



INTERIM REPORT FROM FOREST FOR CALSTOCK PARISH CONSULTATIONS

BACKGROUND

Cornwall Council established the Forest for Cornwall project with the principal aim of helping to combat climate change. The Forest for Cornwall has an overall aim of covering 2% of its land (8000 hectares) with new tree cover and to protect existing trees, woodland and hedges.

Calstock Parish Council declared a climate emergency in 2019. In 2020 the Parish Council won an award of £1000 from the Forest for Cornwall to raise money for a community tree planting scheme across the parish. This project is called the Forest for Calstock Parish. The award needed to be matched with at least £1000 of Crowdfunding. We have now raised £3,520.

The vision of the project is to use Calstock Parish as an example of how community owned assets and publicly accessed areas can be used to generate a positive environment that mitigates the negative effects of climate change and enhances bio-diversity. The project will be a community-led initiative and the views of local people are paramount.

FOCUS

Careful consideration will be required to plant the right tree in the right place for the right purpose. First and foremost the project will consult with the community to decide what planted where, the size of the sites and whether they lend themselves to woodland, copse, orchard, individual trees/shrubs or hedgerows. Specifically each suggested site will need to consider:

- Biodiversity – what planting schemes will enhance the natural wildlife habitats found on the site
- Existing use – to avoid impinging on the current use e.g. football pitches, recreational areas
- Heritage – the impact of a planting scheme on the historical aspect of a site and the local cultural distinctiveness with a focus on sourcing native trees/plants
- Landscape – the landscape should be enhanced by planting and connectivity and not be detracted from it.

Other considerations were:

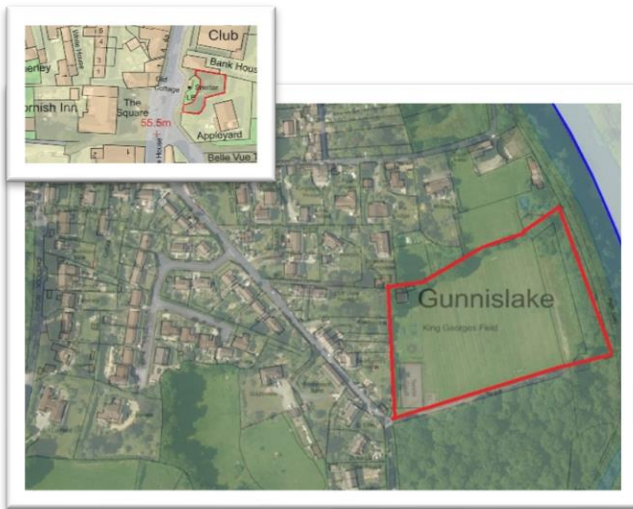
- Ownership and maintenance of the trees,
- The final size of the trees and the impact they will have on neighbours, users of community space and adjoining landowners,
- The long-term impact of tree roots, leaves/shade, obstruction of views and effect on rain drains,
- Safety issues – overhead cables and any underground services, road sight lines and obstruction of road signs should be taken into,
- Land use- what was the land previously used for and is it contaminated?

A long-term objective will be to plant hedgerows and trees to form wildlife corridors to provide connectivity and to engage with other community associations, schools and private landowners. But this initial exercise will focus only Parish Council owned areas.

PILOT AREAS

The project will focus on the following areas in the Parish:

Gunnislake – land owned by the Parish Council is the King George V Playing Field at the bottom of Bealswood Road and the sensory garden behind the bus stop on Fore Street. The Parish Council are in negotiations to take on the ownership of Fosters Field, but the agreement has not yet been formally signed.



Albaston – land owned by the parish council is the Cemetery and the Millennium Green



St Ann's Chapel – land owned by the Parish Council is the King George V Playing Field and the Pleasure Piece. There are allotments at Crow Lane which are also owned by the Parish Council and the field adjacent to them.

King George V Playing Field



Pleasure Piece



Allotments



Calstock – the recreational ground, village green, car parks, parish quay, amenity land at St Andrew's Close and the Cemetery and field adjacent to this are all owned by the parish council.





Harrowbarrow and Latchley were omitted from the initial phase. In Harrowbarrow the only Parish Council owned land is the carpark which is not suitable for planting schemes. In Latchley the Council only own Latchley Green which is a very small piece of amenity land.

MODES OF CONSULTATION

A video was made for the Crowdfunding webpage and links to this were shared on the Parish Council website and across social media platforms. A press release was published in the Cornish Times and the East Cornwall Times.

A questionnaire was set up through Survey Monkey and publicised through the same channels. Advice was initially sought from Lesley Strong and Stuart Wood, both Forest for Cornwall Project Officers who attended site visits across the parish. 17 responses were received at the time of this report being written (14-12-2020).

A virtual meeting was held on Wednesday 09 December 2020. 25 participants attended; after an initial introduction to the project and some information from Lesley Strong groups were placed in 'breakout rooms' to discuss specific sites of interest to them. For the purposes of this, the sites were divided into: Gunnislake, Calstock and St Ann's Chapel with Albaston.

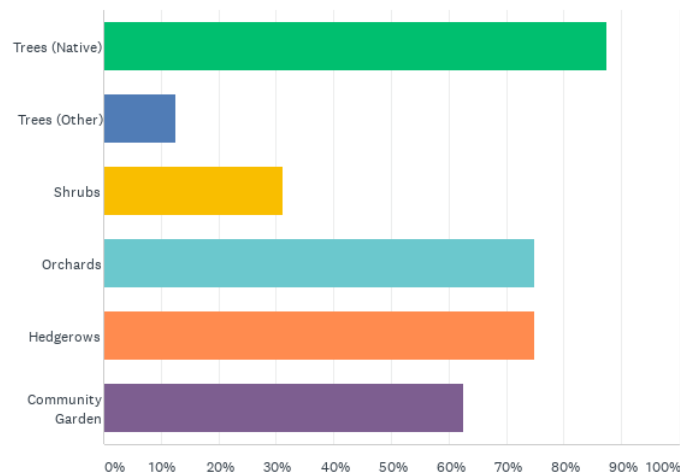
RECOMMENDATIONS

Common threads

Information presented has been collated from Survey Monkey; the discussion within the public meeting and the site visits held with the Forest for Cornwall Project Officers.

The use of native trees and shrubs was a commonly voiced priority. Community orchards and edible plants are popular ideas in all areas. Productive woodland in the form of fruits and nuts was a popular idea. Willow would provide good screening options and provide material for basket weaving.

Q5 Planting Schemes – what would you like us to plant?

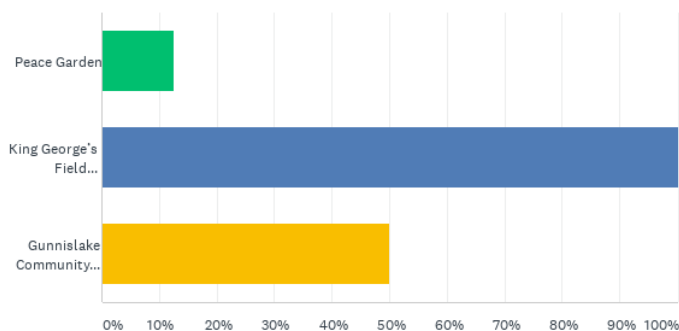


Site specific

GUNNISLAKE

It was agreed that only the King George V Playing Field could reasonably be considered at this phase – and Survey Monkey results concur with this. Whilst the Gunnislake Community Garden was included in the survey, it is not the Parish Council's land, but it was an interesting exercise to see who is aware of it and whether more planting was wished for it. One person from the Survey Monkey questionnaire did not wish to see any planting on any sites in Gunnislake.

Gunnislake Survey Monkey results for sites to be used:



It was felt that there is not a lot of space on the King George V Playing Field for large clusters of trees, but schemes were suggested as follows:

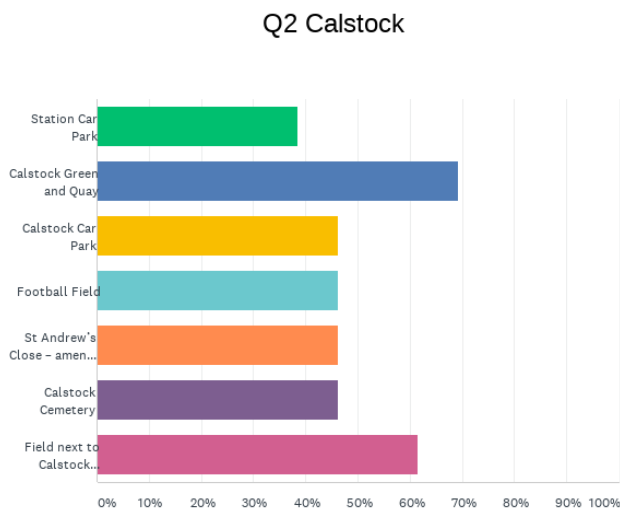
- Hedgerow infill along the perimeter (gapping)
- Shrubs around the gas governor to screen it
- Apple and fruit trees to be planted in the wildflower area at the bottom of the pitch but widely spaced out
- A hedgerow around the tennis court (but not to impinge on the use of the basketball court)
- Research bat-friendly trees and shrubs to support the bat population found in this area

- Be mindful of the land at the Eastern end being excessively wet and possibly contaminated from mine waste.

Concerns were voiced about ensuring trees planted near the play area did not impact on the views or light of the houses above. Anything near the actual playpark should not screen the children using the area and impacting on safeguarding.

CALSTOCK

The areas for planting schemes discussed in the meeting were the recreational field and the cemetery extension. In the consultation meeting the Parish Quay and village green were not considered viable for planting as they have a tarmac surface and are used as valuable parking areas. However, in the Survey Monkey responses nearly 70% of respondents identified these areas as potential sites and one response also included using the beds around the little car park at the end of The Adit (although during the Project Officers' site visits these, and the amenity land at St Andrews Close were considered to be well established with vegetation).



Land adjacent to the Cemetery. This will be used as a working cemetery over the next few years, but half of the site could easily be used for planting schemes. There is, however, a lot of regenerative ground cover so consideration would need to be given as to how to enhance, rather than damage this. Ideas discussed were:

- A link between the burial area to provide an area for reflections and to plant a glading scheme to blend from the formal to the informal area
- Include a corridor of yew trees to reflect the historical significance of the churchyard opposite the site
- Consider a forest garden and edible woodland garden and a small orchard of Tamar apple trees to link with the nine apple trees being planted in the old churchyard
- Other fruit and edible nut trees suggested were hazel, sweet chestnuts and walnuts.
- Medlar and mulberry bushes were mentioned to enhance biodiversity and as a nod to the heritage and cultural distinctiveness of the very local area.

Recreational Field

It was felt that will be important to maintain the open feel and view down to the river and to retain areas for picnic and family relaxation. Consideration should also be given to allow ease of access into the field. Any tree roots should not affect the football field or impede the drainage.

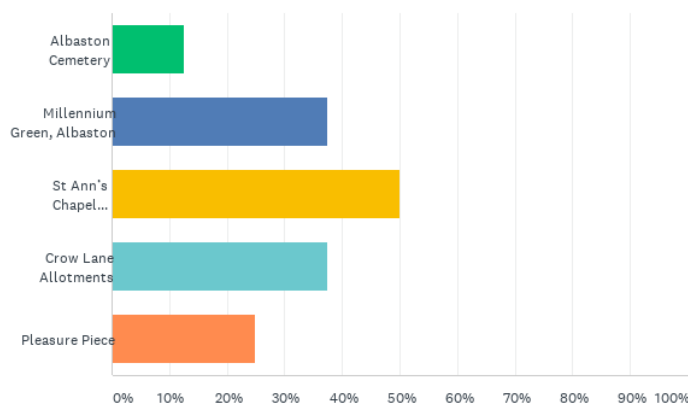
Ideas that were discussed were:

- The planting of a native hedgerow on the manmade bank at the end of the field to link in with the existing hedgerows and into the new wetland area – possibly to make an edible foraging bank
- Infill the gaps in the existing hedgerows
- Screen the concrete fencing – evergreen would give year-long camouflage and/or climbers would maximise use of the ground area – it would be important not to obscure the view of the river and investigation should be made as to whether planting could be done on the river side rather than the field side.

ST ANN'S CHAPEL AND ALBASTON

50% of respondents on Survey Monkey suggested the Recreational Field as a suitable site for planting schemes (although one person felt it was not appropriate as it would take away from the park and football field). Millennium Green and the Allotments were also suggested through Survey Monkey, as was the Pleasure Piece. A Forest for Cornwall Officer advised against planting at Pleasure Piece or Hingston Down as they are lowland heaths which needs to be protected. The allotments were discounted in this discussion as allotments holders had not been directly informed of the meeting and were not represented.

Q1 Albaston & St Ann's Chapel



Albaston Cemetery - ideas presented for this were to infill gaps in hedges and the rounding off of square corners where hedges meet.

Millennium Green

This area was felt to provide a lot of potential:

- Thickening up the hedge between the field and the car park boundary

- A small orchard or copse could be planted in the far end – also some cherry blossom as there are beehives in the field adjacent to this area
- Another small orchard or copse could be sited in the top right-hand corner

It was felt that the siting of the orchards would not impact on the views of the residents above, but dwarf varieties of shrubs could be sought if concerns were raised.

King George V Recreational Field

Despite concerns from one respondent on Survey Monkey it was felt that there were several areas suitable for planting:

- Hedging or small trees in the vicinity of the skate park area near the boundary with the road
- Small trees or fruit trees and hedges around the 3 sides of the playpark which are fenced off. This is also and may qualify for a DEFRA grant for hedgerows as it would be just over 100 metres
- The bottom left-hand corner has the potential for a copse or small orchard (car park end)
- The pavilion has a stark concrete retaining wall behind it which is very visible and an eyesore. This could be screened by some fauna of up to 6 metres in height without impinging on views from the houses above
- The hedging is sparse on both sides of the park
- Potential for a small orchard in the top right-hand corner

Additional areas to be considered in the next phase:

- St Ann's Chapel – Western Boundary
- A meadow field where the new village gates will be installed
- Create or improve the hedgerow alongside the A390 to reduce vehicle fumes (although this would be subject to approval from Cornwall Highways).

LEGACY

Survey Monkey and general contact through email and the website has indicated there are over a dozen people who have experience of plant species, planting and gardening and are willing to offer advice and at least 6 people would like to get involved in the ongoing maintenance.

NEXT STEPS

In January there will be site meetings in each of the pilot areas attended by Stuart Wood and Lesley Strong of the Forest for Cornwall. All interested local people will be invited. This will enable those who were not able to take part in the Zoom consultation to contribute to the project. The site meeting will also be the next step in drawing up management plans for the specific areas – these will hold more detail about the planting schemes and locations.

It is hoped that some planting may take place towards the end of February 2021, but some plants may not be suitable for planting until later in the year.

Long-term aims are to engage schools in identifying areas for wild-flowers; for others low level planting schemes; to and involve community organisations and private landowners. Considerable interest was expressed in the idea of providing parishioners with a "little bit of Calstock Forest" (a phrase provided by a participant) e.g. a garden tree or a small fruiting bushes such as a currant, raspberry, or gooseberry. Every edible shrub will increase the carbon-eaters and provide food for wildlife.

We will widen the areas to include land in Harrowbarrow and Latchley and Chilsworthy. Furthermore, hedgerow management and the filling up of hedgerows will increase connectivity and develop wildlife corridors which would be a way of incorporating good foraging opportunities for bees – one participant drew attention to the B-Line.

Landmark Trees were not discussed in detail during the meetings, but two suggestions have been made for Calstock (a lime to be planted in the cemetery area or an oak to be planted on private land near the incline railway, should parish land not be deemed appropriate). The recreational field in Gunnislake was not thought to be appropriate but Fosters Field may be when owned by the Parish Council.

Clare Bullimore, 18-12-2020

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