

Tree Wardens & Conservation Volunteers Newsletter

February 2011



Help us grow a new tree planting scheme for our district

Suffolk Coastal's Countryside Team is looking for volunteers to help form a new group to help take the district's Parish Tree Scheme forward into the future.



To help it balance its budget, Suffolk Coastal has announced its intention to end its funding of its Parish Tree Scheme (PTS) which has for over 30 years helped parish & town councils increase the tree and hedgerow stock across the district.

The PTS has part funded planting schemes that improve the environment of our parishes and villages, with many of these schemes being initiated by our Tree Wardens. Thousands of new trees and miles of hedgerows around the district have been planted, adding to our green and pleasant landscape and the quality of life for those that live here.

"The Parish Tree Scheme has been one of our most long-lasting initiatives, which has helped change the shape of our environment for years and generations to come. It is with regret,

and it is a measure of the financial challenges facing us, that Suffolk Coastal is to withdraw its funding," said Cabinet Member for Leisure and Countryside, Cllr Mary Neale.

"The scheme has always been a partnership, almost an early example of what the Government is promoting as the Big Society. What we need now is to encourage groups of people to come forward and grab the reins. We are ready to give them whatever assistance they need to identify and gain the funding that is on offer from a range of national and local sources that could enable the new Parish Tree Scheme to grow and even out shine the efforts and achievements of the last 30 years," added Cllr Neale.



There is a wide range of funding from organisations such as the National Lottery, landfill tax charities, Suffolk Foundation, DEFRA's Big Tree Fund, business sponsorship or private benefactors, some of which are closed to the Council, but not to voluntary groups. The Council

still holds a revenue and capital grant scheme budget which can assist with projects with clear community benefit.

“What we need to do is channel the existing drive and enthusiasm of the many volunteers who have regularly given up time to support the PTS in the past, and support their efforts to create a new steering group that will take ownership of the scheme. This Council is ready to offer whatever support and advice it can to help the steering group, but the grim financial reality is that we can no longer finance the scheme,” added Cllr Neale.

The steering group would be able to apply for funding and then choose how it would use the funding. The Council’s Countryside Team could continue to offer specialist advice on landscaping or planting issues, but the steering group would be responsible for all the administration of the scheme, including ordering and purchasing. Alternatively the group could operate a scheme that co-ordinates and supports parish tree planting to ensure the greatest value for money but requiring that applicants pay all of the costs of purchasing trees, stakes and guards. These will be decisions for you to make if you join the steering group.

“We have had to take this tough decision to end our funding of the PTS because of our need to save over £2 million in the coming year, as we see our grants from Government reduce by 28 per cent over the coming four years. However, the PTS is an initiative we are all confident can and will live on. It has been such a success because of the drive and commitment of local communities. The new Localism Bill before Parliament is set to give all local communities even more say and responsibility, and I am sure that the new better than ever Parish Tree Scheme could become a beacon for all to follow,” added Cllr Neale.

If you would like an informal chat about the Parish Tree Scheme or you would like to register an interest please contact:

Peter Ross (Countryside Officer)

Tel. 01394 444619 or email peter.ross@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Once we have a nucleus of interested people we will convene a meeting to discuss how to take this new group forward and we will keep everyone informed of progress.



Suffolk Hedgerow Survey Latest

Don’t forget, this is the last year (2011) for Parishes to complete their hedgerow surveys. Guy Ackers has done an amazing job over the last ten years coordinating this project and we have some fantastic data on the prevalence and species in our Parish hedges. If your parish has still to carry out a survey, there may still be time to co-ordinate a survey this spring/summer, but you will need to speak to Hedgerow survey co-ordinator Guy Ackers first. For further information about the survey or to ask for an end of project summary report, which will be available much later this year please contact Guy on Tel: 01394 383264 or by e-mail

GuyAckersMelton@rmpc.co.uk

'Trees and Woodlands: A Community Resource for Humans and Wildlife.' A free training event for all

At a time when District and County Councils are seeking to transfer assets out to community groups, charities and parish and town councils, some groups are possibly daunted by the prospect of taking on the responsibility of managing their local green spaces, especially where it involves the management of trees and woodland. But, well managed accessible trees and woodlands can be a boon for both people and wildlife. Providing sanctuary, leisure, fuel, and food while improving air quality and reducing surface water flooding and ambient temperatures. On Sunday 20th March 2011 local people are invited to come and find out how communities can engage with these valuable resources and to share their own experiences.

The event Trees and Woodlands a Community Resource for Humans and Wildlife will run from 10am to 4pm in Martlesham Community Hall. The day will include: a series of short talks by people with practical experience or detailed knowledge, including forest gardens and managing woods for wood fuel; workshops; and a wonderful woodland walk.

Drinks will be provided but people are asked to bring their own lunch and as spaces are limited to book in advance. People can book by calling 01394 444218 or by emailing environmental.protection@suffolkcoastal.gov.

This event is being jointly organised by Groundwork East of England, Suffolk Coastal District Council Countryside and Open Spaces Team and Environmental Sustainability Officer, the Greenprint Forum and Suffolk Coastal LSP. It is funded under the Suffolk Coastal Community Environmental Action project by Suffolk Coast and Heaths and the Environment Agency. It is being held to mark the International Year of Forests and Climate Change Week.

The 2010 Parish Tree Scheme In 2010 the Parish Tree scheme enabled new hedges to be planted at Benhall on the A12, Framlingham community garden, Yoxford allotments, Monewden, Bucklesham, Wickham Market, Farnham churchyard, and Aldringham. Hopefully the scheme will continue in a new guise to enable this good work to continue. If you do have a scheme in mind for this coming autumn/winter, Anne Westover's little project to propagate local provenance oaks is now bearing fruit. The acorns of some of our local, mighty oaks from various of our parishes have been propagated and potted on to provide nearly 200 oak whips, which can be snapped up for planting in Autumn 2011. Please contact Anne at SCDC if you would like some of these for special places and hedgerows around the district. Thanks to Blaxhall's Tree Warden for help with potting on last October; surprisingly hard work!

Happy 20th birthday Tree Wardens

On the 29th November Anne Westover had the very great pleasure of attending a reception at the House of Lords to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Tree Warden Scheme set up by the Tree Council in 1990.

Some of you will remember when Anne set up the tree scheme in 1993 to help with the important landscape and tree related work undertaken at SCDC. Since then Tree Wardens have been a great source of help and support for championing lots of great work throughout the district. You have helped enormously in terms of enhancing your parishes through planting and promoting trees.

Blaxhall Tree Warden, Maggie Grenham joined Anne at the House of Lords. "Together we entered the Black Rods garden entrance and enjoyed our tea and then a fantastic night-time view of the Houses of Parliament from the bank of the Thames".

Short speeches were given by Lord Best, Lord Hanley, Pam Warhurst Chair of Forestry Commission and Councillors for East Sussex and Leicester.

All the speeches congratulated the good works carried out by Tree Wardens and told of how successful the scheme had been over the last 20 years. At a time when the Big Society is the big buzz phrase your works are going to be ever more crucial.

I am sure we all hope that the Tree Council will continue to help support our work at national level giving you the framework to promote trees, biodiversity and great landscapes.



Maggie, John Stokes (Tree Council) & Anne

Footprints volunteers go from strength to strength

There are already several established Community Conservation Groups that are carrying out great works on Suffolk Coastal land, such as Wenhaston, Westleton, Middleton and Kesgrave. We are also in discussion with other evolving environment groups at Saxtead and Ufford. Despite these local groups, it was recognised that there wasn't the opportunity for general conservation volunteering on other Suffolk Coastal countryside sites. Hence, the Footprints volunteer group was set up out of a project started in 2009 to enable local businesses and people to get more involved in the management of their local green spaces.



Although we weren't that successful with numbers in the first year, under the guidance of our new Countryside Ranger Team Catherine and Lynda, the number of volunteer events and volunteers has increased ten fold. This winter so far there have been 45 conservation volunteer events, attracting 300 volunteers. If you apply a cost per man hour spent, then there has been an extra £10,000 worth of work carried out. It is not only casual volunteers that have turned out, but Hollesley Bay prisoners and several businesses have used Footprints volunteer days as team building events, as they are a fantastic opportunity to develop people who can find out more about the local environment during an active and healthy day out.

Footprints work parties

There are many practical management tasks carried out this winter, including cutting scrub on heathland at Sutton and Hollesley, thinning and coppicing in young woodland in Felixstowe and scrub coppicing and hedge management at Melton. At most Footprints days there is usually a bonfire, plenty of fresh tea and biscuits and occasionally hot dogs. Once the winter work ends there will be the usual summer work mostly associated with the cutting back of footpaths, but there are one or two wildflower meadows to rake as well. Catherine and Lynda intend to keep up people's interest with some training events that initially will concentrate on surveying. Pondlife, wildflower and bird identification days are planned. It is hoped our volunteers will then go out and collect valuable data from around our sites, which will feed into site management plans. Winter training days are also planned to help people understand how better to manage hedges, ponds, woods, etc.



Whether you are already a Tree Warden or a part of an existing or a planned Community Environment group, Catherine and Lynda will gladly welcome new volunteers to any of the events taking place. Although most of the winter work is now complete, there are events planned until the end of March. So if you or a group of people would like to become involved with the Footprints work parties or if you would like to find out more about what is involved please ask for one of our volunteer information packs by contacting our Countryside Rangers on 01394 444508.