

Press Release

Contact:
Bailey Donoghue
01582 463542
bailey.donoghue@harpenden.gov.uk

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Harpenden Town Council & Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust Partner on Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme

Nineteen students from St George's School in Harpenden have completed sections of their Duke of Edinburgh's Award in a new pilot programme from Harpenden Town Council and the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

Over the course of six months, students attended monthly practical conservation sessions on Harpenden Common, which counted towards the students' 'Volunteering' or 'Skills' activity elements of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme. Harpenden Common is a fantastic local resource that stretches for almost two miles from the centre of Harpenden southwards. It is of county significance to wildlife, recognised as such for its locally rare acidic grasslands and the species these supports. Staff from the Town Council and the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust led the students throughout the programme, with students working to create new habitat in the Brickle Dells, clearing scrub on the hayfield to protect the locally rare acidic grassland, and clearing the shrub layer in St John's Wood to encourage more growth and structural diversity. The students combined to volunteer for a total of 468 hours over the six-month period.

Harpenden Town Mayor Cllr Brian Ellis said, "These students worked incredibly hard and made a great impact on the Common and Harpenden's local wildlife. We look forward to continuing this programme next year."

In addition to completing sections of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, 19 students received an AQA Unit Award in Safe Use of Handtools and 13 received an AQA in Introduction to Woodland Management for Conservation.

Positive feedback has been received from students and their parents, with one participant commenting, “I have thoroughly enjoyed myself and have gained a new found respect for woodland areas and also the outdoors! Being out in the cold was something I have always tried to get out of. I can't believe that I have done that and I have not minded the fact that each week I got so muddy. I am actually proud of myself. I have also enjoyed gaining lots of knowledge of the woodland environment. In the second to last session I had fun whittling (which I had never done or heard of before!). This whole volunteering experience has been invaluable.”

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About Harpenden Town Council

Harpenden Town Council was created in 1974 and is the largest parish in the St Albans District with a population of almost 30,000 represented by 16 Councilors across 4 Wards.