

Routeways and Gateways

The Wychwood Project is planning, with the help of the local communities, to mark the entrances to key villages throughout the area of the former Royal Forest of Wychwood. The aims are to distinguish the villages from the surrounding countryside, increase tree cover, and also to try and encourage those speeding drivers who pass through our villages to slow down earlier. Some modest funds have been allocated by the Project towards this scheme, and the villages of Shipton, Milton and Ascott under Wychwood have been chosen as pilots.

At a public meeting held in Shipton village hall last October, illustrations were shown giving examples of what could be done to mark village entrances. Apparently, small avenues and rows of trees planted at a decreasing space apart on the outskirts of villages tend to slow drivers down. At the meeting, quite a number of people gave their suggestions about what could be done locally. Since then we have also spoken to the three parish councils, local land-owners and the headmaster of the primary school. Any planting will be 'low-key' and in keeping with the surroundings.

The observant of you may have noticed that in Shipton, John Hartley has already planted young oak trees alongside Burford and Leafield Roads, and is starting work on the broken down stone wall beyond Fiddlers Hill. We are hoping to plant a few trees along the road towards Chipping Norton, beyond the railway line, and possibly in the grounds of the primary school.

In Milton, we are hoping to plant a few hedgerow trees either side of the High Street beyond the village towards Upper Milton, and in the hedgerow adjoining the allotments on Bruern Road. It has also been suggested that we replace some of the missing lime trees around the cricket ground, which would certainly help recreate the atmosphere of a sporting arena at the centre of the village.

It is proving more difficult to find sites in Ascott. It may be possible to plant a few trees adjoining London Lane, to the south of the village. We had hoped to plant some hedgerow trees at the very end of the High Street, where it becomes a lane towards the railway line and Ascott Mill, but this may not be possible. Suggestions for other possible sites are most welcome.

We hope to plant next November, but must plan ahead. For example, if we decide to plant in the road-side verge, we have to seek the County Council's permission, satisfy certain conditions and notify the various utilities, all of which takes about two months to achieve.

If you have any suggestions, and would like to become involved either with tree planting, which will involve heavier digging than when we planted the community wood, or by making a financial contribution – our funds are limited – do please let me know.

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