.C. at our popular Riverside for rubbish left by village visitors following a Brownie's letter to our Parish Council and S.D. C. for a new waste bin. SDC have added 2 more waste bins in the village.**
- **More village properties are having solar panels, air source heat pumps and electric car charging points fitted. There are no public charging points in Eynsford as yet but plans for the new village hall on Harrow Meadow include E V charging points in the car park, provision for solar panels, ground source heat pump and full insulation.**

- **A recycled old sink for herbs is used for display and village use at the station and maintained by the station manager**
- **Eynsford Green Team have initiated a Repair Cafe four times a year for residents to bring broken hoovers, bikes, computers and clothes in need of repair. Repairs are provided by local residents with requisite skills with the aim to also encourage people to learn the needed skills to repair item themselves in future.**
- **Eynsford Green team run a monthly Carbon footprint article in the local magazine Trident to encourage villagers to monitor and reduce their own C02 emissions.**
- **Local farm fields are sending slurry and waste from crops to their main farms' Anaerobic Digester plant which can produce gas and generate electricity to the national grid enough to power 600 houses.**
- **The local farmer collects the arisings from the Station wildflower triangle for use on his farm. This prevents over fertilisation of soil at the triangle which would suppress wild flowers.**
- **Eynsford is within the area being considered for the Cross Channel Geo Park which will run from North France to the chalk downs of the North Downs. A Green team member is volunteering to be an ambassador for the project.**



*The arisings from Station Wild flower triangle are collected by a local farmer to encourage wild flower growth*



*Eynsford in Bloom visit local Rainbows group and Anthony Roper pre school to encourage them with gardening and environmental awareness*



*Lullingstone Country Park leaves large areas dedicated to wild flowers. This year the poppy display was particularly spectacular and featured on BBC South East News*