

Community Tree Planting Sites

Background

As part of the National Forests Community Woodlands project, there are plans to develop a community woodland within Hill Hole Nature Reserve. The project has been put on hold until the outcome of an outstanding botanical survey of the proposed site in the Spring/Summer.

It has been suggested that there are lots of people within Markfield with an interest in the environment, and they would like to get involved in planting and maintaining trees and green spaces within the area. The Project Officer for the Hill Hole Nature Reserve has had conversations with colleagues at the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Project, collectively they have potentially identified two spaces within Markfield where some individual trees or collections of fruit trees could be planted to create a slightly different community woodland.

Parish Council's Current Tree Estate

The Parish Council's current tree estate consists of hundreds of trees across 10 sites which include a wide variety of species and mixed age of trees as well as protected trees and trees within the conservation area. The Parish Council takes its tree stewardship seriously with the trees being subject to an inspection regime which rank orders work according to priority. The Parish Council does not have sufficient funds to undertake cosmetic tree work nor does it act upon requests covered by common law pertaining to trees. This current financial year the Parish Council will spend circa 8% of its budget on tree maintenance. Whilst there is a monetary aspect to caring for trees, trees have a wellbeing and amenity value. They reinforce Markfield's rural location and identity, are part of its character and add to its sense of place.

Suggested Sites

The two green spaces suggested are Launde Road and Countryman Way both of which are owned by the Parish Council and are the site of existing trees.

The Project Officer acknowledges that these sites may not be suitable and is open to receiving alternate suggestions.

Level of Support, Tree Care, Maintenance and Ownership

The National Forest and the Charnwood Landscape Project is keen to support a community initiative and are able to provide the funding for planning and delivering the tree planting, as well as supporting the development of a community group to care for the trees as they develop.

If tree planting on Parish Council land is considered, from a practical perspective thought will need to be given to establishing a process of how the Parish Council's trees and the community group's trees are identified and maintained. The Parish Council should be mindful that if over time the community group's interest wanes then the trees will likely fall to the Parish Council as the landowner.

Recommendation

Council is asked the following:

- Whether it supports the principle of community tree planting at Launde Road and/or Countryman Way?
- Whether any in principle support will need to be further determined through a consultation process with the immediate residents
- Can any other potential sites be identified across Markfield
- Whether this matter is placed on hold until the outcome of the botanical survey

Subject to the above and any other questions or concerns being identified, the recommendation to Council is that this matter is placed before Council for further consideration at an appropriate time.