

Having entered peak woodland 'working season', still under Covid-19 restrictions, our focus over this past quarter has been on ensuring we do not miss the opportunity to continue to get what we can do 'on the ground', whilst also keeping the momentum up in developing the partnership working that will help sustain such activity. This has been quite the challenge given limited availability of volunteers especially, demonstrating exactly how important volunteers are to our work, and hopefully soon will be again in taking forward our future plans.

We have been busy supporting the 'New Friends of Hollinswood & Randlay Valley' in the creation of a new 'woodland school' area. By thinning a small area of woodland (removing some windblown and mature Silver Birch trees) the woodland floor has been opened up and we'll hopefully see a good coverage of ground flora return this Spring. The logs were cross cut into 8ft lengths and left in place for the group to arrange into an impressive looking seating area for the local school and community groups.



The 'Woodland School' seating area.

Dead-hedging has also been placed around the area for improved safety and visibility from the nearby footpath improved to discourage anti-social use of the area which increased social activity should also help with! It is hoped that all-ability access should be possible by

The November-long lockdown (once again!) disrupted our plans for tree-planting, especially those that had been made for 'National Tree Week' at the end of the month. However, we have since been able to home some of the 440 trees successfully obtained from the Woodland Trust at various school and community locations throughout the Borough with more lined up for early in the New Year. We were also pleased to be involved in the planting of an Oak tree 'nursery' on the 'Dothill' Local Nature Reserve. 180 bare root trees were rescued from a nursery in Wales, that would otherwise have had to destroy them, by the local 'Extinction Rebellion' group. We were able to provide canes and protectors surplus to our requirements and these will help ensure the trees have a good chance of establishing, on the basis that the plastic spiral guards will be recycled after use. The trees will eventually replace diseased Ash as it is removed from the reserve. Further tree-planting on other sites, including with a corporate partner, is planned for early in the New Year.

Tristan Haynes, Social Enterprise Officer.
tristanhaynes@smallwoods.org.uk

Our 'Community Woodlander' Apprentice, assisted by one of our skilled site volunteers, has been busy creating some attractive, natural, divider screens commissioned by the Meeting Point Trust. Building on our partnership delivering holiday club activities together, the screens have been built using willow harvested as a result of our work last year to restore the willow 'Withy Beds' in the nearby 'Town Park'. The screens are being used to create a meeting area at the café at Meeting Point House.



Information about the sustainability benefits of the annual harvesting of craft material from the withy beds will be provided to help visitors learn more about this.

Finally, as we look towards 'Covid-Recovery' the opportunity to ensure our society 'builds back better' looks promising for innovative economic and social care approaches such as 'Green Recovery' and 'Green Social Prescribing'. We are working closely amongst the longer-standing voluntary and community sector organisations in Telford to build understanding of how connecting with nature can support improved physical health, wellbeing and occupational opportunities for our local communities.