

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 10 August 2021

Title: Tree Planting Requests

Contact Officer: Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer –
Angus Whitburn

Background

A request has been received from a resident to plant a tree in memory of herself and her husband at the Country Park.

U3A has made a request to dedicate a tree, or trees to the NHS with gratitude on a site in Witney.

Current Situation

There remains a small amount of open ground at the Lake & Country Park. This is the ground that would have to be used for a newly planted tree to grow well. This land is used for recreation purposes, picnics fishing etc. Most of those areas are prone to flooding during the winter months and would drown the tree's roots.

The Lake & Country Park is currently under review by officers for management statements. These statements will eventually be collated into an overall management plan for the country park. Part of these plans would involve the suitability of tree planting and tree management.

A location can be found for the requested tree from U3A. It can be planted with no plaque and included in the Town Council's tree stock for management. Alternatively, a more collective approach may be more impactful and help to avoid multiple small covid-19 remembrance items across Witney. Other groups have been interested in the idea of a Covid-19 and NHS appreciation remembrance area. A group of trees could be funded by multiple groups and planted in one area along with a way of signifying their purpose to remember Covid-19 victims and the work of the NHS – an item being considered by the Council's Stronger Communities Committee.

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.

Planting trees is an essential part of trying to offset carbon emissions. Witney Town Council should be actively increasing its tree stock each planting season. If parties are willing to fund the purchase and planting of trees this helps to increase that stock beyond the council's current tree planting process.

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.

Officers have been advised that the Lake and Country Park is not a suitable location for tree planting. Any tree planted in the area would have a low success rate of reaching maturity.

In accepting a tree request for the Lake and Country Park the council would be left in a position to further accept any future tree requests for the area.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

To continually water a tree before it becomes established would either come at an additional cost on the grounds contract or require substantial time for the works team to maintain.

Recommendations

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

1. Creation of a policy for all tree planting requests, this will be referenced in the memorial street furniture policy;
2. Consideration of the Lake & Country Park request;
3. Deferral of the U3A request to the 2022 tree planting season;
4. Consideration is given for the planting of multiple trees in memory of covid victims and the work of NHS staff – this item could be considered by the task and finish group established by the Stronger Communities Committee to look at Covid memorials.