

Minutes of the South Norfolk Tree Warden Network held at The Royal Oak, Poringland on Monday 21st October 2019

Present: Henry Gowman, Phil Grimes, Stella Hughes, Steve Dowall, Roma Beardsall, Richard Beese, Joe Darrrell, Sarah Barney

Apologies: Anne Edwards

Before the official start of the meeting Richard Bees, TW for Cringleford, introduced his 'Back to Nature' experience initiative. This is aimed at primary school children and will be run in conjunction with the local school. It aims to enhance children's sensory experience of woodland by placing structures within that setting which will encourage exploration and feelings generated. The idea is based on the Chelsea Flower show garden presented by the Duchess of Cambridge. The children will help design the natural materials structures. £15,000 is needed to implement the programme so fund raising will begin. Henry offered to contact the Norwich Men's Shed group whose members have carpentry and other practical skills which could be very helpful.

The meeting then opened officially with a welcome and apologies received.

Reports and discussion topics

1. Tree orders: It was disappointing that from 75 Tree Wardens only six orders had been received, three from committee members. These were mainly for hedging plants and would only commit one fifth of the grant received from Busseys.

Discussion followed on why take up was low and the following points were made.

- Planting the trees may be physically difficult for some. Roma suggested purchasing an auger which could obviate the need for digging and would enable trees to be planted within existing hedgerows. Henry has investigated purchasing one from SNCC.
- Tree Wardens are all busy people and may simply not have time
- Norfolk County Council is doing a lot of planting
- Parish Council land is in short supply and suitable land may not be available
- We are a rural area and small parishes may be well planted.
- It can be difficult to engage with farmers. Phil reported that he has found that hedging and compost schemes are often well received but the planting of large trees can present difficulties.
- Anniversary tree planting can provide a focus

We heard a conference report about a Nature Friendly Farming Network initiated by Martin Lines, a farmer who was using this approach and how sceptical attendees became very interested when they heard how yields increased.

Henry led a discussion on a question posed by a Network Tree Warden about planting schemes for a new housing development on land sold by a local farmer and how to encourage planting within the scheme.

- **South Norfolk District Council Tree Planting Strategy.**

This matter was raised as a follow up to the recent East Anglia Tree Warden's Conference hosted by Broadland Tree Wardens, when we heard from the Tree Council that district councils were preparing plans in order to fulfill the large scale tree planting requirements. Tree Wardens could then link in directly and offer work power and provision of plants within our budget. Again, Henry had anticipated this and had contacted SNDC to offer our help in formulating and helping to establish a strategy.

- **SNTWN Tree Nursery**

Phil Grimes reported on progress made towards establishing a SNTWN Tree Nursery where trees from local stock could be raised. A former landfill site at Berg Apton had been identified as being potentially suitable and following a visit with Anne Edwards, Charlie Wright the Head of Closed Landfill Team for NCC and Tom Russell NCC, a proposal was submitted. Methane extraction is on-going but the site is capped.

Having secured an agreement in principle a request for a two acre site for 10,000 trees was submitted but rejected so a ten year, one acre area for 5,000 trees as originally discussed was proposed and accepted by NCC.

- **Points raised**

There is water on site but the installation of a pipeline was initially turned down as the area is naturally damp but water access needs to be written into the agreement.

The variability of the soil must be assessed.

Organic practice and the protection of the existing habitat would operate.

A diversity of planting techniques will be used i.e. seeds and purchased whips,, which would enable schools to be involved by planting seeds, watching them develop and then sending them to the nursery.

A range of native species would be grown and the controlled introduction of more drought tolerant Mediterranean species in response to climate change.

Muntjac deer and rabbits abound on the site, so strong tree guards will be needed.

A Management Liability clause would be necessary so that if the SNTWN were to abandon the scheme then it would revert to NCC.

Phil and Anne and any others interested will receive training in site working and supervision. The site is not suitable for children.

Volunteers are needed to help with planting and ongoing maintenance. To this purpose Phil will set up a Face Book group and will also feed information onto the SNTWN website so all members are informed.

Tree planting will start as soon as the agreement is signed.

Anne and Phil were thanked very much for their sterling work.

AOB

The whole Network needs to get together so a Christmas/New Year celebration was suggested with lots of time for members to talk, share good practice and see how we can best meet the need for extensive tree planting and also mark next years thirtieth anniversary of the Tree Council. Henry will find a central venue.

The meeting finished at 9.15

Sarah Barney