

HOPE WOOD

In 2018 it was calculated that there were approximately 600,000 trees growing in Bristol. They cover in the region of 17-18% of the unitary authority (excluding the extensive marine part of the Severn Estuary part of the authority!). They were worth £280 million to the city, as calculated by the i-tree Eco 6 survey (Benefits of Trees in Bristol) funded by a partnership of the Woodland Trust, Bristol City Council (BCC), Forestry Commission and the Forest of Avon Trust. These trees store 360,000 tonnes of CO₂, and remove about 14,000 tonnes more each year, equivalent to the annual CO₂ emissions of 9,000 cars. They also remove 100 tonnes of air pollution each year. They reduce flood risk by soaking up 90,000 cubic metres of water that would otherwise run into drains and that would cost £140,000 annually to process.

The aforementioned partnership concluded that Bristol's tree cover needs to double by 2050 in order to help combat climate change and air pollution, protect and enhance biodiversity, and promote health and wellbeing.

Bristol's One City Plan (see The Future chapter) was published in January 2019; it contained a target to double tree cover in the city by 2050. The Ecology Emergency strategy published in February 2020 repeated this aim, but brought the target date forward to 2046.

The Manor Woods Valley Group (MWVG) quickly determined to play a part in contribute to the goals of these plans. The Group identified several potential areas into which trees could be planted without adversely affecting the biodiversity of the site as a whole. These areas were clustered around the Wildflower Meadow and Lower Park.



The MWVG made enquiries, but it soon became evident that the planting of quantities of woodland trees was beyond its physical and financial resources; however, the One Tree Per Child programme was identified as appropriate body to approach.

One Tree Per Child is a programme that was developed in Australia in 2014. The following year, Bristol was the first UK city to take-up the scheme as part of its 2015 Green Capital status. The first target of 36,000 trees planted in that year was exceeded - representing one tree for each of Bristol's primary school students. The scheme continues to plant over 6,000 trees per year – one for each new primary school pupil - in schools, parks and open spaces. All the trees, tools and equipment we use is sponsored by the partners.

Following an initial approach to the One Tree Per Child programme in November 2019, a site visit was followed by confirmation that an area at the northeast end of the Lower Park was the most appropriate area in which to plant trees and shrubs, with a smaller number of mainly shrub being used to strengthen the understorey at the lower end of Butchers Broom Spinney. Due to the presence of a 200mm sewer along the spine of the proposed planting area, an unplanted corridor needed to the left so that tree roots would not interfere with the sewer and to allow access for inspection and maintenance.

There was some delay in commencing the planting, but February 2021 was finally agreed upon. It was planned that local schools and the MWVG would be involved in the planting work. During the preceding autumn, BCC circulated a draft tree planting plan to immediate neighbours, the Manor Woods Valley Group and posted it in numerous locations around the site. A large number of responses were received; all positive.



The consultation map for the proposed One Tree Per Child planting



Consultation notice on an entrance barrier – October 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that the planned involvement of schools and the MWVG with the planting could not happen; however, over the space of a very few days in late February 2021, a team of six from the One Tree Per Child group planted 700 trees and shrubs in the main plantation area and a further 40 shrubs in Butchers Broom Spinney. The planting mix represented native broad-leaf species, chosen to reflect the species already thriving on the site and some new varieties to increase diversity. They consisted, Field Maple, Silver Birch, Downy Birch, Dogwood, Hazel, Hawthorn, Spindle, Crab Apple, Wild Cherry, English Oak, Rowan, Small Leaved Lime and Guelder Rose.



New planting – February 2021

The planting was much commented-on by park users and in social media, all in very favourable terms.

A drought meant that the trees had to be watered from a bowser in their first spring; however, the wetter weather that followed meant that the vast majority of trees established well. The MWVG took on responsibility for managing the area, spreading mulch material onto the mulch mats, replanting the few trees that were pulled out, and cutting back Field Bindweed and other herbaceous growth that threatened to swamp some of the trees.



Field Bindweed swamping a young tree and after being removed

The new woodland was named Hope Wood in order to reflect the One Tree Per Child source of the trees and to reflect the 'build-back-better' aim of society post-Covid.

The trees were planted in to regularly mown amenity grassland, which in its mown state appeared to have little botanical diversity. BCC mowing operatives continued to regularly manage the paths that divide Hope Wood in to five blocks, but the vegetation within the blocks was left to grow-up naturally. Each block soon took on its own characteristics. One block was quickly swamped with Field Bindweed which had to be cleared off the trees. False Oat-grass and Yarrow became dominant in other blocks. The MWVG will monitor the botanical changes that will take place in the area through the coming years.