Litter pickers from St Joseph's Catholic Primary School were shocked

Just some of the 12 bin liners that were filled with litter in just 40 minutes

It's the Wombles of Walsall!

Children of a primary school became Wombles for the day – picking up 12 bin liners full of litter in just 40 minutes.

Children from St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Darlaston were shocked at the mess around their school, virtually all of it dropped by adults.

The most commonly collected items were discarded beer and lager cans, alcohol bottles, disposable vapes and cigarette butts.

A group of around 60 pupils from years five and six took part in the exercise along with staff and parent volunteers.

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Walsall Council provided all the resources that were needed to carry out the litter pick – litter pickers, bags and protective gloves.

Its staff will also be collecting the litter that the children collected.

Acting headteacher Nicky Hannett said the exercise showed the children the impact litter could have on a neighbourhood and they were shocked and surprised at the amount of mess they came across.

She said: "The children collected a shocking amount of litter from the pavements close to the school – there were 12 bin liners full plus other items that had also been fly tipped.

"The children really enjoyed it and are keen to arrange our next litter pick but, speaking to them afterwards, they really wish there was no need and that people would take their litter home with them and put it in a bin.

"Our children want to live in a cleaner Darlaston and are ready to tell those they meet about what they found and how it made them feel.

"They are determined to be citizens who care for the environment and who influence others to do the same."

Rubbish dumped on the streets of the Black Country isn't just an eyesore, it also costs taxpayers a small fortune.

Walsall Council, which covers the Darlaston area, revealed earlier this year that it spent around £880,000 a year picking up fly-tipping and rubbish from streets across the borough.

The council has a team of 963 registered adult litter-picking volunteers and between July 2022 and June this year, they removed approximately 20,905 bags of rubbish.

The problem was described by Independent Blakenall ward councillor Pete Smith as being at "epidemic proportions".

He said it would be much worse were it not for volunteering litter pickers giving up their time.

Project looks to support bees in special habitats

Winter might be here but work is under way across Walsall to ensure the borough's pollinators will feel the bee's knees next summer.

Walsall Council is restoring historic eight heathland habitats to create bee 'beaches' to support the threatened tormentil mining bee and other pollinators.

The sites, spanning from Sutton Park to Cannock Chase in Staffordshire are part of the Purple Horizons Nature Recovery Project, coordinated by Natural England in collaboration with local councils and nature organisations.

The project, which takes its name from the purple heather which covers much of the heathland areas, aims to connect green spaces to allow the area's reptiles, birds, and pollinators to move and thrive, which is crucial for the future climate-resilience of local species.

Aaron Bhambra, a PhD Student at the University of Birmingham, is monitoring the populations of bees and wildflowers and taking drone images of the sites.

He said: "We have a real opportunity here to try and help save the tormentil mining bee from becoming extinct in Britain. Although the bee beaches we create will be quite a stark contrast to the surrounding grass and heathland initially, over time the patches of bare earth will allow the heathland to re-establish itself to its former glory."

Former pub will be demolished to make way for 20 'ultra-modern' flats

A former pub will be demolished to make way for new flats.

Sandwell Council has backed a move to knock down the empty former Wheatsheaf pub in Rowley Regis and replace it with 20 'ultra-modern' flats.

There were concerns about the flats plan by Jugraaj Singh with some objectors saying that two dozen more cars using the "perilous" and "dangerous" four-way junction on the corner of Turners Hill would be a recipe for disaster. Objectors had also said the surrounding streets were already congested and the application did not provide enough parking space for visitors. This would also make the already congested roads during busy pick-up and drop-off times at nearby Oakham Primary School even worse, the objectors said.

But highways officers at Sandwell Council said they had "no serious safety concerns" about the plan and stated that the building's former use as a pub would have attracted more cars than the proposed flats. The council's highways department also said that parking spaces for visitors to the flats could be "comfortably" accommodated on nearby streets.

Planning officers at Sandwell Council had welcomed the move and had recommended to councillors it should be approved.

Councillors gave the plan the green light in July and the council has now signed off on the work after a section 106 agreement was negotiated.

Bank's campaign to help those in need

A shopping centre bank is running a campaign to collect donations for its local food bank.

Metro Bank's Merry Hill store is collecting donations in store to help support the Black Country Foodbank as part of its Christmas Community Campaign to this winter.

Black Country Foodbank helps vulnerable individuals and families in crisis through the provision of three days emergency food supplies while a longer-term solution is developed.

Black Country residents and businesses can donate the items to the Two Woods Lane store.

Plans are submitted for new teaching site

A new university building to teach future vets is being planned for the outskirts of Newport.

Harper Adams University has submitted plans to build a new teaching facility with technical laboratories, on the edge of the Ni.Park development off the A518/Audley Avenue roundabout.

The prominent Harper Adams University Institute of Animal Diagnostic and Health building is proposed to primarily be used for students to undergo training in systematic post-mortem examination as part of their veterinary degree.

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