

Climate Emergency Meeting
Stonesfield and Fawler

3 February, 2020.

Caroline introduced the meeting and reminded us that in March litter collection date will be proposed and reminded us that at the next meeting we will be discussing a community allotment and sharing produce scheme. In April we will be discussing Electric vehicles and solar panels. Pleases could anyone who has recently had them installed, volunteer to share their experience with the group.

Tonight's presentation was about tree planting.

Speakers are:-

Paul from the Sylva Foundation

Lucy Stavely

Dave Baldwin who has set up an environmental working gp in Stonesfield.

Paul _____ from The Sylva Foundation spoke first and provided an overview of the national picture. 13 % of UK has woodland cover, an increase from the turn of last century when only 9% was covered. This is largely because of the work of the Woodland Trust.

In England as a whole coverage is 10% of which Oxfordshire is only 9%. Surrey and Sussex have 29%. The plan nationwide is to plant 30,000 hectares to increase the cover to 17% by 2050 which would sequester 14 tonnes of CO₂ pa. Unfortunately, we are emitting 400 tonnes pa, therefore only about 4% of our carbon emissions will be absorbed this way. However, trees are vital for our ecology. We have a nature crisis as well as climate emergency. Floods can be prevented by dams and trees, they provide habitats in their leaf drop and decaying trunks as well as pollen for insects. However, it is important to plant the right tree in the right place. If we rush into it

we may regret it in 20 years. In summary, planting tree is not purely to offset our carbon pollution, they're part of the whole natural picture for which a balance is to be found between rewilding and creating woodland. It is not a case of either/or because there's a place for both.

Q. At what age does the tree maximise the carbon absorption? Up to 50 years depending on size and type. The meeting also asked for 30,000 hectares to be visualised. There are 100m x 100m per hectares. 30,000 hectares is equivalent to 30 x size Bleinheim. Numbers can be misleading though because there are lots of variables. For example, 1 oak will absorb 0.1 tonnes over first 40 years of its life. Carbon sequestration in general, is quicker through trees than rewilding.

Managing woodland is important and about 45% of UK woodland is not actively managed with the result that some species have declined. Management of trees actually benefits wildlife.

Lucy _____ then spoke about her projects in Burford and Fulbrook. She is a trustee of The Wychwood Project and runs a forest school. She set a challenge to plant 2020 trees in the locality by the end of the year. Locals got together with a farmer and got a grant from the festival trust to buy tree guards and stakes. 2000 whips were planted last weekend along with 220 single trees. They have also been planting hedgerows. To identify areas suitable in our area we can search google earth and look where there are areas of copse and hedgerows and then decide to plant the right trees for the area, after approaching landowners. Some farmers are tied into land management schemes. We can also contact OCC about roadside verges (unfortunately the council insist on deciding which species and use their own suppliers, and their contractors to plant out. The community have to pay for four years management at £4 per tree, after which the tree belongs to council! We need to lobby local councillors about this disincentive. They have a legal duty

to plant more trees). Another group of individuals are planting more trees in their private gardens. The Burford group each tried to find 5 people to plant a tree, they also offer to help with the planting. Community planting also took place on recreation grounds and they changed their mowing to leave 5m buffer zone as meadow for wildlife. Landowners and community groups can apply for free trees from Woodland trust.

Q. Why does it cost the council £200 for tree and contractors.
Unsure?

The stewardship scheme subsidy for farmers prevents them from planting new trees for 5 years. In future these landowners will be able to get money for 'public good'. There is a new Environment Bill going through Parliament. We also need work with farmers to influence their grant applications in future. It is worth noting that Robert Courts is Private Secretary to the Environment Minister and a member of The Conservative Environmental Group.

Finally, David Baldwin spoke as Parish Councillor who own a few bits of land and contracted by local council to cut verges, the PC own the common, and we need to plant the right tree in right place which is not on the common. It was nonetheless acknowledged that there are not many trees in Stonesfield [or Fawler]. It takes 100 years to get mature Beech.

PC declared climate emergency unanimously at their last meeting. And PC has a role in the planning process. All trees are currently protected so have to get permissions to fell them. We need to ask the tree officer to make sure PC are informed about any request to cut down tree and replace. If there is grass outside your house it is probably owned by OCC and have a powerline under, maybe grow wild flowers instead of mowing? The meeting was asked if we support tree planting on verges. We need to ask individual households if they want a tree outside their house. Leaf drop and

shade is a problem for some. The mayor of Witney has agreed to plant a tree for every child born in Witney in his reign. The PC asked if we would support funding of tree planting in private gardens. It depends on what tree and where. The meeting was unsure about this proposal.

Stonesfield PC also own a potential burial ground on Ridings, which will be handed over to church. It might be planted with trees in time. PC owns the Glebe lands where council have lease for 30 years, there grow some rare flowers but there is scope for 14 trees being supplied by Cotswold Tree Wardens to replace Ash. Alders along the river and some willows would be valuable too. There are cows on the common and any trees have to be pollarded. PC is about to obtain an area near the playing fields and are considering planting a community orchard. Suggested we replant the old orchard too. David offered to visit our private gardens to advise what is best to grow and how.

David has started an Environmental Working Group – in response to the declaration of CE. PC have a liaison role with other government departments, eg, to get a plug-in charger for Stonesfield residents.

Small groups feedback:

Acorns and other seeds have been collected and small trees are now growing ready to be planted with permissions. It was noted that Stonesfield straight was planted thanks to a community project in 1970's. It was agreed that Blenheim need to be approached in a strategic manner and asked to stop cutting the hedges and plants at Bags Bottom near the Combe dip. Footpath at the bottom of valley on Stonesfield side is poor scrub. That could be worked on with the help of PC and or Blenheim. Perhaps the surrounding villages could all band together in approaching Blenheim. In Fawler, Frances has been having parallel discussions and as a result they have opened up various opportunities. The fact that all the parishes are talking about

this at the same time is helping Farmers and land owners change their views. Awareness was also increased through the parish mags and posters. FoE advertise tree planting days looking to double woodland in Oxon. And the Wychwood project offer good to help. When approaching Blenheim, Farmers and hedgerow owners we can offer our labour.

Action point: Environment working group (as part of PC not Climate Emergency meetings) and community garden group will work together to coordinate their approach, this could possibly include other villages?

David Parish Clerk will look into obtaining information about underground cables but needs specifics eg ID the site first and the sort of tree.

Action point: We need to allow more gardens to over-grow and keep wild patches. Introduce a 'No Mow May'. Frances will approach Stonesfield school to engage young children to start improving their gardens at home.

ECOSIA search engine.

Distribute David's email address to take part in EWG.

Requests for : Blenheim have granted money to hold a produce stall at the St James Centre. We are now looking for a site for the community garden. Do you know anyone who has a spare field willing to donate esp. near the village. Blenheim have suggested expanding the allotment the Woodstock Rd.

Requests for : Barter System Repair Café and Clothes exchange - need speakers.

