

Councillor and college students complete tree planting scheme at Yeovil Recreation Centre

Students of Cambian College at Lufton near Yeovil joined South Somerset District Council's Environment portfolio holder, Councillor Sarah Dyke, to help put the final trees in the ground at Yeovil Recreation Centre as part of the winter planting scheme and help the District Council with its pledge to be carbon neutral by 2030.

The tree planting scheme has seen a total of 2,280 trees planted across the site. Whilst helping with our pledge to be carbon neutral by 2030, the scheme also recognises the biodiversity crisis currently sweeping our native species and habitats and as a landowner, swift and positive action has been taken to tackle this.

SSDC were delighted to accept the help of the students from the college on Monday 2 March, whose enthusiasm was second to none and who worked hard to get the job done and always with a smile and a high five!

Councillor Sarah Dyke, portfolio holder for Environment at SSDC, said: "We have worked swiftly to consider our options for enhanced tree planting across the district and we are delighted to be able to deliver this scheme during this winter planting season. We have already exceeded our target for tree planting this year, but there is much more we can do and we're now looking forward to planning more schemes for later this year and beyond".

"We hope to demonstrate that recreational and sporting facilities can go hand in hand with nature conservation and carbon sequestration, and show that with the right design, even very small areas of greenspace can provide great benefits."

This scheme is just one of many green initiatives being implemented by SSDC as part of their Environment Strategy. The recent Great Parish Tree Giveaway received a tremendous response with 61 parishes taking up the offer to receive free trees, this means an additional 3,100 trees will be planted across South Somerset in the next few weeks.

Yeovil Recreation Centre (YRC) provides exceptional sporting facilities for football, hockey, athletics and a variety of other sports, and is managed by an on-site grounds team and Activity Officer.

What has been planted?

Trees were planted around the grass playing pitches at the site and will replace standard trees lost to disease or damage. In some cases, new trees will replace historic hedgerows seen on the Tithe maps from when the area was farmland.

The team at YRC have been working with SSDC Specialist Officer, Phil Poulton, who is a specialist planner and tree expert, to plan and plant a total of 2,280 trees across the Recreation Ground. These are made up of eighteen different species, including English Oak, Walnut, Hazel, Tulip trees, Holly and Yew, and are being sited with care and consideration to give them the best chance to thrive.

In addition to the new trees, earlier in the winter yellow rattle seed was sown to increase the chances of establishing wildflower banks at appropriate locations on site and shortly a wildflower seed mix will be broadcast on scarified banks. This will create a matrix of habitats and playing spaces that will enhance everyone's enjoyment and use of the site. The surrounding gardens provide existing forage for bees and insects and these site improvements will extend their habitat into the recreation ground this coming summer.

Why plant trees at the site?

Not only has this scheme been developed to enhance the environment of the site and improve its biodiversity, it will also provide extra protection for the playing spaces from the fierce winds and rain that sweep across the site. The new trees should also improve drainage so that playing spaces don't get waterlogged during our increasingly wet winter months.