

Date: 05 March 2020

Title: Report Item 11 – Downs View Lane

By: Cllr L Durso

Purpose: Report on planting plans for Downs View Lane to ensure overall success of the proposal.

Recommendations:
To note the report and approve the spending on arboricultural advice as requested

Context

Downs View Lane Verge

A radical cutback along the lane had been necessitated by a long period of neglect. The verge is not a nature reserve or SSSI but a residential street, which had been similarly maintained since the houses had been built. The screening hedge alongside the A259 is still there. Clearance of the verge on the south side of the Lane had divided opinion. PC members have approved the addition to the council's mowing contract of the annual strimming of the Downs View Lane verge (south side) to a width of 1.5m. It was agreed however that a combination of re-planting to enhance the verge, plus this regular maintenance, should meet the concerns of all parties.

Cllr d'Urso advised that the Woodland Trust was offering free packs of saplings for planting late in 2020 and it was agreed that this should be investigated. A suitable mix of trees would ideally be planted in small clumps along the Lane for ease of future maintenance.

Important points

Specialist advice from Fran Southgate- The Living Landscape Advisor indicates the following species are suitable for planting as hedges on chalk grassland:

Dog rose, Hazel, Goat willow (for wet areas), Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Field maple, Whitebeam, Alder Buckthorn, Yew, Elm (though limited by elm disease), Small leaved lime, Rowan, Wayfaring tree, Native oaks and Crabapple.

Woodland Trust packs that are under consideration include the hedgerow one consisting of 30 saplings per pack made up of of Dogrose, Hawthorn, Crab Apple Hazel and Dogwood.(A very reasonable match)

Recommendations

To be sure that any replanting is successful, sympathetic and adds correctly to the biodiversity of the area without causing any adverse knock on impacts I would like the councillors to consider the proposal that arboricultural advice is sought before committing to this work, specifically to answer the following queries.

Is it worth planting anything from the point of view of location and soil type?

If, so can they confirm the correct selection of suitable species?

How and when should saplings be planted?

Could trained volunteers from the community do it or would an appropriate contractor be more advisable?

What maintenance over what time would then be required to allow saplings to establish themselves? Could village volunteers do this?

Given the length of Downs View Lane how many saplings are appropriate to request?

From a maintenance view point what spacing/grouping is suggested?

Confirmation of the existence (or not) of the cherry trees that were planted as a planning condition from 1982.

From consultation with the Parish Council's Tree Warden it seems that we could secure an expert report from a professional for around £100. We could get maximum benefit from any visit to our site if we included them surveying the Diversity Strip on the Recreation Ground and advising on the development of the Wild Flower Strip. Within the cost it may even be possible for them to provide advice on any specific issues Peter Williamson has not yet been able to resolve.

Cllr L Durso