

Annual Report from the Westbury Sub Mendip Tree Group

Report from Buffy Fletcher – Chair of Westbury Sub Mendip Tree Group

Hello. I am here to represent the tree Group which I set up with the support of the Parish Council and with their continued support. My motivation was to engage with the 3 problems that affect us here, climate change, mass extinction and the dramatic loss we are experiencing with ash dieback.

In the nearly 2 years since I started the group during the first lockdown, we have done quite a lot. With the generous hospitality of Guy and Evelyn Timson we have established a tree nursery. This has been a steep learning curve for the 15 or so volunteers who have cleared the site and started to learn the complicated and fascinating skill of harvesting, and growing trees from seed. This last winter we planted out 170 trees we had grown ourselves and by next winter that could be several hundred available for planting locally. Local grown means no tree miles, and locally adapted tree stock both better for the environment. The group has had funding support from the AONB and Westbury Friendly Society to support the development of the Tree Nursery.

In our first year we linked up with SWT to plant 150 trees up Lynchcombe to replace those lost to dieback. 15 family units did the planting during lockdown including many children. This last winter 3471 trees have been planted from single trees planted in individual settings to 2,500 planted along the new path at Furlong Farm. Smaller plantings along the Strawberry Line extension to Dulcote and on Jon Jones land at Priddy as well as working with the reimagining the levels project resulting in planting 400 trees in 2 village fields to delay water flow to prevent flooding. More than 40 people have been involved in this activity, planting trees feels good.

We have applied for several grants with a concerning success rate of 100% enabling much of the planting to take place. We are now looking forward to talking to more landowners to see if some planting can take place on their land but must always be mindful of our, and many others too, motto which is to put the right tree in the right place. If you are interested in helping with this endeavour in any way, please contact me. Thank you.