

Neil Pullen [NeilP@wiltshirewildlife.org](mailto:NeilP@wiltshirewildlife.org) 24.11.2020

Dear all. A quick update on the work at Rivermead Flood Storage Area.

The first phase of work has progressed well and the banks of the stream have been re-profiled (see attached photo). The contractors will gradually move off site today making good as they go. They will use the track vehicles to level an area that will eventually become a new, natural surfaced path along the edge of the stream. The stream-side, tree work will take place on Thursday and, on Friday that material will be used by a volunteer work party (socially distanced and number limited) to create a number of biodiversity habitats.

The low impact, tracked vehicles have scarified the soil surface and created a perfect opportunity in which to spread a woodland edge/hedgerow mix of wildflowers. I am collecting seed today and will arrange a volunteer task in the coming week or so to deliver this work.

This area will then be ready for tree planting, and this will take place with volunteers over the coming months (the Wild Well-Being group are particularly keen to get involved with this aspect of the work). The trees will be planted using "eco" guards rather than the normal plastic ones that are not biodegradable. This is a bit of an experiment and different types will be used in different areas.

I am in the final stage of appointing a contractor to deliver the tree works on site. Because of an extremely wet October, this work will focus on the trees along the edge of the paths (National Cycle Route 45). Removing ash trees in small groups that could pose a health and safety threat as ash dieback take further hold (several trees have already failed amongst the ash planting). Once this has been delivered, I will promote a socially distanced, community tree planting event, likely to be held in March 2021.

As an aside, my work in Swindon has generated a lot of queries relating to the growing of trees from seed and cuttings. What started out as a practical task to collect and grow on a few acorns has snowballed and I have received many calls. The Wild Well-Being group have seized on this idea and have talked about the possibility of creating a small tree nursery, growing on local sourced, genetically adapted, native trees for use in tree planting schemes.

As always I am available if anyone would like to have a look around the site or to discuss in more detail.

Regards

Neil Pullen  
Swindon Reserve Manager



11.11.2020

Dear all

a quick update on the project at Rivermead Flood Storage area

Unfortunately the weather has not been kind on us in relation to this project and the work that had been planned to start on the 6<sup>th</sup> October had to be cancelled.

We are hoping to start the wetland enhancement works later this month, although I have to say that I walked the site yesterday and water is still laying in some areas so it may need to be delayed again. I shall keep you informed.

Contractors are being sought to deliver the woodland works and all trees are now marked up. As well as the usual checks, risk assessments and method statements, they will also be required to show details in relation to Covid-19 for both staff and members of the public. Before the woodland works begin a press release will be sent out, explain the works and the tree planting that will follow.

At present all volunteer activities have been halted. But since the 21<sup>st</sup> July volunteers have delivered 82 hours of activity for the project. This includes the erection of bird and bat boxes, the planting of woodland wildflowers, pulling Himalayan Balsam and setting out a permanent monitoring plot to record the changes we see.

Following government guidance we are still able to deliver the Wild Wellbeing group activities. Although very strict measures are being put in place to ensure social distancing is maintained and numbers limited and prioritised to those who are at most need.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Neil Pullen

Swindon Reserve Manager  
Conservation and Land Management