

Tree policy for Edington Parish Council (“The Parish Council”) - **DRAFT for consideration**

Background

Why are trees important?

- a) They make our village more attractive and desirable
- b) Absorb air pollution and noise
- c) Intercept rainfall and reduce runoff and flooding
- d) Provide shade and shelter for people and animals
- e) Create a variety of habitats for wildlife
- f) Help to emphasise the changing season
- g) Produce fruits, nuts and seeds
- h) Produce firewood
- i) Help to combat climate change by sequestering CO₂
- j) Are a source of inspiration and have health and well being benefits

Why should Edington Parish Council take positive actions to protect and plant trees?

Throughout the county medium sized elm trees are still dying from elm disease. These are the latest victims of a disease which has killed millions of trees in Somerset and probably many hundreds in every parish and town. No-one has been counting! As ash dieback disease also becomes more prevalent over the next few years we are likely to see many more dead trees appearing. Ash is the most common species over much of England and this area is no exception. While the elms that die are relatively small trees, there are many large ash which will be susceptible and the loss of these will be visually a very significant loss to the Parish.

Recommendations for actions to address continuing tree loss and promote tree planting:-

- 1 When applications are made to fell trees and agreement is given, the Parish Council will, whenever possible, request that a suitable replacement tree, or trees, are planted, either on or near the felled tree or on an alternative site to be agreed with the owner.
 - 1.1 **Recommendation:** For every tree felled (or died) at least one replacement be planted.
- 2 The Parish Council will seek an agreement with Sedgemoor District Council (as Planning Authority) that a replanting condition will be included in all consents which are granted in the village.
 - 2.1 **Recommendation:** An agreement will be sought with the District Council in respect of replacement planting.
- 3 The Parish Council will take an active interest in ensuring that all trees, shrubs and hedges which are planted on development sites (as a condition of planning consent) are actually planted and that they survive. Where trees are lost the developer has an obligation to replace any losses for a period of 5 years. While this is sometimes monitored by district officers they are not always aware of the local situation and the Parish Council is in a good position to monitor losses and notify the district that enforcement action be taken where necessary.
 - 3.1 **Recommendation:** The Parish Council will notify the District Council about non compliance with planting conditions on development sites.
- 4 Where trees in the Parish are removed or are to be removed without requiring any consent, the Parish Council will take the initiative and encourage owners to plant replacements on or near the site of the removed tree. This policy will be publicised locally so that Parishioners know that this is an issue about which the Parish Council is concerned and are less likely to be surprised if they are approached after a tree is removed.
 - 4.1 **Recommendation:** The Parish Council will encourage tree replacement where no statutory obligation applies and will publicise this policy widely.

- 5 In some cases, occupants of new houses may not welcome the trees or shrubs in their gardens which are a planning condition and remove them. The Parish Council will perform a monitoring role and keep the District council informed, where possible negotiating a more suitable location for unwanted trees by agreement with all parties.
- 5.1 **Recommendation:** The Parish Council will monitor trees adjacent to new houses which are part of a planning condition, inform District Council of removals, and **negotiate replanting**.
- 6 The Parish Council will take an active role in finding suitable sites for planting new trees and have **an annual tree and shrub planting programme**. The **relatively low cost** of this will be met from a variety of sources including the Parish precept or **Community Infrastructure Levy or S106 funds**. As tree planting is a **relatively low cost activity** and Parish Councils are close to the 'grass roots' of local affairs, they are well placed to take tree planting initiatives. Local volunteers may be prepared to help plant the trees. In some locations shrubs may be preferable to trees.
- 6.1 **Recommendation:** The Parish Council will identify opportunities for tree planting in the parish, **help with funding packages for tree planting**, and involve the community as volunteers where possible.
- 7 If ready identification of sites for tree planting proves difficult a thorough local survey will be conducted to identify suitable planting sites. Notices will be placed in local publications asking the public to offer up or identify sites which could then be explored to check their suitability. A parish map will then be produced showing suitable sites. Some sites may be more suitable for new shrubs rather than trees, in locations under overhead wires for example.
- 7.1 **Recommendation:** The Parish Council will, in the event of failing to identify sites for tree planting, initiate a survey of the parish, publicise the search, and produce a map of potential sites.
- 8 The Parish Council will consider the appointment of a dedicated Tree Warden - who might or might not be a member of the Parish Council.
- 8.1 **Recommendation:** The Parish Council will appoint a Tree Warden to inform The Parish Council about tree matters, advise on suitable actions and lead on the co-ordination of tree planting projects. **The Tree Warden and their activities to always be subject to Parish Council approval and to act within the confines permitted by parish council law.**
- 9 Consultation on a draft tree policy will ideally have been carried out by putting the draft policy on the Parish council website and inviting people to comment through an agreed feedback mechanism. **(To take place only after the PC has first considered the draft policy.)** Notice will be given of the Parish Council meeting at which adopting the policy will be proposed.
- 9.1 **Recommendation:** The Parish Council will publicise its draft Tree Policy, allow for feedback, and publicise the meeting at which the Policy will be proposed.
- 10 The Parish Council will use its best endeavours to support the creation of new community woodlands and the maintenance of existing community woodlands and community orchards in their parish.
- 10.1 **Recommendation:** The Parish Council will promote, publicise and support the creation of new community woodlands and community orchards and the maintenance of existing ones in this parish or town.