

## Underwood Green Connected Community - frequently asked questions.

Q: What are the aims of this project?

A: Some of the green spaces in Underwood are under-used, unattractive, and are of very little value for wildlife, so we would like to turn them into attractive and pleasant 'Pocket Parks' which you can relax and enjoy, whilst also making them better for wildlife.

Q: Where is the money coming from for this project?

A: The project is being paid for by grant funding provided by the Welsh Government through the **Gwent Green Grid Partnership**. Grants such as these sit outside of the council's core budget and do not impact the rate of council tax. Also, these grants cannot be transferred to other areas of need within the community such as maintenance of roads, street lighting, bins etc. If we do not take advantage of these grants when they are available, our communities miss out on the opportunities to adapt to increasing pressures of the climate and nature emergency that we are faced with.

Q: What is the Gwent Green Grid Partnership?

A: This is a ground-breaking project that aims to improve and develop green infrastructure – a term used to describe the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities. Green infrastructure has a crucial role to play in addressing nature, climate and health emergencies and inequalities. We want to maximise the opportunities that we have to invest in creating healthier, greener and connected communities.

Q: Will the trees shade my garden, damage my house or encourage wasps?

A: The trees have been carefully selected for their size and suitability for planting in locations such as these. This will ensure that they will not have a detrimental effect on neighbouring properties whilst providing the additional benefit of providing residents with an opportunity to use the fruit that grows.

All of the trees on council-owned land are subject to regular surveys and checks to ensure their ongoing safety. These trees will enhance habitat and provide connectivity for nature and people between Rout's Wood and Monks Ditch, bearing fruit at different times of the year from the summer through to autumn. This will limit the likelihood of an influx of pollinating insects such as wasps that may be viewed by some as pests whilst providing opportunities for fruit gathering for residents throughout the seasons.

Q: This has been imposed on us / why weren't we consulted?

A: We had requests from residents to improve the look of the green spaces within the community, and Bishton Community Council approached us for support back in 2021. Over the last few months, we have spent time visiting these green spaces and talking to the residents that use them. Various social media posts have been circulated as well as posters put up in the local shop and on lamp-posts with the addition of QR code linking to a resident's survey. Houses surrounding the 3 main locations

for this project have all had leaflets and surveys posted through their letterboxes, and a coffee morning was held at the Iscoed Tafarn where a number of residents took part in discussions about the project with local councillors and council officers. We are also in the process of organising an opportunity for the local primary school to get involved supported by Gwent Wildlife Trust.

Q: Who will maintain these spaces once they have been created?

A: Agreement has been reached with the council's grounds maintenance team that they will look after these spaces, but we really hope the local community will also get involved and help us to keep them as clean and pleasant spaces to enjoy.

Q: Will more Pocket Parks be created?

A: We have received suggestions for other areas on Underwood estate which could be turned into pocket parks, so if we receive more grant funding we will consult local residents for their views on creating pocket parks in these areas. We would also like to create a circular woodland walk around Underwood to encourage people to enjoy and value the woodlands which gives Underwood its name.