

PROPOSED NEW WOODLAND

In conjunction with local landowners, the Woodland Trust, the High Weald AONB and Sussex Wildlife Trust are working up a scheme for tree planting and habitat and wetland creation along the Rother Valley from Junction Road, including the old cricket pavilion. It would be possible to continue this towards the castle and for a woodland to be established around the perimeter of the Bodiam Recreation Ground in partnership with Woodland Trust. Woodland Trust would oversee the project, appoint a contractor and provide plant maintenance and support for two years after planting.

Such a project would be a parish contribution to the anti-carbon/climate fight, while enhancing local wildlife and providing an attractive amenity for residents and visitors to Bodiam. It will have the added, if secondary, benefit of reducing the area of recreation ground which must be mown.

The proposal

The initial proposal is that the woodland could cover c. 1.89 hectares of the 5.3 hectare site. The plan of the planting, showing the positioning of two soccer pitches and a cricket square is attached.

Planting would be organised to create the effect of a natural as opposed to a plantation atmosphere. Woodland Trust's experts would ensure creation of a very attractive, sustainable amenity. The wettest areas of the recreation ground would be included in the planting scheme using species happy with wet feet e.g. Hornbeam, Willow and Alder etc. Signposted walks through the woodland area would be established.

This scheme would provide an additional local amenity, aid local tree planting and Rother River Valley conservancy plans being developed by the High Weald AONB and Sussex Wildlife Trust. The woodland would link to new planting planned on the old cricket pavilion ground and beyond, and aid wildlife corridor development throughout the valley.

The costs

The proposal would not result in any capital or revenue cost to the parish council. Sixty percent of the £6,000 cost will be funded by grants from Woodland Trust and John and Brenda Lovering will donate the balance. They are both strong supporters, lifetime members and Ambassadors for Woodland Trust.

The trees would be provided along with suitable protection and a marker fence to designate the footpath to the river.

Income

There may be some future income from the sale of carbon credits in respect of the new wood. Woodland Trust estimates that 1.89 hectares of planting could yield an annual income of <£1,000.

Project Management

This will be organised by Woodland Trust who are managing a 14 hectare scheme on New House Farm, owned by the Loverings on neighbouring land. Woodland Trust will oversee two years maintenance which will maintain a weed free environment around the base of the trees to minimise competition for the saplings.

Compatibility with other Rec activity

There would still be space for two football pitches, a cricket square and the access to the central zone and the cricket pavilion would not be affected. Dog walking and general recreational activities would still continue of course. The footpath to the river bank would be left in place and would be fully accessible as at present.

Summary

The proposal provides an investment in eco-friendly woodland at no cost to the Parish. It enhances other conservation initiatives in the valley, sustains existing recreational activity and eliminates some costs of maintaining the over large, very wet village recreation ground.