

Proposal for FDPC October 2016

Recreation Ground External Perimeter Hedge 3-4 year management plan

Introduction

A professional Tree survey was carried out in February 2015 of the Recreation Ground. This identified a number of works including 30% crown reduction in some of the larger specimens; felling of dying or at risk trees; de-ivying of a number of specimens; some tidying/crown lifting of younger trees to improve specimens.

The outcomes of the Tree survey were accepted by FDPC in 2015 and agreement reached to commence the works alongside a rolling programme of funds over several years. The major works involving crown reduction of large specimens in the Cemetery and a group of Ash Trees, Green End, were undertaken and managed within the 2015-16 budget. Further works are in line for this winter period (2016-17 budget) which will complete the crown reductions. Thereafter, de-ivying trees, some felling of dead scrub trees and tidying smaller specimens will move through into the 2016-2017 budget. These works are not expected to be as costly as the crown reductions and are of a similar nature to those required to renovate the external recreation ground perimeter hedge below.

For information, in addition to the works arising from the Tree survey, FDPC have received requests from a number of property owners around the perimeter of the Recreation Ground and Cemetery for crown reduction and removal of overhanging branches on their property. These works are not considered major and it may be possible for these to be carried out within this current financial year's budget for tree works..

The trees captured within the survey are those seen from the recreation ground. The survey excluded the external perimeter hedge (from here referred to as perimeter hedge). This runs from the top of Plough Hill, beyond the disabled access and end of raised pavement in Green End, along the roadside and finally finishes at the first bungalow on the right. The perimeter hedge is mainly of scrub though it is bordered by trees captured in the original Tree survey some of which form part of the hedge/boundary.

There are a number of problems with the perimeter hedge. These have been on-going, particularly since the instatement of the pavement in the 1980's. So as not to lose any width in the road, the pavement was constructed by cutting back into the bank. In some sections this completely removed top soil, exposing clay only, and in others, due to the steep nature of the bank and constant erosion, plants have not been able to re-establish. Regular 'runs' up the bank are created by the public, particularly in the area of the Plough, adding to the problem of soil erosion and plants being unable to establish. Many residents are concerned of the safety risks these runs create, particularly as they are most often on the blind corner opposite the Plough entrance. Other related problems include gaps in the hedging, long straggly growth and poor specimens. The latter typically being of wild plumb, elder, hawthorn, ash and sycamore saplings. Overhanging growth is a particular problem for traffic where the perimeter hedge runs directly along the roadside on a blind corner, Green End.

There are a variety of old failed fences varying from orange plastic web sheeting, broken and twisted chestnut paling, fallen post and wire fencing and barbed wire, all of which have been put in place over the years by generations of FDPC, seeking to address some of the problems. There is also

evidence of inter-planting with saplings e.g. hawthorn no doubt to thicken the base, many of which are struggling to compete with thick ivy and poor light.

The overall appearance of the hedge and bank is poor. From an ecological point of view maintaining a variety of common species, keeping the scrub to 'hedge height' to thicken the base and improve lateral growth would all be of an advantage.

Concerns about the poor quality of the perimeter hedge and need for attention were raised by the public at the 2015 Annual meeting.

To-date advice to inform a management plan been sought from:

- SCDC Landscape officer – Carol Newell
- The Wildlife Trust
- Conservation expertise within the village – Jill Waters
- Local Residents

Proposed Management Plan 3-4 years

The perimeter hedge to be managed within 3 sections in accordance with the works required.

Works to include:

1. Reducing the height of various scrub to hedge height (various heights) to allow for long term routine maintenance (annual cutting of sides and top) and encourage lower growth.
2. Removal of dead and dying shrubs where growth of new inter-planting/healthy species are hindered; maintain dead wood and use of dead hedging elsewhere for ecological purposes.
3. Removal of dead wood/branches and trunks which poses a risk to pedestrians
4. Removal of excessive ivy growth where tree and or valuable shrub specimens (e.g. hawthorn) are at risk of being engulfed. Other areas, thick ivy growth to be incorporated into hedging.
5. New interplanting of hawthorn/blackthorn
6. Planting of ivy plugs in the bank where top soil is present but soil erosion problematic.
7. Removal of old fallen, no longer functioning fencing. Replacement of post and wire in sections where this would assist layering of existing species e.g. hawthorn.
8. Use of dead hedging to provide suitable habitats for various insects etc. and barriers to the public where gaps in hedging.
9. Consideration by FDPC to instate timber framed steps within the vicinity of the Plough but away from the blind corner. Consider inviting Plough to contribute to expense.

This proposal is for FDPC to agree to extend the existing rolling programme of finance in place to support tree works on the Recreation Ground to include a 3-4 year programme to put in place the management plan above. No additional finance is proposed at this stage, rather that the existing rolling budget be allowed to incorporate works to the perimeter hedge.

If agreement is in place quotations will be sought to attend to the various works in time for the annual budget setting in January 2017.

