

A Millennium Wood on our Doorstep?

Would you like to help create a local wood for the Wychwoods, a place for trees flowers and wildlife, with public access?

Over the last fifty years England has lost almost half its ancient woodlands and the Woodland Trust, Britain's largest charity dedicated solely to the conservation and creation of woodland, wants to help reverse this trend. Locally, the Wychwood Project wants to restore tree cover to levels present in Norman times.

Last year, The Woodland Trust considered purchasing Mill Field, Shipton. The aim was to create a small scale local wood with public access under the Trust's *Woods On Your Doorstep* scheme. The Woodland Trust owns 15 existing woods in Oxfordshire, and has completed the purchase of the first Woods on Your Doorstep site at Deddington.

Although the Mill Field site was not suitable, many people were in favour of the concept. Offers of financial support came from Shipton, Milton, Ascott, neighbouring Charlbury, and even from a Woodland Trust member as far afield as Abingdon. People offered to help, but the problem was finding the right available site.

Last Autumn, John Hartley helpfully said he might be prepared to sell his small 9-acre field he had available to the West of Dog Kennel Lane for a local community wood. The County Ecologist visited this site, and considers it very suitable. The Woodland Trust like the site, which is near both Shipton and Milton, on a busy footpath, on the very edge of the village.

To create these Woods on your Doorstep, the local community usually has to raise half the costs of acquisition and planting, with the Woodland Trust providing the other half from Lottery funds. However a Norfolk man, whose daughter lived and worked in Oxfordshire until she sadly died of cancer, has approached the Wychwood Project, seen the site, and he and some friends may make a substantial donation to help us purchase this site in memory of his daughter. But this will still leave a lot of money to be raised locally.

Charlbury already has nearly 20 acres of community woodland. The Wychwood Project will be launched on June 7th, with the hand-over of the newly landscaped 19 acres at Dean Common, near Chadlington. The Wychwoods, too, could have a community wood.

If you like the idea, and would be prepared to help in any way, please contact me on 01993 831403.

Charles Keighley