

## Tree Planting Begins

Community planting of 300+ whips began on 19 February 2022 and was planned for four days, although most planting was completed within two.



Special sessions had been set aside later in the same week for village children to have a go at planting. Hanney Cubs it was hoped would also come along to lend a hand.

In addition to planting, children and their parents have been given the opportunity to adopt a section of dead hedging. Yes, that's what the posts

along the bridle path are intended for. Cut brush is packed between the posts to form a dry/dead hedge. First though, a hedgehog box will be placed at the bottom of each hedge section to provide our prickly friends with a snug and safe place to over winter.

The benefits of the dead hedges are that they will provide habitat for birds, insects and small mammals. They are a practical and environmentally friendly way for CHAFT to use up cut material from maintenance of the copse, shrubberies and hedgerows on Charney Field, without the need to burn prunings. As the brush rots down it can be topped up with new material, as it becomes available – though not in nesting season please.

### *Tree varieties and numbers*

The Forestry Commission laid down in their felling licence that three varieties of trees might be used in the replanting area: alder, silver birch and oak, at a rate of 1,600 whips per hectare. Following careful measuring of the felled area, we have planted 250 oaks, birch and alder to meet this requirement. In addition, following the community consultation in 2021, we have broadened the species diversity with a further mix of 70 whips of hazel, hornbeam and holly.

### *Planting area*

Based on professional advice provided, the whips have been grouped in blocks rather than randomly placed, as alder and birch are much faster growing than the oaks and would overshadow them, stunting their growth.

Three colours (one for each tree variety) of biodegradable, environmentally friendly paint were used to mark where the whips should be planted.

The whips have largely been spaced at 2 m intervals and follow a loose diamond planting pattern, to create a more organic look.

Two footpaths leading from the bridle way through the plantation to the field have been marked out.

### *Planting*

Community volunteers have been provided with advice on how best to plant. Once in the ground the whips are staked and sleeved to provide support and protection from animals. A thick collar of mulch has been placed around each sleeve to help suppress weeds.

### *Aftercare*

Whips tend to be used in the planting of larger areas as they are not only considerably cheaper but have a better survival rate than larger specimen trees which require more aftercare. Except in severe drought conditions, whips do not need watering, as they naturally send out a root system to search for moisture – watering tends to keep the roots close to the surface.

Although a small area of ground has been cleared of grass and weeds prior to planting each whip, this will only give the tree about a year of clear growth before vegetation begins to reappear and compete. It will therefore be necessary to trim around the whips occasionally to ensure they do not become choked.

*February 2022*