

Common Farm Woods, Swindon

Common Farm Woods is a new woodland planted under the Countryside Stewardship scheme in a partnership between the Forestry Commission, Swindon Borough Council and the local community.



The eight-hectare community woodland sits on the edge of Wroughton village and is the latest addition to the Great Western Community Forest, a programme that has seen large areas of woodland planted over the past 25 years in and around Swindon.

Common Farm Woods was designed following extensive consultations with local groups, organisations, elected councillors and residents and hundreds of people were subsequently involved in tree planting events.

“The act of planting a tree can be a very sociable one and people often come to tree planting events with stories to tell and family memories to celebrate,” says Jonathan Wilshaw, Community Forest Officer at Swindon Borough Council.

The new woodland includes a network of mown paths and new access points, with a new footbridge linking Common Farm Woodlands to nearby Blackhorse Farm Woodland.

Thousands of trees have already been planted with the help of the community, with funding provided under the Countryside Stewardship scheme.

“The scheme has an attractive grant offer, with advice and guidance readily available from Forestry Commission officers, and on-going support from the Forestry Commission generally, which helps us when we have any questions regarding environmental impacts,” explains Jonathan.



“Children who planted trees in the early stages of the Community Forest project are now grown up and have come back to plant more trees with their own children, as has happened at the Common Farm Woods planting.”

“For anyone thinking about applying for funding for Woodland Creation, I’d advise them to talk to their local Forestry Commission officer as soon as possible to plan and discuss any potential constraints, such as ecology, archaeology, underground and overground services, and so on.

“It’s also important to listen carefully to, and get the local community on-board. They’re your eyes and ears on the ground throughout the whole process.”

Common Farm Woods was planted to help maintain a sense of separation between Wroughton and Swindon, provide an accessible community woodland and improve biodiversity and water quality.

As Jonathan explains, there are also many community benefits that come with tree planting and woodland creation.

“For me it’s as much about the social impacts as it is about landscape change and forestry per se.

“Evidence suggests the site is already well used, and we want to continue to develop the woodland as a community resource over the coming years. We particularly want to encourage continued community involvement and instil a sense of local ownership.”

Jane Lane, a resident in Wroughton and member of the Vision 4 Wroughton community group who helped plant trees at Common Farm, adds “Every time I’m at a community tree plant it strikes me how brilliant they are. I remind myself what they bring together: people of all ages, all backgrounds and most of them local. Some you know, others you don’t, but tree planting is such a great leveller it seems to tick all the boxes like welcoming new people into your area.

“These community tree plantings harness a special quality in people of all ages. We dig and then plant them together until one day from a stick with barely a leaf on it becomes a real tree in a real woodland. Moreover, a community woodland. It’s very satisfying indeed.”

Find out how we can support you to plant trees on your land and the funding that is available to help.

www.gov.uk/guidance/create-woodland-overview

