

EXAMPLE TEMPLATE

Baltonsborough Parish Council

Tree Policy

Introduction

Trees, hedgerows and woods are an important part of our landscape. They provide rich habitats for the UK's increasingly pressured wildlife, they could potentially perform a pivotal part of efforts to combat climate change by sequestering CO2 and they intercept rainfall and reduce runoff and flooding. They are also much-loved and a source of inspiration and beauty. The therapeutic power of trees is widely recognised so that healthcare and tree-care go hand in hand.

Nationally, our trees are under attack from disease, development and poor management. Locally, our landscape is particularly threatened by ash die-backⁱ. For example, of the approximately 45 hedgerow trees in Muchelney Lane, 38 are ashes. The declining health of our local orchards is also a concern with many trees covered with mistletoe and others dead or dying. In the Parish Community Led Plan of 2012, the orchards in and around the village were "much valued, with 59% 'strongly agreeing' and 85% overall 'agreeing' that more should be done to preserve and maintain these" (p. 6).

In view of the above, the following Tree Policy has, subject to community consultation, been adopted by Baltonsborough Parish Council. The overall aims of the policy are to promote, encourage and facilitate:

- the regeneration of local orchards;
- new planting to increase tree cover;
- the protection of existing trees and hedgerows;
- and to ensure:
- that legal obligations arising from planning consents are met.

The policy has been developed using the Tree Policy template produced by Reimagining the Levelsⁱⁱ as a starting point. This template is supported in the Draft Somerset Climate Emergency Frameworkⁱⁱⁱ. Two tree champions have been appointed (Paul Sander-Jackson and Mary Phillips). The tree champions will be responsible for implementing the Actions and working with and supporting the local community, including farmers, to protect existing trees, replace those which are lost and increase tree cover in the Parish. The tree champions will report back to the PC. Help is available to cover the costs of tree planting (e.g. from Reimagining the Levels and the Somerset Community Fund). The champions will access relevant planning applications and information such as detailed maps (if available) and a list of TPOs.

Actions to address continuing tree loss and promote tree planting

- 1) The PC will consider the appointment of two dedicated Tree Champions.
Action: The Council will appoint two Tree Champions to inform the Council about tree matters, advise on suitable actions & lead on the co-ordination of tree planting projects. The Tree Champions will set up a volunteer group to take forward projects.

- 2) When applications are made to fell trees, the PC will, whenever possible, recommend when responding to such applications that a suitable replacement tree, or trees, are planted, either on or near the felled tree or on an alternative site to be agreed with the owner.
Action: For every tree felled at least two replacements will be planted.
- 3) The PC will seek an agreement with Mendip District Council that a replanting condition be included in all consents which are granted in the Parish.
Action: An agreement will be sought with Mendip District Council in respect of replacement planting.
- 4) The PC will take an active interest in and encourage developers to ensure that all trees, shrubs and hedges which are planted on development sites (as a condition of planning consent) are actually planted and that they survive. Where trees are lost, the developer has an obligation to replace any losses for a period of 5 years. While this is sometimes monitored by District Officers, they are not always aware of the local situation and the PC, through the Tree Champions, is in a good position to monitor losses and notify the District that enforcement action be taken where necessary.
Action: The Council will notify the District Council about non-compliance with planting conditions on development sites.
- 5) In some cases, occupants of new houses may not welcome the trees or shrubs in their gardens which are a planning condition and remove them. The PC will inform the District Council when this happens and, where possible, negotiate a more suitable location for unwanted trees by agreement with all parties.
Action: The Council will monitor trees adjacent to new houses which are part of a planning condition, inform Mendip District Council of removals, and negotiate replanting.
- 6) The PC will take an active role in encouraging residents of the Parish to offer suitable sites for planting new trees, shrubs or hedges or regenerating existing sites, particularly orchards, and have an annual tree and shrub planting programme.
Action: The Council will identify opportunities for tree planting/regeneration in the parish, help with funding packages for tree planting, and involve the community as volunteers.
- 7) The PC will use its best endeavours to encourage and facilitate the creation of new community woodlands and the maintenance of existing community woodlands and community orchards in the parish.
Action: The Council will promote, publicise & encourage the creation of new community woodlands & community orchards and the maintenance of existing ones.
- 8) Consultation on this tree policy will be carried out by putting the policy on the PC website and alerting the community through News & Views and Facebook (Baltonsborough Hub).
Action: The Council will publicise its Tree Policy and collect feedback.

ⁱ www.somersetwildlife.org/ash-dieback and chalamap.fera.defra.gov.uk/

ⁱⁱ reimaginingthelevels.org.uk/?page_id=330

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<https://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/documents/s13164/Draft%20Somerset%20Climate%20Emergency%20Framework%20Appendix.pdf>; p. 17