

APPENDIX A – TREE PLANTING

In the winter of 2020/21, Wildspace Volunteers planted 200 trees in Parndon Wood and Greenteam Volunteers planted 800 trees in the hedgerow restoration project at Parndon Lock Meadows. This has been fairly standard for the biodiversity work undertaken by our volunteer groups each winter over the past 6 years.

In the winter of 2019/20 a tree planting scheme was piloted together with the regular hedge restoration and understorey plating at Parndon Lock Meadows, Parndon Wood and Ridsen Wood which saw around 5,000 trees planted. This was celebrated with media reports on the huge number of tree planted. To focus on the number of trees planted needs to be reported on with caution, it may be misleading as it is area of habitat which is important. There are many approaches one can take to establish a habitat consisting of trees, the methods used and sites selected need to be reviewed, with emphasis on available funding to achieve a sustained community tree planting initiative. It can take a similar effort to plant 100 whips as it is to plant 1 medium sized tree.

The piloting of the 2019/20 community tree planting initiative in response to climate change relied on minimal cost with no source of funding initially identified. Therefore the approach taken was to firstly rely on the goodwill and adoption of the trees aftercare by those in the local community who were to plant them. Clearly there was a risk that this wouldn't happen and a high percentage of planting failures would follow. Anticipating a high number of failures, a greater number of trees were to be planted per ha than if aftercare was guaranteed. Therefore, at that time with the resources available, a 30% success can be regarded as a success in establishing a woodland copse habitat, which is despite 70% of the trees failing to become established. This was the case for the tree planting in the winter of 2019/20 in Sumners Open Space which did see a 30% survival rate.

East Park Open Space was not successful with 90% of trees failing to become established. This has been put down to a number of factors - unsuitable ground for community planting and made-up ground containing rubble with a very shallow top soil. It became apparent during the planting that people were struggling to open the ground up deep enough and many of the whips were not planted deep enough with roots exposed on the surface. This was together with an exceptionally hot and dry spring, shallow planting and hard, stony ground with very little water available resulted in the majority of trees not surviving.

Pear Tree Mead planting area was in great contrast with approximately 90% of trees successfully becoming established. This was despite extensive vandalism and vehicles driving across the planted area. In spring 2020, there was a concern that the exceptionally dry period was leading to the failure of this area, as elsewhere with trees exhibiting signs of drought stress. A contractor was employed to mulch and water the trees, which was then followed by a break in the weather (unfortunately it

was too late for the trees at East Park). In spring 2021 the vandalised trees, mostly flattened to the ground (yet still alive) with plastic guards and bamboo canes broken, were re-staked upright and the tree guards replaced clearing away the fragments of plastic. A good amount of well-rotted manure was mulched around each tree and a section of chestnut fencing installed to restrict a desire line across the trees area.

2021/22 Tree Planting Programme

Harlow Council has been successful in its bid to the Local Authority Treescape Fund. The contractual details are in the process of being agreed, but this is likely to provide funding in the region of £42,000 to provide: -

- 1,900 whips with tree guards
- 40 standard (i.e. semi-mature) trees
- Maintenance costs for the next three years (2022/23 – 2024/25)

It is proposed that the whips are to be planted through community tree planting exercises in three copses at:

- Netteswell Plantation near the old helipad on Second Avenue
- The old grazing paddock between Willowfield Woods and Passmores House
- A re-planting of East Park

For the 40 standard trees, these will be distributed across the town. It is the intention that there is some planting in each ward during this winter's planting season. Locations are in the process of being confirmed bearing in mind the need to avoid proximity to buildings and utilities ducting. A final list will be agreed with the Portfolio Holder for the Environment before the end of November.

The Treescape Fund requires a 75% survival rate of whips and a 100% survival rate of standard trees after the expiry of the three year maintenance period. The replacement of any failures beyond this will need to be funded by the Council.

Two key learning points have emerged from last year. Firstly, in relation to ground conditions, planting will now be enhanced with the use of a mechanical drill to ensure the correct depth is reached. Secondly, maintenance costs are included within the overall budget to ensure the appropriate mulching and watering over a three year period.

Queens Green Canopy

On 17 May, The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) initiative was launched as part of the Royal Horticultural Society's Virtual Chelsea Flower Show. Her Majesty The Queen is Patron of the RHS. The patron of the QGC is His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales.

The QGC is a unique, UK wide tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 by inviting people to "Plant a Tree for the Jubilee".

Everyone from individuals to Scout and Girlguiding groups, villages, cities, counties, schools and corporates will be encouraged to plant trees from October 2021 through to the end of the Jubilee year in 2022 to create a legacy in honour of The Queen's leadership of the Nation. Details are available on www.queensgreencanopy.org

Harlow Council will commit its tree planting activities in 2021/22 to be identified as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative. The Council will work on this with the office of the Lord Lieutenant of Essex and identify appropriate opportunities to engage communities and promote this initiative. The community tree planting events will be an opportunity for this and efforts will be made to involve local schools in some of the standard tree planting events.

Tree Planting Strategy

Following this winter's tree planting programme the Council will develop a longer term tree strategy by March 2022, based on a model provided by the Woodland Trust.