

Meeting	Parks and Open Spaces Committee
Date	7 th November 2023
Report Title	Tiny Forests (now Trees for Climate)
Agenda Reference	12
Author	Georgina Morgan-Denn, Chief Officer/Clerk & RFO David Hunt, Head of Parks & Open Spaces

Officer's Recommendations:

1. To note that Earthwatch (Tiny Forests) will no longer be delivering the project with Swindon parishes. As of the 30th October, Trees for Climate (TfC) will be delivering it.
2. To note the agreed (POS 102) Grace Walk site has progressed and an agreement with Earthwatch was signed.
3. To note an updated site for Voyager was discussed with Earthwatch and, pending the outcome of more community engagement, may be progressed after Christmas with TfC.
4. To note a third location at Heaton Close is being investigated. If viable (subject to utility searches), and following a community consultation, it may be progressed in the New Year with TfC.
5. To note the main difference with TfC now delivering the project is a less dense planting scheme and there is now a budget allocated for a 10-15 year maintenance programme - amount to be confirmed. This will include paying for the utility search for Heaton Close.

Original Plan – Earthwatch (Tiny Forests)

Earthwatch (Tiny Forests) confirmed that their involvement to the schemes is total. They arrange all aspects of the process, community engagement, planting, install of 900mm fencing and informal low-level benches. The ongoing scheme could involve school visits. Ongoing maintenance can be carried out by community groups and ongoing items can be at our discretion. There was a Teams meeting with Earthwatch on Friday 20th October and the following was confirmed.

1. Grace Walk

Proceed with Grace Walk as agreed by committee following public consultation (a leaflet drop to 22 properties with basic outline details and received no feedback from residents). Agreement between both parties was signed.

Haydon Wick Grace Walk Tiny Forest Design 1



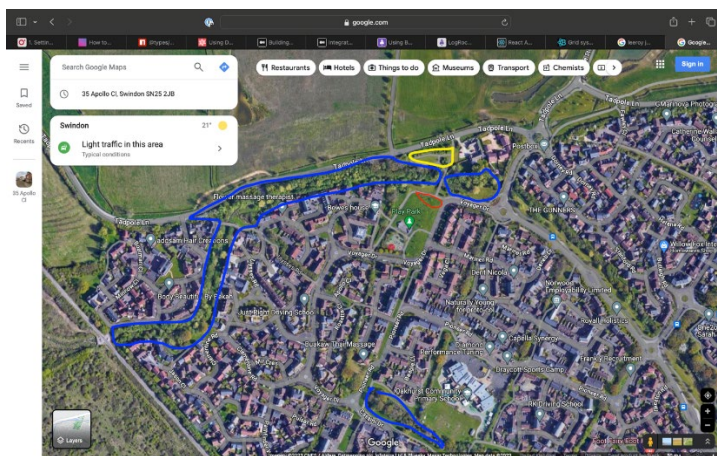


2. Voyager Drive

Discussed the possibility of planting an area at Voyager Drive, north of the stream and bridge. It was agreed that collectively we would pursue the possibility of this new area being planted – shown in yellow on the map below.

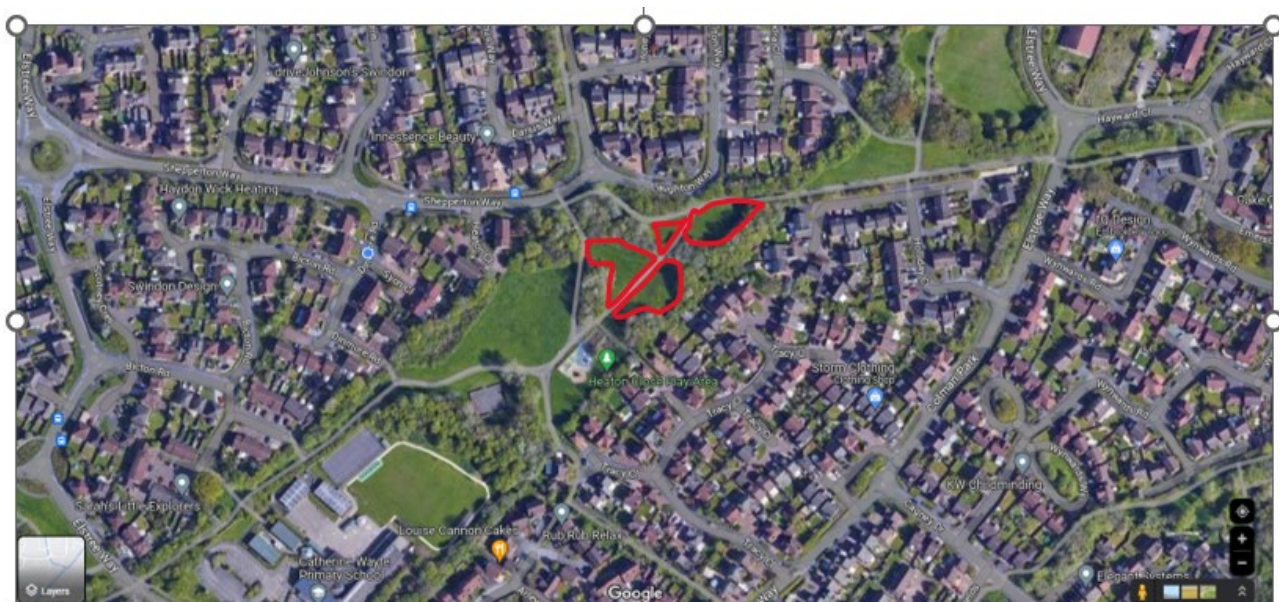
Given the site is slightly “no man’s land” for now it was agreed that we would need to work with residents to increase their interest in this site and improving it prior to planting so we can ensure good community engagement and support.

Planting would not be possible until after Christmas, but it is better to get the right site and preparation than rush. The Parish Council should engage with the schools around Voyager Close.



3. Heaton Close

Asked if Earthwatch would reconsider one of our original suggested sites for planting at Heaton Close – triangle shape shown in the plan. This was agreed and now in the process of getting service plans arranged for this area. If the service plans are favourable, then we will look at carrying out local consultation with residents and staff and pupils at Catherine Wayte School.





Revised Plan – Trees for Climate

The following update was received on the 30th October 2023.

The Green Infrastructure Programme Manager at SBC has confirmed that SBC will not be entering into an agreement with Earthwatch and the Tiny Forest programme. The primary reason for this decision is that SBC are unable to provide the £25,000 funds required to be paid to Earthwatch for each Tiny Forest site, due to financial constraints.

SBC is unable to use the Trees for Climate (TfC) grant to support the Tiny Forest programme, due to the fact both sources of funding are from Central Government. However the TfC grant can be used to support tree planting in all the Tiny Forest areas identified in the Parish.

The Tiny Forest project was not able to contribute any money towards maintenance, but the Trees for Climate grant will pay all capital costs and include maintenance payments for 10 to 15 years (payable to the PCs). This will include paying for the utility search for the Heaton Close site. Caroline Hunt will assist Parish Councils in delivering this alternative tree planting programme.

As the sites will now fall within the Trees for Climate remit, there will not be a need to take soil samples or use heavy machinery on site. The trees will be notch planted into existing ground conditions, with minimum disturbance to the soil.

Each site will have a minimum of 25 native trees planted. The density of planting will be lower than the Tiny Forest method but will still deliver high value biodiversity and provide access to pocket community woodlands which can be used as outdoor learning resources. Seating and fencing can be included if required. The sites will be delivered as community tree planting opportunities.

Local communities should be encouraged to get involved with monitoring the woodland and maintaining it, but the Parish Councils will now not be required to fund this.

Further update from SBC received 30th October from SBC

We can incorporate the following if parishes require them:

1. Fencing – if a PC feels this is an absolute requirement then we will consider
2. Seating – simple bench design
3. Incorporate path in planting design (grass path say 2.5 metres)
4. Shape – avoid squares
5. Shrub layer – fruity, colourful and nothing spiky...

Finally, there is a Teams meeting planned with SBC on 2nd November with all the parishes involved in this project. The Head of Parks & Open Spaces will verbally update the committee with any updates.