

Suggested tree policy for North Curry Parish Council

Having considered the TPO issues in the report in Appendix 1, the Parish Council has taken the view that there are a number of other actions which they could take in order to address the losses of many trees which is currently taking place, largely through natural causes.

Why the Parish Council should take positive actions to protect and plant trees

Along the main road into the village from Lillesdon to Town Close, for example, there are presently approx 15 medium sized elm trees which have recently died from elm disease. These are the latest victims of a disease which has killed millions of trees in Somerset and probably many hundreds in North Curry Parish. No-one has been counting!

As ash dieback disease also becomes more prevalent over the next few years we are likely to see many more dead trees appearing. Ash is the most common species over much of England and the North Curry area is no exception. While the elms that die are relatively small trees, there are many large ash which will be susceptible and the loss of these would be visually a very significant loss to the Parish.

Why trees are important ;-

- a) They make our village more attractive and desirable.
- b) Absorb air pollution and noise.
- c) Produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide.
- d) Intercept rainfall and reduce runoff and flooding.
- e) Provide shade and shelter for people and animals
- f) Create a variety of habitats for wildlife
- g) Help to emphasis the changing season.
- h) Produce fruits, nuts and seeds.
- i) Produce firewood at the end of their lives.
- j) Help to combat climate change by sequestering CO2
- k) Are a source of inspiration, have psychological health benefit.

Recommendations for actions to address continuing tree loss.

The draft recommendations for action to help compensate for these losses are;-

- 1) When applications are made to fell trees or large shrubs within the Conservation area and agreement is given, the PC should, whenever possible, request 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. (See item 7 on finding planting sites.)
- 2) The PC should seek an agreement with TDBC (as Planning Authority) that a replanting condition will be included in all consents which are granted in North Curry. The parish council is also concerned about the loss of

native hedgerows in Conservation areas and will lobby the Planning Authority to protect these as well as trees.

- 3) The PC should take an active interest in ensuring that all trees 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 picked up by TDBC officers they are not always aware of the local situation and the PC is in a good position to monitor losses and notify TDBC that enforcement action be taken where necessary.
- 4) Where significant trees in the Parish are removed or are to be removed without requiring any consent, the PC could take the initiative and have a policy of encouraging owners to plant replacement native trees and shrubs on or near the site of the removed tree. This policy could be publicised locally so that Parishioners know that this is an issue about which the PC are concerned and are less likely to be surprised if they are approached after a tree is removed.
- 5) In some cases occupants of new houses may not welcome the trees in their gardens which are a Planning condition and remove them. This is again a situation where the PC could perform a monitoring role and keep TDBC informed, perhaps even negotiating a more suitable location for unwanted trees by agreement with all parties.
- 6) The PC should take an active role in finding suitable sites for planting new trees and have an annual tree planting programme. The relatively low cost of this could be met from the Parish precept or CIL funds. Many Parish Councils now have access to slightly more funding as a result of CIL funds and, unlike high tiers of Local Government, their precept is not presently capped. As tree planting is a relatively low cost activity and Parish Councils are close to the 'grass roots' of local affairs, they are well placed to take tree planting initiatives. Local volunteers may be prepared to help plant the trees.
- 7) While finding suitable sites is not easy this is a way that local action can help secure a higher tree population for the future. A local survey could be conducted to identify suitable planting sites. Items could be placed in the pink sheet or other local publications asking the public to offer up or identify sites which could then be explored to check their suitability. A parish map could then be produced showing suitable sites.

Other suggestions and comments are welcome.

Consultation on this draft tree policy could be carried out before it is formally considered and adopted by the Parish Council.

Phil Stone, Tree Warden. North Curry PC. Nov 28th 2018

Appendix 1

Review of TPO trees in North Curry.

At its June 2018 meeting the Parish Council decided to investigate whether there are important trees in North Curry which should be recommended for new Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). Phil Stone (as Parish tree warden) agreed to consider this and come forward with draft recommendations.

Background

There are a significant number of trees in the Parish which are already protected, either by specific TPOs or by being within the Conservation Area designated by Taunton Deane. Most of the more significant trees in the centre of the Village are protected in this way.

There are other significant trees in the Parish which may deserve protection but many of these are on land in the ownership of bodies or individuals who are considered to be responsible and unlikely to damage or fell the trees without good cause. For example some in the Churchyard, on land owned by the Parish Council. Examples include trees at Church Road and Greenway playing field. Others are owned by longstanding local residents, examples are the large oaks in hedgerows along the main road into the village near the entrance to Lillesdon Court and sycamores outside Town Farm bungalow.

District Council attitude to TPOs.

From past experience, the writer is aware that the attitude to TPOs by the relevant officers at Taunton Deane is that they will normally only impose new Orders where there is evidence of a risk to significant trees being felled. Imposing TPOs does not necessarily stop trees being felled if they are dying or dangerous. Council Officers will be reluctant to prevent trees being felled if they are in these categories. In some cases Councils get involved in protracted legal disputes where owners are determined to remove them.

Recommendation on new TPOs.

In view of the three points above I suggest that there be no requests made to TDBC that orders should be imposed on more trees, except where important trees are considered to be under threat from the owners or the actions of others, such as developers. In these cases the Parish council should make requests to TDBC for action to protect trees.

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