

Proposal to submit a bid during 2025 for a Trees for Climate planting project at Belmont Green

1.0 Introduction

Whilst meeting Wiltshire Wildlife Trust at Belmont Green to discuss the possibility of a Volunteer Tree Warden, the Projects & Grants Officer requested WWT's advice on whether it would be possible to plant some additional trees on the open space between The Mountings and the hedge behind to the north, as indicated on the map attached. This grass is not used for anything specific, and the addition of trees could improve the area as well as increasing Swindon's (and Wroughton's) tree canopy.

More information on SBC's Trees for Climate can be found here: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20183/nature_conservation_and_creation/1327/opportunities_for_private_land_owners_to_support_tree_planting

2.0 Report Details

- 2.1 WWT advised that a combination of whips and more mature trees could easily be planted on the site. They are working with several other parish councils in Swindon to bid for funding under the Trees for Climate, and some parishes are using this to plant 80 trees in a small area to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of VE Day on 8th May 2025. The trees cannot be planted in May and would need to be planted later in the year, but this does not preclude them from being a VE Day 80 memorial. Neil also advised that there is likely to be a 'special tree' given out to those parishes which choose to commemorate VE Day 80 in this way.
- 2.2 WWT are willing to meet the Projects & Grants Officer in April to help formulate a bid to Swindon Borough Council's (SBC's) Trees for Climate fund.
- 2.3 The bid could include training for Volunteer Tree Wardens and Grounds Team Staff, the costs for a contractor to plant the trees including community engagement, the cost for the contractor to maintain and look after those trees during the first year to ensure they become established and healthy, any additional trees which Members wish to see planted on other areas of parish-owned or parish-managed land. It could also include the replacement of any single street trees which might have died.
- 2.4 The benefits of trees include: producing oxygen; storing carbon; absorbing water; reducing soil erosion; slowing the filtration of water which is important when large adjacent areas include impermeable tarmac and concrete; releasing water vapour which produces a cooling effect; providing a food source and habitat for wildlife; good for mental health and wellbeing; we need to replace trees as they get towards the end of their lifecycles, which involves planting them ahead of time so new trees become mature before older trees die naturally.

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- 2.5 WWT advised that Swindon wishes to increase the tree canopy across the Borough, and SBC may consider planting trees on areas which had previously been refused. There are trees which suit wetter habitats, which are becoming more rare, so damp areas which are sometimes waterlogged can also be considered.

3.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- 3.1 **Support the proposal to plant 80 trees at Belmont Green as a VE Day 80 memorial, using a mixture of larger trees and whips, as advised by WWT.**
- 3.2 **Suggest any other areas where they would wish more trees to be planted – these should be parish-owned or managed, so the Projects & Grants Officer can then discuss with these with WWT at the meeting in April.**
- 3.2 **Agree the Projects and Grants Officer can meet with WWT and SBC in April to put together a bid to include include:**
- **training for Volunteer Tree Wardens and Grounds Team Staff**
 - **the costs for a contractor to plant the trees including community engagement**
 - **the cost for the contractor to maintain and look after those trees during the first year to ensure they become established and healthy**
 - **any additional trees which Members wish to see planted on other areas of parish-owned or parish-managed land**
 - **funding for future years' maintenance.**