

## **Freshford PC – Natural Environment Report, Sept 2024**

Cllr Elli Bate

### **1. River Festival – for info**

As mentioned at a previous meeting, I have been working with Richard Mann (Winsley PC) to bring together other parish councillors and local groups with an interest in the climate and nature emergency, to organise a festival of events around the theme of the river. We will present a series of events between 31/5/25 and 16/6/25 as a celebration of nature and community, to raise awareness of the climate and nature emergency and to support networking between local grassroots organisations.

We now have a name – the *Wild Waters Festival* – and a sponsor, who is currently designing a website and logo for us. We have volunteers offering to help organise events in most of the villages along the river from Bradford on Avon as far as Batheaston, and BANES (who have their own river festival in June 2025) have also offered their support.

Any suggestions for local events or organisers gratefully received! I am hoping to be able to include something in the October PC newsletter if we have the logo and landing page ready in time.

### **2. Tynning matting**

When this was last discussed we had a large number of villagers attend or write in support of leaving the matting in situ, so we agreed to postpone any action to remove it. I was asked to enquire in the village how much support there was for removing it (we had previously thought opinion was equally divided).

I met with a resident in July who confirmed that he and others (including members of Nature Chain for example) are strongly against leaving the matting in situ. His arguments were:

- High cost of removal could be avoided by using volunteers (not sure if feasible)
- Not clear whether it is serving any purpose now it has a thick layer of grass growing through
- Matting could be re-used once removed (not sure if feasible)
- The matting was always supposed to be temporary and was only put down on this basis
- Leaving it where it is will release micro-plastics into our local ecosystem

I appreciate that councillors will feel we've spent a lot of time already on this topic, but opinion is clearly divided among members of the community, with strong feelings on both sides.

One option would be to try taking up a small test area of the matting to find out how difficult it would be for volunteers to achieve, and whether the matting comes up in a re-useable state. Could we do this and use the information gathered to inform a final consultation to decide the final action?

### **3. Tynning verges or 'hump'**

A couple of villagers have been in touch with concerns about the safety of the unmown verges on the Tynning. As per the biodiversity plan agreed some years ago, the 'hump' is not mown regularly – can we confirm as a council that we are happy to continue with the proposed plan?

The plan does include provision for cutting this area 'every few years' so I will go back to Tanie Pascoe to ask when in the year would be best to do this as it is probably due.