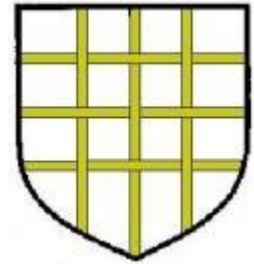


SKIRLAUGH PARISH COUNCIL

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Wilder Skirlaugh

Introduction

‘Wilder Skirlaugh’ is the Skirlaugh Parish Council’s green project that is a continuation of the Climate and Ecological Emergency that was declared back in 2021.

The Skirlaugh Parish Council has taken advice from the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and other groups in the East Riding who have already set out on their own Wilder Projects.

Project Wilder is run by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and assists groups in Yorkshire to improve the biodiversity of their areas. They do this by offering advice, access to funding and free equipment hire.

The Goals

The main goal of Wilder Skirlaugh is to improve the biodiversity of the Parish by making better use of the existing green spaces. By improving our already green spaces we can make Skirlaugh a better place to live and work for the residents as well as making the Parish a haven for wildlife.

This is an ambitious goal and will take much time, effort, and funding to complete. For this reason, we have broken the project down into phases. There are currently five phases. Each of these phases tackles a different area of the parish and will provide opportunity for residents to get involved at both the design stage and at a hands-on level.

The Story So Far

Wilder Skirlaugh has been in the works since early 2021. It started with the Council conducting a village wide assessment of any green areas within the village that are suitable for the project. Only the village of Skirlaugh was assessed at this stage as this is where most of the residents live and as funding is limited, this would provide the biggest impact for the least amount of funding. The rest of the Parish will be assessed as the project progresses.

Contact was made with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and a site visit was conducted by the Yorkshire Wildlife Team. This consisted of walking around the village, making notes on the size and location of the green areas and then, Andy Steele from the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, produced a write up of what had been discussed and even included extra details such as adding the plant species that he would recommend. The Skirlaugh Parish Council has also visited the Molescroft Wildlife Network to see their progress with their own Wilder project. There were representatives from Barmby Moor and Lockington and Aike Parish Council at that meeting as they too were interested in starting their own projects. There was then a visit to the Yorkshire Wildlife Trusts Team Wilder Day in Flamborough. All the visits provided brilliant insights as to how others are approaching their Wilder Projects and allowed questions to be asked about our own project.

Funding

Funding for trees and hedge plants will largely come from the Woodland Trust and the Carbon Footprint Trees Community Scheme. There is also the Humber Forest organisation that covers our area. These three groups all provide trees and hedge plants free of charge or for a small donation if the right criteria are met.

The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust can provide as much help and advice as needed but they can also loan out, free of charge, spades other practical equipment for planting.

There are also several other options for funding from the local area including the Routh Wind Farm Community Fund, the Withernwick Wind Farm Community Fund, the Orsted East Coast Community Fund, and the Dogger Bank Wind Farm Community Grant Scheme. All these need application forms completing but there are set times when this can happen. They also require evidence, reports, and such like. The funding from these groups is not so readily available as from the charitable groups above.

Additional to the funding options above we would like to see a ‘Skirlaugh Green Projects’ fund set up to essentially ‘put our money where our mouth is’ and to show a long-term commitment to this project. Ideally the fund would become part of the council’s annual budget with an agreed upon sum each year placed into the fund. Outside funding is often ‘match funding’ so we would need a balance in hand to put forward when making applications. Although the fund would start of small it would soon build and allow us to become more ambitious as the project matures.

Timescale

The five phases mentioned in this document will take years to complete. This is not a quick process and will take many years to complete even a portion of the phases.

Whilst phase one has already been partially completed it is still at least two seasons away from being completed.

There is no definite end to the project as there is always something that can be done to improve the biodiversity of an area. As the project progresses there may be a change of direction or different approach to an area.

Phase One

[September 2024] The trees, for the most part, continue to thrive. There are a small number that have failed to root and will be removed early next year. The weed mats placed at the time of planting will also be removed to allow easier and closer access for the mower and to reduce the ongoing maintenance schedule.

[April 2024] Phase one has already started and is off to a brilliant start. The original plan for phase one has been left below so that we can see the progression of the project over time. Phase one had to be altered due to concerns from the East Riding Highways Department about the hedge being too close to the carriageway and the potential for loss of sightlines as you drive past once the hedge was established. The trees have been planted as planned and are all thriving with several of them already showing encouraging growth. There has been one or two that have needed to be staked again as they had fallen over. This will need to be an ongoing activity until the smaller trees have established. The wildflower meadow has not yet been started. This is likely to happen early next year, so it is ready for the spring growing season.

[Original Plan] This is the first phase that will be advertised to the residents as it is important that they are behind the project from the start. This will be done via the usual means of the newsletter, the notice board and Facebook.

The area covered by phase 1 is the land to the east of the A165 opposite the old council buildings. It extends from the 'Welcome to Skirlaugh' sign down to the north side of the brick bus stop. This area is ideal for additional trees to be planted with the potential for a low hedge to be planted along the roadside and a high impact wildflower patch with advertising and information boards to inform and educate.

Andy, from the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, has suggested that slender, fast-growing trees (such as birch and rowan) would be a good choice for this area. These would provide impact in a shorter period, would be less likely to cause sightline or overhanging issues with the A165 and would provide valuable food for finches, thrushes and similar birds.

The high impact wildflower patch would be created near the north of the area so that people would see that first as they enter the village. It would work best with taller, hardier species (such as oxeye daisy, corn marigold, knapweed and yarrow). This area would also be a perfect place for a 'Welcome to a Wilder Skirlaugh' sign for motorists passing by. A comment already received from a resident suggests that the primary school is contacted to see if designing this sign would be something with which they would like to be involved.

The low hedgerow would run alongside the A165. Starting after the wildflower patch and continuing all the way along to the bus stop. The hedge will be continued further south towards Church Lane in phase 2. A mix of non-spikey, native hedgerow plants (such as hazel, field maple and dogwood) would be ideal here. These hedgerow plants will provide a food source for various species of animal and once established will provide noise and weather buffering for the newly planted trees.

Currently the area in phase 1 is largely unused by residents, barring the occasional dog walker. This activity would still be able to happen as the trees will be spaced out to not promote overcrowding once fully grown. The hedge may also be an advantage to those walking their dogs as it would provide a barrier against the A165 once matured.

The trees and hedge plants mentioned in this phase are readily available for community planting events via the Woodland Trust and the Carbon Footprint Trees community scheme. Any equipment (such as spades, high visibility clothing, etc) would be provided by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. It is not recommended in this area to use plastic tree guards unless significant rabbit and deer activity is noted.

Phase Two

[September 2024] A heavy duty, railway sleeper style planter has been put in place between the bench, the clock and the silhouettes. A grant was obtained from the ERYC from their D-Day 80th Commemoration fund for most of the costs involved. The planter is currently planted up with a wide selection that will offer year-round foliage as well as flowers at several times of the year. Once the current plants have reached the end of their lifespans a community garden with various herbs and wildflowers will be planted.

[Original Plan] The area for phase 2 is directly south of phase 1 and continues the same side of the A165 down to the junction with Church Lane. As mentioned above in Phase 1, the low hedge would continue south of the bus stop and would follow the A165 around to the junction with Church Lane. Leaving a gap on Church Lane and the A165 to allow access to the area from the footpaths.

Within the hedged off area this would be an ideal location for a couple of benches and some heavy-duty planters to form a central area to admire the clock and appreciate the silhouettes. It is noted that there are already some benches in this area. These could be incorporated into the design or moved to form part of a new area. The heavy-duty planters (using railway sleepers or similar) would be planted up to be 'community kitchens' with Mediterranean herbs and perennial wildflowers. This would provide both colour and scent. Residents will be encouraged by way of information signs on the planters to pick the herbs and other edible plants. The wildflowers also would provide pollen and nectar for insects.

The raised embankment to the east side of this area is currently mowed low to around two thirds of the height of the embankment. Wildflowers (such as hawkbit) are already flourishing in this area. By reducing the mowing pattern down to every 2 months and introducing additional wildflowers (such as trefoils, clovers and selfheal) the embankment would look more aesthetically pleasing to the residents as well as providing additional benefits to pollinators. If this cutting pattern proves too difficult to achieve there is another option for the embankment where it is not mown at all from early spring to early august and large amounts of narcissus and yellow rattle are planted. This would provide early colour and pollen right through to when it gets mowed. For this to happen we would need to contact the grounds team at the East Riding Council and provide them with a plan of when and where to mow.

Phase Three

Phase Three is the Jubilee Wood as a whole. It was acknowledged by the team from the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust when they came to do a walk around of the village that the Jubilee Wood is already an amazing asset to the local community and the biodiversity of the area. The only thing missing in terms of improvement would be standing water. A low-lying area to the east of the Wood was noted as an ideal candidate for creating a small pond or bog garden. There are advantages to both ponds and bogs so this would need more research nearer the time.

To increase the variety of wildlife it was suggested that we introduce some dead wood areas. This is simply old trees that have been cut down. The older and rottener the better as these would attract the more insects and fungi growth. Admittedly this could look unsightly to some residents so information boards would be needed to explain the benefits of the dead wood and why it hasn't been removed. There is also the option to make a feature of the dead wood rather than hiding it in the under growth. The other area noted in the wood was to the west of the main green area in the middle. This would be ideal for a large, or several smaller, wildflower meadows.

Phase Four and Beyond

Phase Four is the playing field. This will obviously involve a joint effort between the Skirlaugh Parish Council and the Playing Field Committee.

As part of the walk around with the team from the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust it was noted that the hedges surrounding the playing field are cut quite far back in some areas and are missing totally in other areas. It was suggested that the hedges are allowed to grow out, even an extra foot would be of great benefit. Additional to this extra growth, allowing the hedges to grow in more natural lines, rather than the current straight line, is better for wildlife as it allows more protection from predators and has that 'tamed wild' look that is sometimes needed in more urban areas. Completing the hedge all around the boundary would also be of great benefit using the same hedge plants mentioned in phase one to create the low hedge alongside the A165.

The corners of the playing field, where there is more room from the edge of the pitches, would be ideal for bench planters. These would allow seating in those parts of the field as well as providing additional planting space. These could be used, like those planters in phase two, as community kitchens with a variety of herbs and other plants. Again, information signs would need to be provided.