

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 4 March 2024

Title: Tiny Forest – Request to Install a Wooden Monolith

Contact Officer: Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer

Background

Witney is home to the first Tiny Forest in the UK created in partnership with Earthwatch Europe, and so often is a focus for the correct way to create and look after a Tiny Forest. It is also a focus of visits from people from all over the world.

Current Situation

Earthwatch have approached the Town Council to ask if they could erect a wooden monolith which will have bronze oak leaves with details to commemorate someone passing who has left a legacy to Earthwatch to support the tiny forest project.



FAQ's provided from Earthwatch:

1. Background info on what the plinth is for.

The plinth is a simple but beautiful piece of oak that we are using to acknowledge people who are pledging to leave a gift in their will (a legacy to Earthwatch). As Tiny Forests are our main programme and we are an environmental charity it made sense to put this outdoors, and our first (and local) Tiny Forest seemed appropriate.

2. What kind of leaf will go on the plinth, size, material, number?

The leaves are elegant and made from bronze (inspired by a memorial woodland). See picture attached – they are just 15 cm wide and will have the name(s) of the legacy givers.

There will be ten leaves on the plinth but there is space to add some more in the future

3. Will there be text on the plinth? How, what?

No – we want to keep the plinth simple and elegant – we were planning to update the Tiny Forest signboard which is looking tired after 4 years and add a small mention on this about the Earthwatch Legacy Maker Plinth.

4. Will anything else go on the plinth?

No just the leaves

5. What are exact dimensions?

About 2.2m by 70cm....the idea is that it will be concreted into the ground by about 1/3 of its height (so 70-80cm). We deliberately chose oak for its ability withstand the elements. It was sourced from Oxford Wood Recycling so is well seasoned and also sanded down. We will also treat with decking oil (recommended as the best coating by OWR).

6. Who will be responsible for aftercare?

Earthwatch will ensure that the plinth is in good condition and will maintain it.

7. What is our suggested time frame?

The ceremony has been planned for 21st March– around 20-25 people have confirmed they will be attending [if approved]. We want to inspire the guests by visiting the first Tiny Forest and seeing the plinth.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

The monolith is Oak, the Leaves are bronze and will have minimum maintenance needed. It will have no impact to the ecology of the area and to the teams mowing the grass on this site.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

There will always be a risk of vandalism although this is not an area that suffers greatly from anti-social behaviour.

Maintenance will be very low and as a “tree keeper” for the Tiny Forest the B&GSO would be happy to carry out checks and general cleaning as required.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- The total costs for the supply of the monolith and foundation materials will be Earthwatch’s responsibility.
- The costs for the installation will be an hour of the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer’s time.
- The Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer will decide along with Earthwatch the exact positioning of the monolith. They have also said that they will take this opportunity to replace the main sign at their expense.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Would this fit into the overall “look” of the Tiny Forest and,
2. Would this monolith “add” to the interest and enjoyment of the park and Tiny Forest.
3. If yes, approve to allow the installation of the monolith.