

Swindon Advertiser

Thousands of trees set to be planted by Swindon council

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Swindon Borough Council is looking to plant thousands of them on land it owns as part of its efforts in the Trees for Climate initiative.

The national scheme aims to see more than 6,000 hectares of new woodland planted over the next five years – and Swindon has earmarked 350 hectares – for its trees in the Great Western Community Forest.

Cabinet member for climate change Keith Williams said: “We can all change our lives in ways that help reduce our negative impact on the environment.

“We can cycle and walk instead of driving, we can use less plastic, reduce our food waste, and generally live more sustainably.

“However, there is nothing that makes our community more beautiful and provides so much social benefit than having a landscape full of trees.”

Coun Williams is leading efforts to get the council’s own operations to be carbon neutral by 2030 – and the entire borough’s to be the same by 2050.

He said planting trees on council, land could help the authority get into negative net carbon emissions, with new trees absorbing more carbon than the council’s operations put out.

But while the council will start planting on its own land across the borough in January, it is looking for other landowners to get involved.

Cabinet member for strategic infrastructure and planning Gary Sumner said: “We have made a first statement of our intent to address climate change and the Trees for Climate scheme is a welcome boost to our tree planting ambitions for 2021.

“As well as using Swindon Borough Council land we are keen to find as many opportunities as possible to increase planting and enhance biodiversity.

“This is on top of our existing Urban Meadows project and our commitment to the Great Western Community Forest.

“Having Keith Williams as a passionate advocate in his role as cabinet member for climate change was a key appointment to deliver our zero carbon ambitions for the borough.”

Coun Sumner said the council would help landowners who wanted to plant trees to help offset carbon emissions.

He said approving woodlands on new housing and business developments that need planning permission and by providing grants to landowners to set aside land for trees would be part of this effort.

Set up in 1994 the Great Western Community Forest covers more than 168 square miles, stretching from the North Wessex Downs to the River Thames.

It includes the entire borough of Swindon, with the council planting trees in urban, suburban and rural areas, looking for an average tree coverage of nearly a third – 30 per cent – across the entire site.

Since the start of the project in 1994, tree cover has more than doubled.

A plan for the planting will be put to the cabinet at its meeting this evening, which starts at 6pm.

Source: <https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/18913665.thousands-trees-set-planted-swindon-council/>