

1) NP3's Street Tree Planting Wish List 2016/2017 and 2017/2018

This is a simultaneously sad and optimistic report. I am sad and angry because of our three tree planting sites planned and budgeted for the 2016/2017 season (just finished) only one of our 3 sites got planted - the planting of 3 trees on Henleaze dual carriageway.

One of the other two sites - the planting of 5 trees on Church Road in Sneyd Park - we thought was going to happen until literally the very last day of the planting season - when the contractors turned up to plant the trees and could not do it. They could not get the size of tree ordered and supplied into the sites. My anger is because this could and should have been discovered before the trees were ordered at Christmas, or even better, before Christmas. Our order went in last May - 11 months before this discovery - and my view is that the site should have been checked long before the last week in March 2017, or "written up" better in the first place.

Our third site - well - what can I say? I am to have a meeting with Richard Ennion on 27th April about these failures, and his explanations of the failure on Church Road and of the Westbury Road scheme I will give you on the night.

But my optimism is that, almost as a result of this 2016/2017 failure, we should be able to get trees planted in 2017/2018 using our CIL money already budgeted but possibly frozen. If you recall the NP has agreed to plant 29 trees during the forthcoming season. Then the cash axe was threatened and for weeks we have been left wondering what was going to happen about CIL money.

I asked Andrew McGrath that question directly:

"Dear Andrew

At the last NP meeting on March 6th we asked if we could go ahead and make "order/allocations/commitments" against CIL funds devolved to the Partnership. The answer was "Yes". Several people I have spoken to since then have said we cannot - although none of those has been a Council Officer.

I did ask the same question of Penny Garmon and Asher Craig at the meeting we went to on Wednesday 5th April but the group never got around to my question - which got written down on the Flip Chart. We were told that questions written on the Flip Chart would receive a reply - but none has been forthcoming.

I spent the morning today visiting tree planting sites with the last (wo)man standing in the Tree Department - Holly Paton - looking at "our sites". But can we commit to them?

Asher Craig and Penny Garmon have said that no decisions have yet been taken about the spending of CIL funds and that all is open to consultation and discussion and that decisions will not be taken until December - after the consultation has ended.

But meanwhile can we place orders against the funds for allocation? It all involves a lot of work - some of which has been done.

And of course there is the thorny issue of the 5 Black Pines in Church Road which were supposed to have been planted during this last season - but it did not happen. The earliest it could happen is next season and if we cannot spend the money (even though it was allocated over a year ago) then that planting - now sorted out - will be caught by the "redistribution".

I need answers on this please - and urgently."

and the answer I got is:

“Stephanie

I copy David and Steve in to this reply, as David can request that a Dem. Services officer (Steve) be present if there are going to be financial decisions made on 22nd May.

Penny and Asher are talking about the future arrangements after June, when NPs are gone. The CIL allocation process is a very hot topic at present and will be subject to consultation over the summer, with the aim of the Cabinet making a decision in September.

What we officers are being asked to consider for the May/June NPs is whether it is realistic to allocate funds to projects if there is no realistic prospect of them being delivered due to officer capacity problems.

Money already allocated to projects (whichever year) should still be delivered. If the one for the 5 trees is allocated, it should still be delivered eventually.

If David wishes to have the May meeting as a decision meeting, then we ask Steve to attend to record the decisions.

Regards

Andrew”

This reply means two things to me

1) With regard to the 2016/2017 plantings the Church Road plantings - modified to perhaps only 3 trees - will happen. It is now all worked up (see below). The Westbury Road project (new trees in new sites in the verges opposite Majestic Wine Warehouse) might happen (up to £3925). (await Richard Ennion's answer).

2) The 2017/2018 planting can happen if you agree at this meeting. You have voted the money twice now and I have visited all the sites with a Tree Officer (10th April 2017) and with perhaps a few modifications (choice of tree size, choice of tree species, moving a few sites a few feet) we have identified no more than 29 tree plantings. This might reduce to 24 depending upon some sites needing to move a few feet and residents having planted trees in a site! The Officer has written up the visit as a tree planting plan - so I have already used some officer capacity which we should not waste, and we do thus have a realistic prospect of delivering the project. I think we have had this allocation of instant officer time because of our bad experience with this last season. We were told that we were first in with our list last season and the only NP to get it all right.

Please support me in my efforts to get these trees (up to 29, budgeted at £8555 at the last NP meeting) planted in 2017/2018, and the 2016/2017 order completed in 2017/2018 - Church Road trees (3 or 5) for sure, Westbury Road trees maybe. Thanks

2) Other Tree Issues

Residents requesting assistance with planning applications regarding trees and requesting help with sponsoring tree planting privately have received such assistance, sometimes including a home visit!

There should be five new trees in Roman Way, four new trees in Northumbria Drive (we are putting four in there too) and five new trees in Grange Park as a result of group sponsorship efforts, and a new tree in Harbury Road courtesy of one resident.

3) Liaison with the Tree Forum

Two new problems have come to the fore since our last meeting.

In two Westbury planning applications we have noticed that **developers are including hedges in their landscaping proposals to replace lost tree canopy**. Unfortunately this has been accepted by the planners, although we did manage to influence a reduction in the number of hedging stock and an increase in the number of trees in one of the developments. This is a worrying trend and I have raised it with the Bristol Tree Forum (BTF). Their support against this was unanimous and we now propose to engage the city planners (Paul Chick) in a debate about it. I have asked for a meeting and intend to attend with the Vice Chair of the Bristol Tree Forum.

Again in two (different) Westbury planning applications **developers have waited more than one year between a) acquiring land and clearing it of trees immediately and then b) putting in the development planning application**. It is only three years since, again working with the then chair of the BTF, we managed to persuade Paul Chick to apply the Bristol Tree Replacement Standard retrospectively for a year. It seems that we have now to ask for a longer period of time. We probably will not get it. I think we shall ask for five years because under current regulations any tree that does get planted as a condition of planning consent has to be replaced if it fails in the first five years after planting. That is prospectively, so why not having a go for the same period retrospectively?

4) One Tree Per Child

There is now a community orchard planted by Sea Mills schoolchildren in one corner of the Rec(reation Ground) courtesy of OTPC/BCC and organised by one of our Tree Group, Lucy Wallis. Well done Lucy - who did that mostly on her own. I planted a tree!