

Volunteer survey 2025:

Common Themes and Issues Across Groups

1. Structure and Coordination

- Most groups operate informally, with varying degrees of organisation.
- Several groups note the benefit of having a **volunteer coordinator** or neutral contact to link activities and share learning.

2. Recruitment and Diversity

- Recruitment mostly happens informally (via word of mouth, open sessions, or Friends network).
- All groups report a need for **new and younger volunteers**, particularly for heavier, seasonal, or one-off tasks and for events to increase organisational capacity.
- Suggestion from Conservatory group: a “**general volunteers**” **pool** for families and ad hoc events could support all areas.

3. Funding and Resources

- Many groups rely on **plant sales, small grants, or personal contributions**. Events has a way of ticketing events to cover costs and provide sustainable development.
- A more **coordinated approach to grant applications** or shared fundraising could strengthen all groups.

4. Communication and Engagement

- Internal comms within groups is generally good (WhatsApp, meetings).
- **Cross-group communication is weaker**, leading to overlap and missed opportunities.
- The structured volunteers’ and members’ newsletters are not yet mentioned by group reps as a way of improving communications between groups, although feedback suggests that they are valued.
- Council communication is inconsistent – horticultural and habitats groups, in particular, cite lack of clarity and follow-up. (NB newly introduced tracker may be helpful in this regard)

5. Management and Planning

- Few groups have a written management plan or long-term objectives (Horticultural and Habitats groups both flag this).
- Some frustration with **Council responsibilities** not being met (e.g. mowing, hedge cutting, infrastructure).

6. Safety and Environment

- Habitats and Orchard groups raised safety/antisocial behaviour issues near the growing space, suggesting the 'chillout space' is a magnet for ASB.
- Lakes & Wildlife group raised concerns about **environmental quality**, particularly **water pollution** and degraded lake infrastructure.

7. Shared Aspirations

- Strong commitment to collaboration and supporting one another's work.
- Interest in **joint social events** and **cross-group visits** to strengthen understanding and identity.
- All groups express a sense of pride and ownership of their respective areas.