



Witchford Open Spaces Group (OSG) is an independent community-based organisation consisting of volunteers actively working for conservation and people's enjoyment of the countryside. We've been active in the village since our formation in 1989.

The group works closely with individuals, other village groups, and Witchford Parish Council, meeting every two months to plan the group's activities, which our volunteers carry out throughout the year.

What we do

Rights of Way

One of our aims is to encourage people to venture out into the countryside and enjoy the experience. From early days it has been a priority of the OSG to make the rights of way (RoW) in Witchford more accessible. We worked to open those that were blocked and carried out the first waymarking of RoW. We continue to lead guided walks, and are currently updating the 2010 leaflet of Witchford Walks with new maps and texts.

Sandpit Drove.



The OSG has had a long association with Sandpit Drove (Byway 11), which extends from Broadway through to Manor Road, beginning with the restoration in 1992 of the pond. In 2011 we established the wildflower meadow, now coming to its 2020 fruition

A management plan for the Sandpit Drove Conservation Area agreed between the parish council and the OSG has been operating since 2007. Management activities are undertaken by volunteers on the site throughout the year to enhance its conservation value and maintain public access.



The Millennium Wood



The Millennium Wood is a site of 0.3 ha owned by the parish on the south side of Main Street. It was planted in 1999, and subsequently the Woodland Group was set up by the parish council to manage the wood on its behalf. The OSG is a member organisation of the Woodland Group, and most individuals on the Woodland Group are also part of the OSG. Our volunteers are actively involved with its routine maintenance carried out through the management plan.

The Old Recreation Ground and Community Orchard



The Old Recreation Ground is a 1 ha (2½ acre) parcel of land owned by Witchford parish, situated south of the village and to the west of Grunty Fen Road, around 500 m from Main Street via Footpath 1 and the Horsefield. The OSG began its involvement in 2008 by

restoring an old farm pond and providing an oak sleeper picnic table and bench. In 2012 the OSG's proposals to set up and maintain a community orchard with hay meadow were accepted by the parish council, and the following year more than 40 Witchford residents planted 70 fruit trees. The orchard is managed as a community project, based on a management plan set up by the OSG in conjunction with the parish council.



Edna's Wood and Fairchild Wood

These two small woods were planted in 2011 on private land adjacent to the Old Rec and Community Orchard. Both woods have since had Permissive Paths established through them so are accessible to the public. The OSG has been party to their enhancement from early days, planting and maintaining trees and hedges through to the present.

Trees and hedges

OSG volunteers have been planting trees in Witchford since 1992, when trees were planted along Main Street, and are mostly still there. Another landmark is the 130 metre-long native hedge along the playing fields on Bedwell Hey Lane, planted back in 1994. Since then we have gone on to plant a total of almost 600 m of native hedging in the village, and hundreds of trees. We have also laid 85 m of hedgerow in the Millennium Wood and the Old Rec.

Other activities

Some of our other activities have included the enlargement of Victoria Green Pond in 2009; establishing and planting up New Pond on Manor Road between 2010 and 2014, with Witchford Scouts and the parish council; and carrying out the annual meadow mow in Kevin's Place.

Present Activities and Plans

Outdoor activities recently have been somewhat hampered by the Covid-19 restrictions, but we hope over the next few months to return to some normality. We have a number of assignments lined up:

Millennium Wood annual Meadow Mow (June)

Pruning of community orchard soft fruit trees (June)

Community orchard tree restaking (July)

Hedgerow maintenance Edna's and Fairchild Woods (August)

Kevin's Place annual Meadow Mow (September)

As you may have seen elsewhere on the parish council website we are currently working on the redrawing of the Witchford Walks maps and the updating of the text. The 2010 leaflet inevitably has become out-of-date, and a new Witchford Walks booklet will be available when the maps and text are completed.

If you would like to participate in Witchford Open Spaces Group activities, we welcome volunteers, young to not-so-young, at any time. Why not join us and make your contribution to Witchford's biodiversity as well as enjoying the company of like-minded people?

For more information about the Open Spaces Group and volunteering contact Richard Braund on 665222 (e-mail richardbraund50@hotmail.com), and see us on Instagram at [Witchford_Open_Spaces](#).