



## IT'S YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD - MARKING SHEET

<b>Name of group: Riverside Naturally</b>	<b>Assessment date: 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023</b>
<b>Name of assessor: Morag Menzies</b>	
<b>Introduction:</b>	
<p>Riverside Naturally has been going for 4 years, although the orchard has been going for 11 years. The group has close relations with the local community council and Stirling Council. There are 6 Trustees, with wide and varying skill sets, including an ecologist. They have their own website, which is up to date and easy to use. The green space they have has been utilised with nature in mind. They are passionate about their local community, environment and sustainability.</p>	
<b>Section A - Community Participation</b>	
<p>Riverside Naturally have close links with the local community, as individuals, and through the local and community council.</p> <p>The group continue to impress me with their commitment to applying for funding. They have managed to secure funding to put bench tables/benches in the area. Encouraging people to sit, notice and enjoy their surroundings.</p> <p>Their ongoing collaborations with other groups, such as Bee Conservation, Butterfly Conservation, Plantlife and Buglife Charities as well as nearby groups such as Cambuskenneth Nature and Environment group, continues to bear fruit.</p> <p>They continue to organise talks and share information with the community, which is so important. The knowledge they share is amazing.</p> <p>They have a very good relationship with Stirling Council and now the understanding of mowing and leaving areas has increased. The Orchard area has a grassland area of which now paths are mown by the Council. Benefiting both walkers and the insects who can use all year around. There will be signage explaining the benefits of grassland, which will be in place later this year.</p> <p>Meeting Emily and Mary again was fantastic, their commitment, their enthusiasm is infectious. They are so inspirational in wanting to improve local areas, involve as many people as possible and spread knowledge.</p> <p>My visit was peppered with several local people using the area to walk and stopping to chat away with them. People who volunteer with the group. One local, volunteering his outdoor tap for the volunteer group's use should they require it. This is such an amazing local community group. Getting more people on board through word of mouth and</p>	



encouraging other volunteers, who are excited in being involved. This visit just confirmed how much local people are now understanding what the group are doing and why. I think this is due to the explanations for the 'Why; something is going to be done and the How' it benefits the area, nature and people.

Their ongoing programs and events still occur, with the October Orchard Day approaching, where a celebration of the orchard occurs, and apple pressing is involved.

As well as weekly volunteers, they still have their larger monthly volunteer sessions where everyone is welcome to sit and have a cup of tea, or to help with anything that requires attention.

Locals have been enquiring about certain plants and what their names are, with the intention of putting them in their own garden and this has led to a seed sowing collecting event being organised soon!

Riverside Primary are regular visitors to the area, with the story section area (a willow dome) being a favourite.

You can tell community engagement and participation is very important and the degree of thoughtfulness that has gone into communicating with people shows the importance of this non-conventional (and by that, I mean lack of bedding plants) area. The signage is amazing, it's clear, concise and if you do want extra information there is a QR code that can take you to their website for more detailed information. There are several signs telling people about how the area helps with environment, with pollinators, insects and wildlife, which is lovely to see.

Locals are now asking Riverside Naturally if they require any donations!

The presence of the most up to date website I've seen in a long while is notable. As well as the notice board with what is taking place, the newsletters, WhatsApp group and Facebook help keep people connected when not meeting up in person.

I really do admire this group, their commitment, their passion and their enjoyment of it. It is joyous!

## **Section B - Environmental Responsibility**

Riverside Naturally is environment responsibility personified!

- Composting – an extra bay is now being added.
- Deciding the correct course of action for the 'meadow area' which has been confirmed now as grassland, with the Council mowing a path (not the whole area!).
- The ongoing success of the orchard area.
- A joyous Story Garden area thoughtfully planted (and parts left to own devices) with the environment and the community in mind.
- The living woven willow dome, facing the water, with spectacular views from the recycled tree trunk seats.
- Encouraging native bee and insect friendly planting.





- Ongoing learning for all who participate.
- Providing free dog poo bags in the area
- The A.R.K section, Acts of Restoration, an area which is not touched and left to its own devices.
- A successful and thriving stumpery.
- Insect hideaways and bird boxes.
- The glorious bee bank which has an abundance of viper bugloss nearby.

### **Section C - Gardening Achievement**

This is long term environmental gardening for the area, using native plants and lots of recycled materials. It's wonderful. There are posters around the area, explaining to visitors how and why this is important. Locals are now starting to realise, due to the group, how important native plants are and what they do for the environment as is the Council. I really am struck by the genuine passion about sustainability and the environment and good relationships that have developed over time and continue.

I know the Orchard is for all. I was delighted by the story of a schoolgirl, who stopped, got off her bike, chose an apple and went on her way again. It really made my day!

Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCf) - I love that the group are now thinking about this, and how to best go about getting trees into the area that will be cared for and loved. At the orchard day in October, they will talk informally about promoting trees in gardens – in particular fruiting ones. They can encourage a scattered orchard situation (or native trees). Hopefully TreeLink will be involved in this process sometime next year or the year after.

**OVERALL LEVEL ACHIEVED**

**Level 5 - Outstanding**

#### **Areas of achievement:**

- Bee bank. What a success! Bees a buzzing!
- Inclusive – 'Ask us what we are doing?' Explaining when asked what they are doing and why this is beneficial. It is working!
- Signage. Due to signage, people are beginning to understand and shift their thoughts on what makes a garden and how wildlife can be encouraged. Another success. QR codes for people wanting more information are included.
- Caring and involving. Local people donating items and more volunteers. Everyone welcome and have a cuppa.
- Regular volunteer dates and larger events for all to enjoy.
- Story telling at events. Getting messages over to children and adults and learning new things, making it interesting and fun! Learning about our past relationships with plants.
- Website. It's fantastic – absolutely fantastic! Easy to find what you are looking for and very informative and up to date!
- WhatsApp – fantastic for keeping up momentum and keeping up to date/in touch.





**Recommendations/suggestions from your assessor:**

If at all possible, leave a few leaves on the ground at the orchard. It helps the bees and other insects.

**RESULTS**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Description</b>
Level 1	Establishing
Level 2	Improving
Level 3	Advancing
Level 4	Thriving
Level 5	Outstanding

