

## UNITED KINGDOM

### Biodiversity restoration, preservation & enhancement

#### Location

Swindon

#### Programming period

2014 – 2020

#### Priority

P4 – Ecosystems  
management

#### Measure

M8 – Investments in forest  
areas

#### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 134 925.56  
RDP contribution 57 071.96  
Private 77 853.60

#### Project duration

2015 – 2017

#### Project promoter

Swindon Borough Council

#### Contact

[Jwilshaw@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:Jwilshaw@swindon.gov.uk)

#### Website

[www.wiltshire.gov.uk/recreation-trees-forests](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/recreation-trees-forests)

Planting new woodland under a scheme in a partnership between Forestry services, a local authority and the local community.

### Summary

Common farm woods is a new woodland planted under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme in a partnership between the Forestry Commission, Swindon Borough Council and the local community.



Wiltshire Council  
Where everybody matters

The woodland will help connect fragmented woodlands within a priority Green Infrastructure (GI) corridor identified within Swindon's GI Strategy. The tree planting was completed over two seasons by local volunteers. Volunteers were recruited via local groups, local advertisements and social media.

### Results

Together the community have planted a total of 15 100 trees.

The woodland will provide a valuable habitat, acting as a refuge for many local species.

The woodland has not only had environmental benefits but also huge social benefits.

Encouraging local participation in the project has created a sense of local ownership which should ensure the young woodland is maintained as a community resource that everyone can enjoy.

## Context

The project is part of the ongoing development of the Great Western Community Forest (GWCF) in Swindon, now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year. A substantial increase in woodland cover, particularly in the context of Swindon's continued expansion, remains a priority for GWCF.

## Objectives

The main objectives of the project are:

- The woodland will help connect fragmented woodlands within a priority Green Infrastructure (GI) corridor identified within Swindon's GI Strategy. The woodland is part of a growing 'landscape scale' chain of woodlands reaching from the North Wessex Downs AONB, running through urban Swindon and to the River Thames to the north of the town. This will increase species movement and improve population health.
- Common farm woods will also provide an accessible community woodland giving local people a natural space to enjoy and relax. The woodland is also seen as a significant measure in lessening the impact of development pressures helping to maintain the identity of the adjacent village of Wroughton.

## Activities

The project began with a site constraints check to ensure an appropriate area was chosen. This involved an investigation into archaeology and underground services. The layout of the woodland was then designed by a landscape architect, guided by community consultation. The architect took into account ground conditions, access provision and management, amenity and desire for open grassland. It was also necessary to account for a solar farm in the adjacent fields just north of the site. Shrub species would be planted to prevent over-shading of the solar panels.

The tree species choice was guided by forest research, taking into account local ecology, species preferences, climate change predictions and ash dieback. Community consultation favoured species for their colour and fruit/nut bearing qualities. Twenty-one species of trees were planted, including Field Maple, English Oak, Sweet Chestnut and Sweet Cherry.

The planting of the trees was led by the local community group (Vision 4 Wroughton) and Wroughton Parish

Council. The tree planting was completed over two seasons by local volunteers. Volunteers were recruited via local groups, local advertisements and social media.

After the initial planting it was necessary to manage the young saplings for the first few years. This is specified in a four year maintenance contract which includes, spraying, tidying/straightening, additional costs associated with vandalism and the local farmer maintaining rides and paths. The local community are also involved in reporting and helping to resolve any problems with the new woodland.

## Main results

Together the community have planted a total of 15 100 trees. The trees are establishing very well and locals are making use of the site. Although still in the early stages, the woodland will not only provide a valuable woodland habitat in itself, acting as a refuge for many local species, it will also act as corridor to connect other fragmented woodlands in the area. This will enable better species movement and will benefit local populations. The rides and glades will be further developed as part of a Swindon-wide 'Forest Meadows' project which will see a landscape-scale programme to enrich meadows across the town.

The woodland has not only had environmental benefits, but also huge social benefits too. The community have come together for tree planting events, people of all ages have joined forces to ensure the woodland is well established. Planning, consultation, planting and ongoing use and care have all provided opportunities for local people to be involved and work together. Encouraging local participation in the project has promoted a sense of local ownership which will ensure the young woodland is maintained as a community resource that everyone can enjoy. The site is currently the venue for a current school arts project: students from the local secondary school have designed, created and installed new signs at the site.

Further investment in the site is planned in collaboration with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Parish Council and local community.

*"The act of planting a tree can be a very sociable one and people often come to tree planting events with stories to tell and family memories to celebrate."*

Jonathan Wilshaw, Community Forest Officer at Swindon  
Borough Council

## Additional sources of information

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/698967/CommonFarm2017.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/698967/CommonFarm2017.pdf)  
[www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/13497517.17k-trees-to-help-offset-4500-wichelstowe-homes/](http://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/13497517.17k-trees-to-help-offset-4500-wichelstowe-homes/)

