

Meeting	Parks and Open Spaces
Date	13 th June 2023
Report Title	Trees, Bulbs, Wildflowers & Rewilding
Agenda Reference	14
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Recommendations

1. To note the contents of report
2. To determine order of works

Aim of this long-term project

Society is becoming increasingly aware of the importance flora and fauna on the well being of our planet and ourselves. Though we acknowledge the need for some maintenance activities, we also realise that we have a duty to work to improve the biodiversity within the Parish for the benefit of not only the wildlife and the planet but the residents.

Why is biodiversity important?¹

Biodiversity is essential for the processes that support all life on Earth, including humans. Without a wide range of animals, plants, and microorganisms, we cannot have the healthy ecosystems that we rely on to provide us with the air we breathe and the food we eat. And people also value nature of itself.

Some aspects of biodiversity are instinctively widely valued by people but the more we study biodiversity the more we see that all of it is important – even bugs and bacteria that we can't see or may not like the look of. There are lots of ways that humans depend upon biodiversity, and it is vital for us to conserve it. Pollinators such as birds, bees and other insects are estimated to be responsible for a third of the world's crop production. Without pollinators we would not have apples, cherries, blueberries, almonds and many other foods we eat. Agriculture is also reliant upon invertebrates – they help to maintain the health of the soil crops grow in. Soil is teeming with microbes that are vital for liberating nutrients that plants need to grow, which are then also passed to us when we eat them. Life from the oceans provides the main source of animal protein for many people.

Trees, bushes and wetlands and wild grasslands naturally slow down water and help soil to absorb rainfall. When they are removed it can increase flooding. Trees and other plants clean the air we breathe and help us tackle the global challenge of climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide. Coral reefs and mangrove forests act as natural defences protecting coastlines from waves and storms.

Many of our medicines, along with other complex chemicals that we use in our daily lives such as latex and rubber, also originate from plants. Spending time in nature is increasingly understood to lead to improvements in people's physical and mental health. Simply having green spaces and trees in cities has been shown to decrease hospital admissions, reduce stress and lower blood pressure.

¹ The Royal Society



Selected Locations and Treatments

The following locations are in no particular order, there are a large number of sites, it is impossible for all of them to be done this year, so a decision needs to be made about which to be given priority and those to left for future years.

Tiny Forests

This initiative will see in the region of half a dozen tiny forests (approximately tennis court size) across the whole of Swindon. The Parish is planning on sending a list of sites in Haydon Wick Parish to Swindon Borough Council for inclusion in the Swindon wide programme. It is unknown which if any of the suggestions will be accepted. Where sites are rejected by SBC, alternative treatments will be used. Trees are available through the community scheme, so this could be a fallback supplier. See supplementary document about the Tiny Forest Project.

Sites agreed to progress with the prospect of Tiny Forests were, Grace Walk, Heaton Close, Voyager Drive, and Luna Close. These sites have been suggested to Earthwatch Europe via our Community Development Officer. See supplementary documentation for details of submissions.

Budget and Costing

It is hoped that we can make use of the various tree planting schemes currently available. We still have some wildflower seeds, and ground cover seeds.

Update on Rewilding Areas

Full council had been given the opportunity to submit suggested sites, for these activities.

5 areas were identified to cease mowing they are:-

1. Hysopp Close the area directly linked to the wildflower area, four desire lines / footpaths will be cut into this area. Leaving access for members of the public to use.
2. Havisham Drive open space. An area to the east of the open space bounded by the ancient ditch and established Oak hedgerow.
3. Queen Elizabeth Drive (Garsington end) at its junction with Thamesdown Drive, two small areas either side of the junction.
4. Wick Farm Orchard, the area between the play area and the pond in Upton Close. A desire line will be kept cut through this area.
5. Blossom Park, (Prospero Way) the area to the West of our tree planting. This is bounded on three sides by hardstanding footpaths a 2mt mown strip will be maintained alongside these three sides.

These areas will not be cut from May 1st 2023.



Locations – Aerial shots marking out the areas are available on request.

- **Friday Street** - There is currently a line of trees, the suggestion is to extend this line, and encircle the base of the trees with bulb and wildflower planting. This would come under the Community Forest scheme – the scheme used to provide for Tadpole Field, the trees, supports, shields and mulch mats were provided for free, and monies were available to pay staffing costs. For street planting like this, the packet is slightly different in terms of ongoing financial support.
- **Luna Close** - Tiny Forest site – if not accepted - It is suggested that a “cherry” walk be planted along Luna Close near to the playpark. There is an additional shrubbed area which will be enhanced. Tree would be provided via the Community Forest scheme.
- **Voyager Drive** - Tiny Forest Site – if not rewilding or wildflowers.
- **Grace Walk** - Create a Tiny Forest.
- **Blossom Park (Prospero Way)** - Rewilding site.
High Street - There is a small patch of grass that is awkward to maintain, replant it with lower growing plants. Seeds already available.
- **Havisham Drive**
To mow a strip of grass by the path, approximately two mowers width, then leave the areas under the trees uncut to rewild.
- **Pond Street**
The areas marked on the image to be rewilded – i.e. left to their own devices, a desire path will be mown.
- **Heaton Close**
Two treatments, the left-hand patch on the image to be a tiny forest – this is infill planting between existing trees. The second site to the right of the image planted with wildflowers.
- **Hyssop Close**
Three actions on this site, increase the size of the rewilding area, create a tiny forest at the bottom end of the site, and plant wildflowers to the right of the site.
- **Purton Road**
Some infill planting of trees between the existing trees, with additional bulb planting to complement the existing planting.
- **Doyle Close**
Increase the hedge cutting on the path from Doyle through to Thamesdown Drive, the corners of the playpark are rough, but at this moment further thought needs to be given into how these areas should be treated.
- **Cloverlands**
To plant wildflowers to the rear of the site, mow near the pathway and plant with bulbs.
- **Blunsdon Road and Thames Avenue**
This site is currently being used by Thames Water as a works compound, therefore the



grass is being ripped up. Suggest that we approach Thame Water for funding for us to plant wildflowers there, rather than TW reinstating the site themselves.

- **Mazurek Way**

In the first instant plant with cuttings of willow, to quickly fill the gaps, then in future years progress to planting appropriate hedgerow plants. The willow will be free as we will just collect cutting from willows about the Parish.

- **Garsington Drive**

To plant with wildflower seeds (low growing), cut a desire path across the island for pedestrians also facilitates residents' ability to look closely at the flowers.

- **Queen Elizabeth Drive junction Thamesdown Drive**

Leave grass uncut for rewilding.