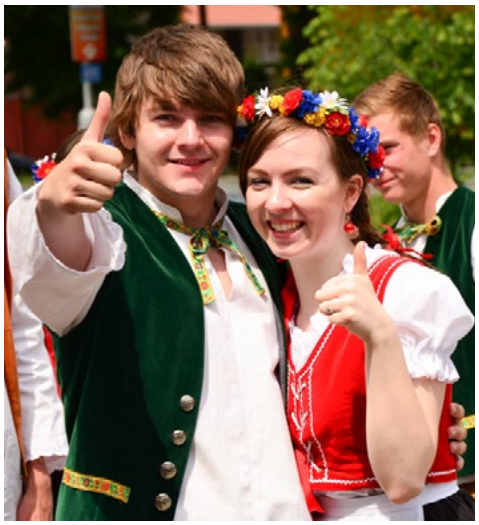
Entente Florale Europe

Kostelní Lhota

Entente Florale Europe 2017



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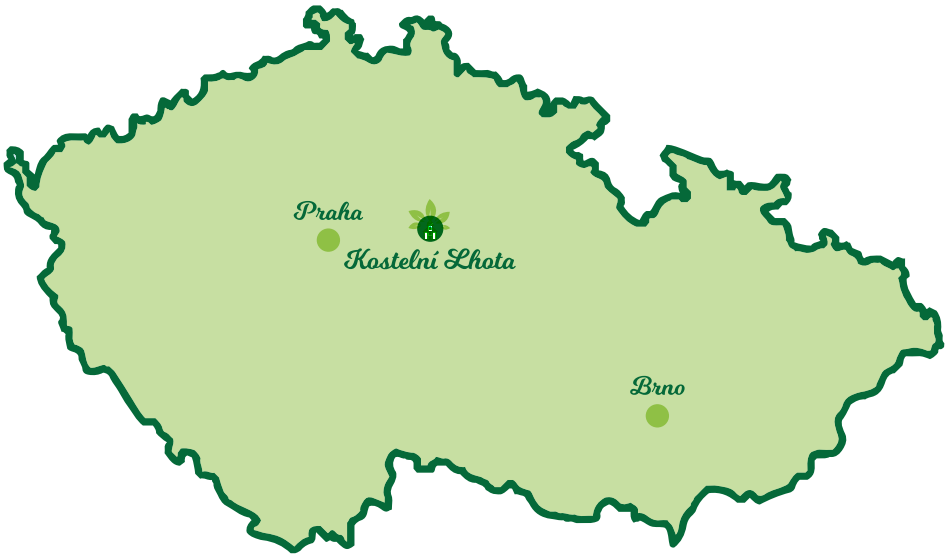
Welcome to Kostelní Lhota!



The municipality of Kostelní Lhota is a small village with 851 inhabitants in Central Bohemia, about 40 km from Prague. The territory is characterised by fertile flatland around the Labe river, with vast farmlands and pine tree forests in the surrounding areas. Agriculture and the principal road have shaped the village's typical ribbon housing development, with a wide village green alongside the main road including numerous ash and lime trees. The overall appearance of intravilan is completed with four small ponds.

History of the Village

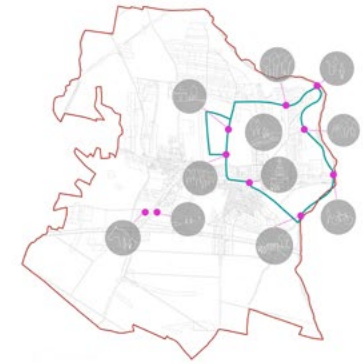
The origin of the name of Lhota comes from the Old Bohemian "lhóta", which means release from liability for a certain time period. This name used to be given to municipalities and settlements established on lands cleared of forests. However, it could have also been on wetlands, marshlands or other barren land that was supposed to be cultivated. The subjects (the settlers of these villages) were, for a certain time period, exempted from the levies to the landlord which comprised annual fees – interest and payments. All this in return for completed work, such as forest clearing and soil cultivation. At the beginning of the 14th century, this exemption period was for ten years and over the century it was reduced to eight to six years.

Both Lhotas are closely connected with the city of Poděbrady. From the mid-14th century, the Poděbrady manor belonged to the Kunstadt family, of which the most prominent member was King George of Poděbrady, the great-grandson of Bocek of Kunstadt. Under their rule, the city and the region recovered considerably. In 1351, Poděbrady became a land of Bocek of Kunstadt who started establishing new settlements, as well as new churches on some of them. In the above mentioned area between Poděbrady and Sadská, he established Písková Lhota, Kostelní Lhota, Vrbová Lhota and Přední Lhota. According to church sources, Kostelní Lhota dates back to 1354, Písková Lhota a year earlier. Wide village squares are typical for all four villages.

Main road in the village in 1963

KRAJINÁŘSKÁ STUDIE

KOSTELNÍ LHOTA

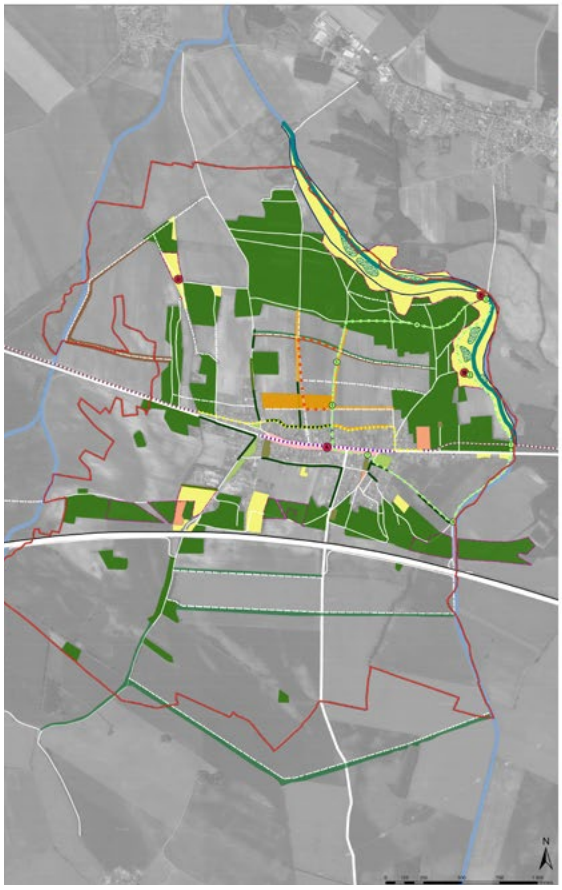


HÉMA KONCEPCE NAUČNÉ STEZKY

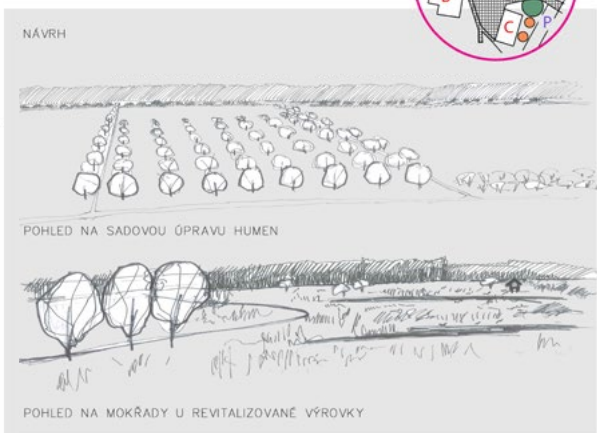
SCHÉMA KONCEPCE SÍTĚ CEST

SITUACE – NÁVES

DETAIL SITUACE U KOSTELA



ZÁKLADNÍ KONCEPCE



Coffehouse visualization

Visualization of the revitalization of the Podebradka spring

Planning and Development of the Municipality

Municipality's Long-term Approach

It has been only a few years since Kostelní Lhota completed the water main and sewerage system, i. e. the very essential elements of the municipal's technical infrastructure. This substantially curtailed investments into other areas. As the loan needs to be repaid by 2021, the development activities consist mainly of the co-funding of the state, European and regional subsidies. The basic philosophy of the municipality is to maximise the use of European subsidies before the end of the EU programming period.

In 2016, the municipality invested approximately CZK 2.4 million in greenery, which accounted for 18 % of the overall municipal expenditure. However, this is mainly due to the current planting project of 1.5 million Czech crowns. The spending is usually in the order of several hundred thousand crowns.

The development of Kostelní Lhota is governed by regional documents, especially by the Development Strategy of the Central Bohemian Region, as well as by the Master Plan of Cycle Routes and Cycle Tracks. At the grass roots level, it is the Strategy for the Community Led Local Development (SCLLD) LAG Podlipansko, which covers Kostelní Lhota.

The essential priorities of Kostelní Lhota include providing a pleasant environment for its inhabitants and visitors, striving for their safety, ensuring job opportunities and maintaining and developing sporting activities, cultural traditions and communality.

Municipality's Rural Renewal Programme

The Municipality's Rural Renewal Programme is a key development document. The latest update was approved in February 2016. Individual plans were discussed with the citizens at two public meetings.

The document proposes basic measures for specific localities within the municipality. In addition, it also focuses on architecturally significant economic buildings and family houses. For selected, and in the past carelessly reconstructed houses, the textual part is supplemented with interesting sketches of the proposed measures on how to improve these real properties and adapt them to the original character. These specific proposals may serve as inspiration for those citizens who wish to renovate their own houses.

If an owner decides to change the appearance of their house while maintaining the character of the rural housing in the Labe area, the municipal office will be happy to provide an architect's help at its own expenses, and provide feasible scenarios, if any, of the house's potential appearance.

Caring for Greenery and Public Spaces

The basic document regarding the care for public greenery is the Municipal Zoning Plan, which proposes specific measures in selected localities of intravilan. A new zoning plan will be completed by the end of 2017.

In 2013, the municipal office commissioned the Greenery Master Plan. It was prepared by Atelier König (König Studio). We drew upon the previous documents prepared by them – Assessment of the Municipality's Dendrological Potential, Landscape Greenery Recovery in the Municipality or Public Greenery Recovery in Kostelní Lhota – U rybníka location ("By the Pond").

It is a continuous cooperation of more than fifteen years with a landscaping studio which supports the development of a decisive conceptual approach in Kostelní Lhota. We also encourage a long-term collaboration with one professional horticultural company, which is in charge of the maintenance of the existing and new plantings.

Visualization of the extension of the elementary school

The new strategic document of the municipality draws upon local natural, cultural and historical conditions, creating a general compositional and operational framework at the settlement level while considering landscape continuity aspects. In the design part, it tries to take into account economic, environmental and aesthetic aspects of public greenery and adapt them to the requirements of contemporary man. The Greenery Master Plan is the basic ideological document for the public greenery maintenance in our municipality for the future.

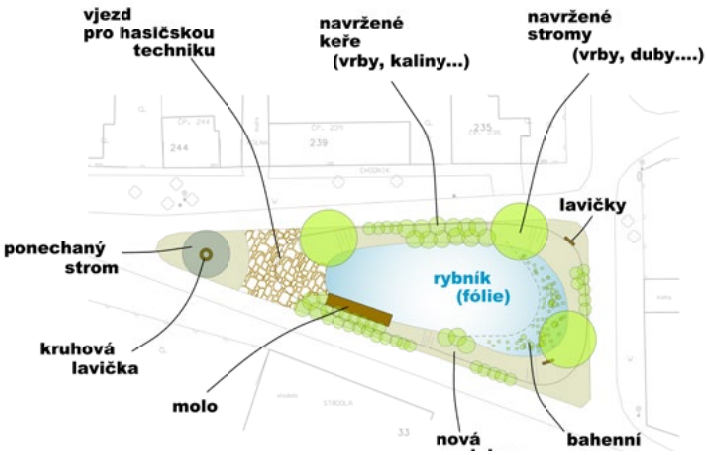
Atelier König also participates in proposing and implementing minor modifications to flower beds, flower boxes, seasonal plantings, etc. Larger implementations include the current design of the ongoing gradual maintenance and renewal of trees in the main village green alongside the main road. The plan also includes restoration of two ponds and returning them to their natural state.

Land Consolidations

The most hoped-for changes in the landscape are Land Consolidations, initiated in 2012. They were launched under the governmental supervision in 2015. At present, we are in the process of defining the so-called plans for joint facilities and preparing the recovery of the defunct road network. We perceive Land Consolidations as the most important landscaping event of the past few decades, and we try to bear this responsibility in mind as we begin this whole project.

In an attempt to adopt a completely comprehensive approach, we collaborated with the Faculty of Horticulture at Mendel University in Brno. After spending a week in Kostelní Lhota, the students who specialise in the Garden and Landscape Architecture proposed specific measures both in the built-up areas and in the landscape, which will be used as the basis for further projects in the years to come.

The conceptual approach in Kostelní Lhota also includes cooperation with the local people and their involvement in the planning process and in the actual implementation of public space modifications. Creating a sense of shared responsibility is a necessary precondition for sustainable development of the municipality.



Natural Environment

The village is located in the agricultural and flat countryside of the lowland Labe area. Nevertheless, it has a high number of forests in its total area as compared to other municipalities in the region. We appreciate this uniqueness, striving to preserve the forests and open greenery and further expand them.

In the past, the surrounding landscape was significantly transformed by man, but we are all more aware of the need to care for small habitats and to promote the creation of new sites that will disturb the current cultural landscape.

Air

The air quality in Kostelní Lhota is adversely affected by the nearby motorway, as well as by the main road passing through the village. This, naturally, generates a certain level of noise pollution.

The introduction of gasification in the village is not realistic at present. In spite of that, individual households are gradually able to replace solid fuel furnaces with environmentally-friendly alternatives. The municipal office sets an example for others by having purchased heat pumps in all three of its buildings.

The municipality also proactively supports its citizens in acquiring new environmentally-friendly boilers by providing guidance and regular information on subsidy entitlements. In 2014, as part of the EU subsidy support, we received a sweeper to reduce dust level in the village.

We consider crucial to further extend green areas and to create a ring of forests around the village, aiming to reduce motorway noise. Notably positive is the fact that there is no factory or larger industrial polluter in the village.

Soil

The region is situated on fertile alluvial soils. Typical are the so-called drift sands, as well as apparent sand dunes in some parts of the pine forests, which are the remains from the Ice Age.

The major part of the municipality lies on fertile Phaeozem and Chernozem soils. We know their value and we are trying to preserve them for future generations. Our goal is to avoid the salting of the village roads in wintertime. Above all, in particular thanks to line plantings, we try to reduce wind erosion in the fields.

Water

The boundaries of the municipality are defined by two rivers – the Výrovka river on the one side and the Šembera river on the other.

The flat area of the Labe river, virtually without any elevation, predetermined the village for a unique system of drainage channels which surround the entire village and drain waters from the surrounding flooded fields (Mokrá luka). Our aim is to maintain these waterways regularly in cooperation with the Labe Basin Authority.

The groundwater level in the wells within the municipality is determined by the fullness of the Peklo pond in the intravilan of the municipality. The pond is fed by the Výrovka river through a 550-metre-long inflow ditch and then drained away by a 700-metre-long outflow ditch. Due to subsidy entitlements, it has been possible to clean and remove mud from both the ditches twice over the past four years, and last year we were able to do the same with the Peklo pond. This activity also included the reinforcement of the ditch dam.

The quality of well water has dramatically improved after the completion of the sewerage system and waste water treatment plant. Today there is a sewerage system throughout the entire village.

A specific feature of our village and of the entire region is the fact that the underground water is a ferrous healing mineral water called Poděbradka, which gave the name to the nearby spa Poděbrady. One of the natural

springs is located in Kostelní Lhota municipality and has been an attractive trip venue for many people.

Fauna and Flora

Kostelní Lhota falls within the floodplain of the Labe River. The entire area has been greatly transformed by man in the past. Watercourses have been embanked due to frequent floods.

In spite of that, we would like to return some interesting habitats to the landscape – those that have been preserved at least partly elsewhere in the Labe area (e. g. alluvial forests, old back waters, etc.). In cooperation with Mendel University and Land Consolidations, we are already planning major changes that could return the natural past to some parts of the landscape. These changes concern, in particular, disturbing the regulated flow of the Výrovka river and creating an alluvial forest, which provides a possibility of water retention during floods.

The majority of species is bound to the local environment. These are, in particular, several species of aquatic animals, frogs and birds that live along the riverbeds and their small tributaries.

Waste

In addition to regular weekly municipal waste collections, the municipality also runs a collection point where the citizens can bring any other type of waste materials – sorted, bulk, construction or electric waste, batteries, lamps, oils and bio-waste.

As regards to the disposal of bio-waste, we are still resistant to the collection of environmentally unfriendly containers as is the case in the surrounding municipalities. We want the people to dispose of this waste by themselves, in their own gardens. Each household has received a composter for free, as part of an EU-funded project. In addition, the citizens have eight different sites within the village where they can bring grass and leaves. The containers are collected by our own vehicle and the bio-waste is given to local farmers. Thus, the material is not transported out of the village, but remains here.

We also try to encourage home bio-waste sorting and composting by selling baskets and decomposable bags. We have also organised a seminar titled “How to Compost Properly” for interested parties.

As regards to sorted waste, we try to reduce the distance to the containers for the villagers to a minimum. There is a total of 40 containers available at eight different sites. In addition, each household regularly receives a free set of bags for sorted waste.

The collection of hazardous waste is organised twice a year.

Last year, we also purchased a domestic indoor composter for disposing of all kitchen food waste coming from both the school and the kindergarten kitchens. The composter ensures environmental disposal of all animal product by the action of a special strain of bacteria. The result is a high-quality organic fertiliser made in the indoor premises.

Thanks to the municipal chipper, we dispose of the cut tree branches in an environmentally-friendly manner and produce mulch for further use.

In almost every issue of the Lhotský zpravodaj (Lhota Newsletter) we dedicate at least two pages to waste

Restored rubbish dump - Pond Myslivečák

management, focusing mainly on raising awareness. We inform our citizens of the results, which clearly show a continuous reduction of the waste amount collected from our village.

Energy Savings

Complete heat insulation and window replacements in all reconstructed public buildings have become routine. However, we also pay attention to modern, sustainable and clean technologies when adapting civic amenity buildings. The municipal office, school and kindergarten have all been equipped with new heat pumps. They substantially lower our electricity expenses.

In addition, all three buildings are equipped with heat recovery function, which holds onto heat from indoor premises and return such heat to rooms with fresh ambient air. Thus, the heat recovery system significantly saves on heat operating expenses. In addition, the formation and spreading, if any, of moulds and wood-decaying fungi is substantially reduced in this manner. However, the main benefit is an improved comfort and health of our citizens. It is the fresh and not stuffy air which is important in places with a higher concentration of people, for example, for reducing fatigue and increasing the ability to concentrate. And this is especially true in the case of children.

The ventilation system in our schools has already been presented in professional publications and we have been invited to seminars dealing with these topics. The most prestigious conference has been one on school ventilation systems intended for designers, architects, sanitary facility staff and representatives of school facilities and public administration.

The newly built streets are already being equipped with LED lamps. The smog lighting and the lighting costs are being reduced by lowering the intensity of lights after midnight.

We also try to provide guidance to individual households for applying the energy saving measures in their own family homes.

We are currently preparing a project for the elementary school extension, with a photovoltaic power plant to be built on its roof in the future.

The village is designed as a ribbon housing development, whose central part has been preserved until today. The ribbon structure has been developed around two more densely populated areas. Both parts were connected alongside the main road by parcelling according to an agricultural model – i. e. a residential dwelling, farm building, orchard, backyard and farmed land. Especially farm buildings – barns, as a link between the gardens and adjacent farmed land, are nowadays a very valuable part of the municipal architecture of the past years. The municipality aims to preserve these buildings, if possible, and to gradually refurbish them. For this purpose, for example, the municipal office has purchased two unused historical buildings and has plans for their future development.

The municipality's rural renewal programme details the buildings and family houses that are architecturally significant. The selected owners of thoughtlessly modified houses are offered assistance with projects for reinstating the houses to their original condition. In this manner, the citizens may get inspiration for their house reconstruction.

Historical Centre

The dominant building of the village is the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary – the only cultural monument of the village, which also makes a "name" for the village. The first phase of an extensive reconstruction is planned for next year. We are currently negotiating the transfer of the monument ownership to the municipality with the current owner of the building (Roman Catholic parish). This would give us a better chance to rescue the building.

The picture of the historical part of the village in the church's vicinity is completed by three other buildings – a former parish house – today the seat of the municipal office, an elementary school and a former church farm house.

In 2012, the elementary school regained its original historical appearance destroyed by thoughtless modifications made in the 1950's. The last building of these

four – the farm house – is still waiting for the reconstruction. Currently, there is an intensive discussion about the future use of this interesting building.

Care of minor sights and public space

In recent years, we have also renovated some minor sacral monuments, such as a stone cross, wayside shrine, small chapel, memorial to the fallen or the Little Bell Tower of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church from 1930, which has been made publicly accessible thanks to the cooperation with the Church. Thus, a completely new resting place has come into existence.

We have been trying to gradually renovate pavements and reduce parking in public areas.

The municipal office is purchasing uniform street furniture for the entire village – benches, litter bins, dog excrement holders and information carriers. Due to relatively high rental prices, we are able to reduce business advertisement hoarding in the public areas.

In the years to come, there should be an extensive restoration of the hiking route alongside the entire village square.

New Housing Development

The housing is regulated by a valid zoning plan which observes the prescribed number of floors, recommends roofing with saddle roofs and defines the maximum height of the ridge. Apart from a few exceptions, inappropriate houses in terms of scale and shape have not appeared. Areas designated for housing developments are assigned a maximum number to the built-up areas, and we are trying to avoid secluded locations. The zoning plan usually respects the ribbon type of housing development.

Despite the proximity of Prague, the new housing development is gradual and rather smooth, which has a positive impact on social integration of new inhabitants amongst old residents. The key is the interest of the local people to remain in the village; therefore, the opportunities for newcomers are partially limited.

In addition to a large area of farmlands and pine tree forests, bodies of water are an inherent part of the municipality. In the past, three reservoirs closed a long municipal square and at the same time formed a divide between the built-up part of the village and the landscape. Today, they are natural prominent features of the village and a meeting place. Built on a former landfill site, a natural pond is the latest complement to these three ponds. Its reclamation has been done by the hunters' association and today it serves as an important venue for municipal cultural and social events.

The watercourses, namely the Výrovka River, are frequent everyday walking destinations for the village inhabitants.

Elements of Ecological Stability

With territorial systems of ecological stability, there are two very important regional bio-corridors on both municipal borders, which follow the most significant watercourses in the municipal cadastral area. In strategic plans, they are locally complemented with proposed bio-centres. In addition, a supra regional bio-corridor of arid pine tree row passes through this territory.

Farming and Forest Lands

At the beginning of 2012, we initiated the land consolidation action in the village – the most extensive transformation of property relationships and landscape. Land Consolidations are considered a unique opportunity to arrange the landscape around our village. We are not likely to have a bigger opportunity in the future, and therefore we are actively cooperating with the State Land Office.

In particular, the renewal of the original field roads provides new opportunities for the surrounding landscape permeability, reduced erosion and alternative walking paths for local people.

In recent years, the drought and the lack of groundwater have led us to the idea of restoring the original wetland and alluvial habitats in selected localities. This would also bring some of the original animals back to our countryside. In particular, a major challenge is the local regulated river flow disturbance, and hence strengthening of the role of the regional bio-corridor. All of this is necessary with regards to protecting our municipality from floods.

Another long-term goal of the municipality is to "close" an incomplete ring of forests around the village's intravilan, thus creating a solid green belt around the village. We are preparing gradual purchases of lands for the future forest planting. The priority is the afforestation of the southern part of the village along the D11 motorway, which will also provide for partial noise insulation.

Historical flood of unprecedented scope in 2013
In June the river Výrovka overflowed and the village was struck with a flood. Many volunteers helped day and night to build protective dams out of sand bags and with the pumping of water out of homes.

Caring for Cultural Landscape

Every year, as part of volunteering activities, we plant new alleys along the paths in the fields or along the Výrovka river on the lands that belong to the Labe River Basin Authority. The composition of trees is always consulted with designers and is based on the strategic documents of the village. We mainly aim for high-quality interconnection between the intravilan and the landscape.

Unfortunately, some plantings complicate the ownership relations, so we are very excited about the benefits of Land Consolidations in this matter, as we plan not only to restore the original routes but also for sufficient planting.

In 2015, the main municipal pond Peklo was cleaned of mud after forty years. In addition, other water ways are regularly maintained, in particular the pond's inflow and outflow ditches.

A significant element of the surrounding landscape is the spring of the Poděbradka mineral water in the Borky forest. We are planning extensive adaptations of the entire locality, which will make the site even more attractive.

Public Spaces and Water Areas

The village is proud of its vast green areas. The dominant feature is a wide and atypical main village green with 270 trees. The characteristic appearance of the village is shaped by open space created in the past, now called Paloučky. In recent years, all these places have been equipped with street furniture and today they are used as resting and meeting places.

An inseparable part of public spaces are four ponds. For two of them, a plan for restoration and reinstating them to their original condition has already been prepared.

The municipality takes care of almost 6 hectares of grassland, the size which covers an area of a smallish town within the region. This also means that from spring to autumn we continuously employ five greenery maintenance workers. In spite of that, we still rely on the help of the inhabitants who look after the premises in front of their houses.

Just like our ancestors' efforts to create spacious public spaces, also today we are trying to build on this tradition of creating "small grassy clearings" in new localities, and to persuade the property owners to sell them for these purposes.

An interesting feature of the municipality is the existence of two cemeteries from the 1920's, which were established due to disagreements between representatives of two church communities at that time.

Sport Fields and Playgrounds

A sports complex hosts numerous sporting and cultural events as well as fulfilling a social role in the community. The football pitch is surrounded by a forest on three sides, which creates a pleasant environment both for the athletes and the audience. The complex also offers volleyball and foot tennis courts. Moreover, the largest children's playground in the village is open to the public, promoting mainly physical activities. We are currently preparing an extensive reconstruction of the

surrounding areas, planning to build new facilities for sports teams.

The garden of the local kindergarten hosts a natural children's playground, which is also accessible to the public for social events. The elementary school garden offers a small school arboretum. We have also completed a project of a children's traffic playground, designed to teach children how to behave around moving cars and buses. Due to the need to coexist with the main road in the village, traffic education is one of the main educational topics.

Public Engagement

Historically, there is a willingness among the local people in the village to take part in new tree plantings. Perhaps the planting of the memorable linden alley by school children in 1908 established this tradition. Almost the entire village green was planted by volunteers in the past. The members of the public also took part in the removal of old poplar trees and subsequent restorations.

This tradition has been preserved up to present times. Over the past few years, it has become a good tradition to plant one alley in extravilan or along the roads from the village to the countryside together with volunteers.

Project of Planting in Public Spaces

When planting new trees, we benefit from a long-term cooperation with Atelier König and with one professional horticultural company which implements the proposals or supervises the planting with volunteers. The choice of plant species always respects the surrounding landscape and is based on traditionally variety of uses.

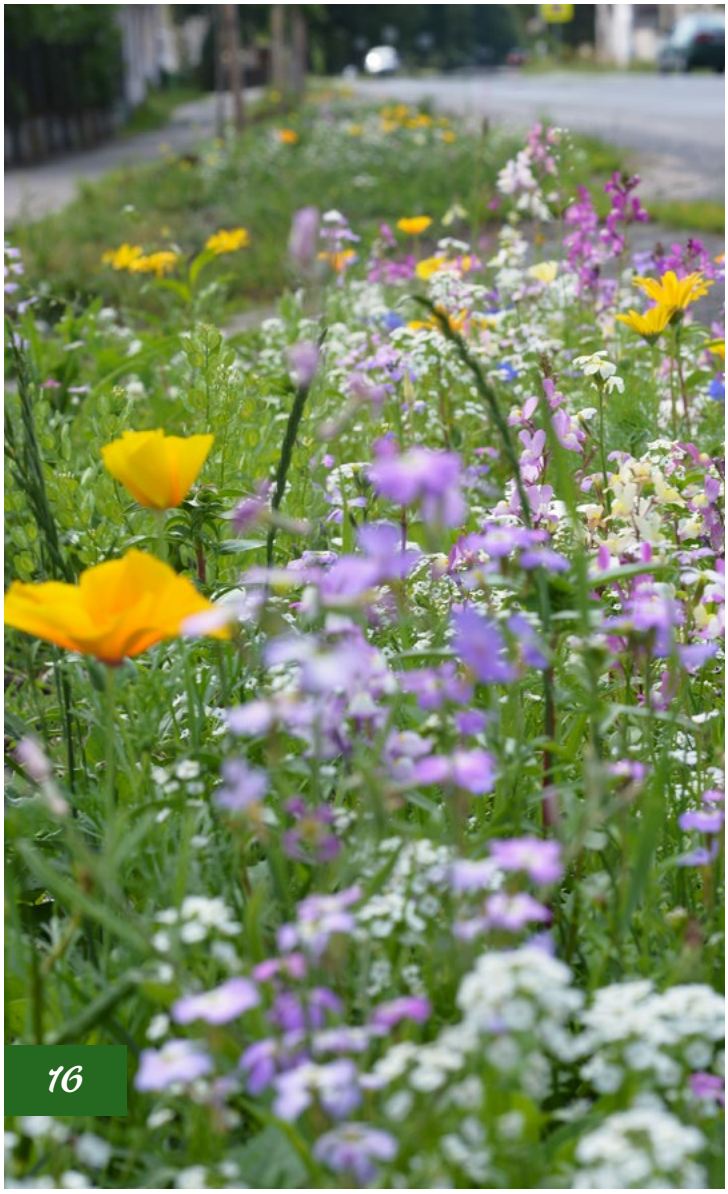
Plantings are carried out in accordance with the main strategic document – The Greenery Master Plan of the Municipality of Kostelní Lhota. Modifications to village's open public spaces were completed last year – perhaps the most striking achievement over the last years – are based on this document. The project, co-funded by the State Environmental Fund, covered twelve public sites in the municipal intravilan as well as two linear plantings in the extravilan along the existing roads.

Altogether, almost 300 larger and smaller trees and dozens of shrubs were planted. The project included the construction of new reinforced areas and threshing surface pavements. The sites were equipped with new street furniture.

The entire project was divided into three years, considering the extent of plantings and watering with our own staff.

From the very beginning, we wanted the public's involvement in the project. The entire documentation was published and made accessible to the public. Moreover, the members of the public were allowed to voice their opinion on the plans at a meeting with designers. This resulted in partial modifications, replacements of some of the trees in selected areas or even the rescue of several trees. The project was concluded by a newly planted fruit tree alley leading to the neighbouring municipality. Every single child from our elementary school could, together with their parents, plant their own tree with their own name tag.

In recent years, we have also tried to improve smaller sites and secluded places which until recently looked neglected and would perhaps be used for a car park. Every single site is consistently consulted with an architect



and we choose from a broad range of perennials that make the places pleasant for the longest possible part of the year.

Caring for Full-Grown Trees

Besides the new planting, we try to care for older trees in the village. We rely on the experience of a dendrologist and a landscaping architect. In recent years, we have been mainly monitoring the full-grown ash trees in the village green. The pruning and safety tying of trees are carried out under the supervision of a professional company.

The school building is lined by a linden alley made of six trees. The alley was planted in 1908 by the then principal and pupils during tree festivities to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Emperor Franz Joseph I's reign. In 2008, one hundred years after the event, the alley was awarded the "Tree Hero" prize from a regional jury, as part of the nationwide survey "The Tree of the Year." The event is commemorated on an information panel located by the school building.

Revitalisation of the Main Village Green

The 2016 Revitalisation of the Main Village Green is a document currently applicable for us. It is a crucial strategy which, among other things, covers the removal of a large portion of unsuitable and century old trees. This would significantly influence the future appearance of the village green. In spite of that, we intend to build on a spatial layout of tree lines, taking into account that the proximity of the trees to the road, which clearly reduces the speed of the passing vehicles.

A complete inventory and basic dendrological survey have been prepared for all the trees; this would prioritize care and removal of damaged and unhealthy trees.

Individual scenarios are currently being discussed with the public. Gradual renewal will be the task of the next few years.

Seasonal Plantings

In the past, individual households carried out seasonal plantings in front of their houses. Recently, the public space has undergone changes and in many respects, it tries to set the direction. In general, however, we try to be moderate and respect the historical regional traditions, trying to avoid excessive decorativeness.

There are flower boxes around the stops as well as at the entrances to public buildings. The windows boast red geraniums (Pelargonium zonale), which are typical for the rural area around the Labe River.

In several locations, we have new annual flower beds and are waiting for the public response to them. We are also slowly learning to appreciate the beauty and nice smell of meadow flowers with only minimum mowing. Both the school and the kindergarten have their own flower beds where they try to grow not only seasonal flowers but also herbs, strawberries, etc.

Last year, volunteers planted more than 3,500 bulbs of the earliest varieties of yellow and white daffodils. And for the first time this year, they have become a beautiful spring messenger on the main village green.

The crucial role in environmental education is played by both schools – the kindergarten and elementary school. However, clubs and associations do not lag far behind. For example, breeders' association hold an annual exhibition of domestic animals, showing how to properly look after them. Children can play various games there and participate in skill competitions. Similarly, breeders from the association regularly visit the kindergarten where the children learn how to recognise various animal species. The fishermen teach children about the fish that live in our waters.

Elementary School

The elementary school in Kostelní Lhota is a small rural school with the first five grades. Nevertheless, the environmental education is firmly embedded in the school educational programme called 'Children Learn for Life'. This includes teaching about a positive relationship to nature and the environment, raising awareness of a potential impact of human activities on the landscape and nature, of sustainable consumption as well as of our ancestors' well proven experience.

In addition to classroom teaching, the school strives for collaboration with the Czech Union for Nature Conservation at their events, spends time observing changes in the school garden in individual seasons of the year, produces and distributes bird feeders, takes part in competitions and charity events on waste sorting, and as part of the "Truly Healthy School" project teaches how to appreciate food, where it comes from and how it is made. It also takes part in many national events throughout the year. And above all, they try to spend most of the time in their large school garden, which is also adapted for outdoor instruction.

In 2013, a small school arboretum called School in Nature – Nature in School was created according to the design of Atelier König. The project included the planting of twenty trees and shrubs, as well as a small perennial bed. Minor equipment was purchased for this purpose, such as a pump, hoses, tools, etc., which allow the school to take care of the plants on their own. At the same time, a local cabinet maker built a sitting area with a blackboard for outdoor classes. If the weather is bad, classes are held in a small wooden shed.

Children can learn how to look after pets in a small zoological garden on the school premises.

Kindergarten

The kindergarten itself launched the renovation and modification of its garden. The design documents for a school natural-type playground titled "A Trip Around the World", again prepared by Atelier König, was used as the basic document for obtaining subsidies from EU funds. The aim was to create not only new natural elements, but also to offer children a wide variety of hiding places, obstacles, climbing areas, and to enable them new physical activities or observing insects in their natural homes.

A Trip Around the World is symbolised by the garden divided into four main natural biomes of the Planet

Arboretum at the Elementary school

Earth – mountains, sea, desert and primeval forest. In a playful manner, they divide the garden into small areas promising diverse, undisturbed, independent and creative children's games. Elevated flower beds are used as a place for growing strawberries, peas and herbs. Herbs from our own garden are also used for seasoning the drinks and meals in the school kitchen.

From the beginning of their attendance in the kindergarten, the children are made familiar with the topic of environment. They learn how to economise with water and paper and how to sort waste. They learn about human activities, which ones are beneficial and which are damaging. They celebrate Earth Day, Water Day and other major events. During almost daily walks to nature, children gain hands-on experience with all natural rules, and in real life they try to respond to negative human activities. They actively cooperate with the Association of Breeders of Small Domestic Animals and Birds, Český Brod Municipal Forests and Eco-Centre Huslík in Poděbrady (a rescue station for endangered and injured animals). In autumn, they collect and give chestnuts and acorns to gamekeepers to feed animals in cribs. They are rewarded by a possibility of observing fallow and roe deer in the game preserve.

Natural-type playground in the Kindergarten

Annual clean-up of the village

Effort and Involvement

From the historical point of view, it has always been a tradition in the Czech Republic that local residents take care of the premises in front of their houses. Kostelní Lhota is no exception in this respect. The local population has remained active in this respect until today.

On the contrary, excessive creativity and inconsistency often created wild combinations of trees. Due to intensive communication with the local people, we have been successful at removing and gradually replacing the improper species. Positive examples as well as the approach of the village management are the precondition for our citizens to continue looking after the space in front of their houses.

For several years now, we have been successful at organising several events that come out of the citizens' volunteering activities, with the participation of families with children. These include, in particular, the participation in the nationwide campaign "Let's Clean Up the World, Let's Clean Up Czechia" (and let's clean up our Lhota). Each time, there are about forty volunteers cleaning up the ditches along the road and the banks of the Výrovka river. Also, after the event, a get-together with refreshments in the school garden boost the number of participants.

A similarly successful annual social event is the planting of trees. It concerns the planting of alleys in the intravilan of the municipality. Every single citizen is allowed to plant their own tree and place their name tag on it. The name tags are soon washed off by rain but some trees are remembered until today, for example, the Tree of Love from the Láskas' family or the children's "Frňákovník" (Snoot Tree), etc. The latest initiative has been the planting of an alley by school children and their parents.

Planting trees with volunteers

Tourism and Leisure

Although Kostelní Lhota does not belong among the top tourist destinations, it still makes important contributions for the local community and we want to make it a pleasant place for living. The most popular among tourists is the Lhota Cycle Track. The local pub has a lot of visitors and the children's playground is popular among the families with children. Some cultural events have gained regional importance.

Lhota Cycle Track

The playing field is the starting point of the Lhota Cycle Track, which links Kostelní Lhota with the neighbouring Písková Lhota municipality, and continues to the spa town of Poděbrady. The other end of our cycle track connects our village with the town of Sadská.

Both parts of the cycle track are made of cement and concrete. The concrete surface is more environmentally-friendly than asphalt. At the same time, it has a great many advantages: it is not deformed by tree roots, it does not grow through the grass, it "shines" at night, etc. We were inspired by southern Moravia which already had three such cycle tracks. In Czechia, it is the very first concrete cycle track made by the finisher technology. The Lhota Cycle Track has been awarded with two interesting prizes in nationwide competitions to date, of which one has been the main prize.

In addition, the whole route is a great alternative to the long-distance international Greenway Labe route, which is overcrowded. Our vision is to prepare such attractions (for example, a chocolate bar with a café and a cake shop, local brewery) which cause tourists to turn off this busy route through the Lhota Cycle Track into our village.

Cultural Events

In Kostelní Lhota, there are several active associations that prepare social events. Some of them enjoy great tourist interest. These are, for example, Old Bohemian Maypole festivities or Lhota Carnival. However, entirely new traditions have gained importance in recent years. This is, for example, Opening of St. Martin's Wines. Our aim is to present mainly regional wines, especially those from the nearby Kutná Hora. The visitors do not only drink wine but they also indulge in freshly roasted geese, or taste homemade Lhota cheeses.

The Cafest or Coffee Festival is another interesting event. Visitors can taste a selection of various coffees; there are demonstrations of roasting, various coffee making methods or presentations given on the topic of coffee. The biggest ever event we have organised was the meeting of Lhotas and Lehotas during which Kostelní Lhota was visited by 3,500 people.

Communication

The topic of environment is most apparent in a regularly published local magazine called Lhotský zpravodaj. It is distributed for free to every mailbox. At least two pages in each issue is devoted to environmental matters, mainly to waste management.

It should be noted that the success in the nationwide competition titled “The Village of the Year” in 2016 and the award of the title “Green Ribbon of the Czech Republic” triggered a huge wave of enthusiasm among the local people for further work and regular meetings to discuss new plans. It has not only become an important stimulus for the preparation of further projects, ideas and plans, but it has also helped to consolidate a sense of belonging to and pride of the place we, the Lhota people, live in.

www.kostelni-lhota.cz

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