

## OURBORETUM

**Summary:** To present an overview and update on Ourboretum, a community tree growing initiative with BBC Radio Gloucestershire

**Recommendation:** That the report is noted

**Reviewed by the Executive Committee:** Yes / No

**If yes, the Committee's comments:** N/A

**Report by:** Mark Connelly, Land Management Lead

### Sowing the seed

1. In 2018 the Board was a lead in a local partnership, working with the Woodland Trust and eight other landscapes across the country in a bid to the HLF to fund a 'Trees Outside Woods' project to mitigate the impacts of ash dieback. The bid, although unsuccessful, included the proposal for community tree nurseries to grow trees from seed and working with farmers and land managers plant them out in the wider landscape outside woods. The local partnership were also keen to keep going and formed into the Cotswolds and Vale Ash Dieback Forum (CoVADF). The forum produced guidance for farmers, land managers and parish councils and helped co-ordinate the planting of 2,000 trees donated by the Woodland Trust during the winter of 2019/20.
2. Following a meeting with our Communications Lead, Chris Sandys from BBC Radio Gloucestershire contacted Alana seeking help. Chris had the idea of engaging people in Gloucestershire in planting trees to create a community arboretum, or even several arboreta and was seeking help in finding out who to contact, what tree species to plant, where could they be planted, etc. The idea played on 'our arboretum' – *Ourboretum*. Alana set up a meeting.

### Germination

3. Ourboretum emerged as a hybridisation of the community tree nursey element of the Trees Outside Woods proposal and Chris' proposal for creating a community arboretum. Instead of community tree nurseries we would invite people to grow from seed a selected number of tree species in their gardens, school grounds or on the balcony in 'micro-nurseries'. The project would be promoted by BBC Radio Gloucestershire on air and on social media with support from Alana using our digital platforms. We would use our networks of Cotswold Wardens, farmers, land managers, etc. to find locations to plant the trees across Gloucestershire when ready.
4. Over the summer of 2019 Ourboretum took shape. See brief outline in *Appendix A*. The tree species selected were beech, oak (pedunculate and sessile) and hazel as they are easy to find, identify and grow from seed. An Ourboretum page was created on the BBC website with how to become involved, identification guides and FAQs.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3gSC23y0kmPRhzSVCH3ShH6/ourboretum>

5. The original intention was to launch in late summer 2019 but time was running out and it was decided it would be best to wait and launch in July 2020, before the schools break up for summer. The opportunity was taken over the winter to 'test' Ourboretum by growing beech, hazel and oak from seed in pots and to refine the webpage and guides.

### **Taking root**

6. Ourboretum launched in July 2020 with a target to grow 2,020 trees from seed collected and sown by the people and communities in Gloucestershire. Plans for a launch event with guests and displays, etc. had to be abandoned due to the Covid-19 pandemic, so the launch was on-air on BBC Radio Gloucestershire and supported by garden designer and broadcaster Chris Beardshaw. Ourboretum also made it onto BBC Midlands Today and BBC Points West.
7. To date 120 people have signed up, as have several schools across the county. The target of 2,020 trees has been smashed with nearly 3,000 nuts and acorns collected and sown to date in 'micro-nurseries' across Gloucestershire.
8. Asking people to grow trees was working but to develop Ourboretum some further help was ideally needed. Stakes and guards would be needed to support and protect the trees when planted out, some additional species, not easily grown from seed, would be beneficial and to help some schools and other groups to become involved, pots and compost would be needed.
9. In spring 2020 the Chief Executive was approached by Ground Control, a grounds maintenance company operating nationally who had established a fund to support tree planting. Ground Control are supporting Ourboretum and have to date bought 3,000 pots, peat-free compost to fill them and bamboo labels. Ground Control have also agreed to support the planting out of the Ourboretum trees with stakes and tubes and to add other species to plant with them to increase diversity using native species difficult to grow from seed. In addition, Ground Control has recently delivered 1,200 hedging plants and 55 trees to the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens in the Avon Valley District.
10. The second national lockdown has hampered the delivery of pots and compost to schools but nine schools were happy to receive deliveries during November. So far 625 pots with compost and labels have been delivered.
11. To expand the range of tree species Ourboretum could grow, a virtual meeting has been held with some Gardening Clubs across Gloucestershire organised by Chris Sandys. Some species such as lime and black poplar can be grown from cuttings and this is to be explored further over the winter months.

### **Planting out**

12. Trees from seed are normally grown for two years before being planted out as 40 – 60cm bare-root whips. We are planning, however, to start planting Ourboretum

trees out in the landscape next winter, 2021/22 and will begin to contact farmers and landowners in the spring via networks such as FWAG, NFU, local authority tree officers and Rangers and the recently formed Gloucestershire Tree group.

SUPPORTING PAPERS:

- Appendix A - Brief outline of Ourboretum

DECEMBER 2020