

## **Natural Boxford report for Boxford Parish Council annual village meeting: Saturday April 26<sup>th</sup> 2025**

Natural Boxford got off to a flying start to its second year, with the Keep the Heat project in January featuring free thermal imaging of participants' houses to show where additional insulation might be required. This was followed up by an event in the village hall working with Hadleigh Environmental Action Team, and the SCC Climate Change Partnership offering further information from a range of organisations regarding retro-fitting to keep heat in: it was well attended and deemed a success by all involved. Over 50 houses were surveyed and residents found the imaging both interesting and helpful.

In early March we welcomed Simon Hooton from Suffolk Wildlife Trust who gave an excellent talk on swifts and the work of the Save Our Suffolk Swifts group, in conjunction with whom, as well as the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Wilder Together project, we have installed 5 sets of swifts boxes plus a community set in the belfry. In time, it can take several years, this will help our Boxford swift population to expand and remain healthy.

The River Group continue to carry out regular water quality monitoring of five locations on the River Box and tributaries, as well as taking regular RiverFly surveys in collaboration with the Environment Agency's citizen science project to establish baseline health levels for the river. This weekend we are taking part in both the Rivers' Trust Riverwatch, and Earthwatch's Waterblitz projects. Luke Farnish from the Suffolk and Essex Rivers' Trust is working with us closely to put a coherent plan into action, including working with local landowners, to clear the invasive Himalayan Balsam.

We have nearly 30 supporters and a core active group dedicating spare time to the natural environment and wildlife and habitat recovery.

The Causeway Bed team are chipping away at the couch grass and introducing wildlife friendly planting and the bed is taking shape nicely. We have a small experimental wildflower patch now in the churchyard which we have seeded and are waiting to see what appears this year. Some cowslips from seed sown 20 years ago in the churchyard have recently been spotted for the first time!

We are assisting the PC in identifying spots for replacement tree planting, and are hoping to get some working parties together to carry out biodiversity surveys of the Croft. We have offered some suggestions regarding the new Woodland Trust area at Goodlands, and passed on information about rare species identified there.

We have a regular article in the BRN which receives very positive feedback, and will have our stall again at the Open Gardens event featuring a display on wildlife friendly gardening. We are liaising with other local community groups to share ideas and inspiration.  
Louise Carpenter, on behalf of Natural Boxford.