

Giving new life to Community Park

CLARIDGE'S Park in Stratton has been given a facelift by volunteers and Nationwide staff, ahead of the area being passed into parish council control. In an attempt to cut costs, Swindon Council is giving over a number of public spaces to parish councils, which are better equipped to manage them. And Claridges Park is now being tended to ahead of a revitalisation by Stratton Parish Council. Councillor Nigel Chalk (Stratton St Margaret) helped out on the day



along with wife, Anne, who is also a parish councillor. He said: "It used to be a proper park in the past, but it has been neglected for a long time. All the bushes were overgrown and the lake had got a lot of rubbish in it. "We wanted to bring it back into the community. Historically locals used to fish there, but when it was handed over from Highworth to the borough council, they had no one to manage the lake so they banned it, and stopped kids going in there at the same time. "It made sense to come back under the control of Stratton,

because the local councillors live very close by, and our parks team are only five minutes away." The parish council offered to take up provision of a selection of public spaces to help the borough council cut costs. "They are looking at ways to cut their coffers, so Stratton gave them a list of open green spaces we would be happy to take over and manage. It is one of six or seven places we have agreed to take control of," said Nigel. "Nationwide offered us staff as part of their community day, where they send people outdoors to work on different projects. We thought that was a great opportunity to start the clean up of Claridges. "We got more than we expected done, but there is still a lot more work to do. "We have done a general tidy up and put some planters in, so we have started cheering the place up already. Everybody got really stuck in, but we can't do the heavy work until it officially belongs to us. "The council are giving it to us free of charge on a 99-year lease, and once that is in place we should have it up and running within six months." Nadine Hicks, divisional development analyst at Nationwide, said: "Nationwide has always been eager to help in the local community as well as supporting national charities and as a division we were keen to do our bit. We had a really widespread interest in taking part in a project and we wanted as many people as possible to get involved and to provide as much help and man power as we could. "We all had a great day out and got a real sense of achievement knowing we'd been able to help. All involved from Stratton Parish Council were grateful for the help we provided."

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