

Annual Report of the Westbury tree Group

It is now a whole year since the Parish Council allowed me to start a parish council supported tree group. It has been quite an eventful year. We now have a simple constitution and have settled down with a committee of 6 who all are doing work in support of the group. We have finally got a bank account which proved difficult as banks were not setting them up during the pandemic.

We have achieved quite a number of goals, though we are yet to significantly increase the number of trees in the area.

- 1) We have established links with the Somerset Wildlife Trust and the AONB all working together to get a Tree Council grant to plant 150 trees on the Lynchcombe reserve.
- 2) A lot of work has taken place to start a Tree Nursery at Court House Farm, with thanks to Guy and Evelyn. We now have 3 beds ready for trees or already in use. Amazingly, we have funding of around £1,500 from the AONB to develop the tree nursery and a recent visit to an established tree nursery in Devon by three of us has given ideas of how best to use this largesse. One reason for their close interest is a general concern that many established tree nurseries do not grow their own local trees. They may be moved several times round the country or even be imported. Both mean lack of genetic diversity or local suitability as well as the opportunity for the import of disease. In addition, the increased demand means that some places are running out of trees each year.
- 3) Early development at the tree Nursery was supported by the Westbury Friendly Society which we found very encouraging.
- 4) I challenged people via the Westbury good gardeners group to have a go at growing tree seeds and about 8 people have had a go. Our success rates are varied but we all agreed that the first year is an experiment and we will learn as we go along. Despite the difficulties of growing trees rather than flowers or veg we will be able to plant several hundred down at the nursery in the autumn to grow on.
- 5) As part of the liaison with the AONB we now have the opportunity to involve the young rangers from time to time in our work and a very enthusiastic group of 13 went to check all the Lynchcombe trees and water them; it has rained almost continuously since! They are coming back in November to help us plant out our baby trees in the nursery.

- 6) The committee has put together an excellent leaflet and we are hoping to use this to start talking to more of the village landowners about planting trees. With the efforts of some members of the committee we have discovered that there are more than 70 households who own at least one field in the village- far more than anyone had guessed.
- 7) I have started working with the Hills to Levels Project to identify and talk to individual landowners about the possibility of planting trees. There is some funding available for tree planting to impede the flow of water down the hill, and there are many places where that happens.
- 8) The group has started a [page](#) on the village website. We have uploaded several documents for village use including a Q&A on Ash Dieback, and a list of suitable garden trees done by Tina and Hiliary Little. We have also put regular bulletins in the PEW and more recently in the Parish Newsletter