

Forest and Football



Shaw Forest Park, West Swindon

Shaw Forest Park is some 53 acres of community woodland that has been established over the last 10 years on an area tipped with waste since the mid 1940s.

So far, over 46,000 trees have been planted. But the most important element in the success of this site has been the community ownership and involvement. The Forest has held three community tree planting events, and over 10,000 local people have taken part in these and other activities.

Recently, in April 2004, this dedication was put to the test when it became clear that Shaw Forest Park had been proposed as the site for Swindon's new football

stadium. Local people saw this has a huge threat and immediately set up the Shaw Forest Protection Group. Although the stadium proposal was abandoned in July 2004, the Group grew quickly to over 2,000 strong.

The Group held a number of activities to raise the profile and support of the Park, with the Forest team working alongside the members, identifying opportunities for community involvement and focusing their enthusiasm onto practical projects. As a result,

a Shaw Forest Park Consultation Day was held in early December 2004 to give the people living in West Swindon the opportunity to meet the Forest team and officers from the Borough's landscape architects. As well as finding out more about the changes that had taken place over the years, local people were able to learn about the technicalities of turning a tip into a park and to discuss their thoughts and ideas on how they might get involved in the Park's future.

Comments on access points and wildlife issues from people already using the Park were really helpful, and there were lots of ideas for the continued involvement of the community. This information will help prioritise developmental work on the site over the next few years, work that will include footpaths, interpretation and associated park furniture.



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Growing community woodland in a Growth Area

In a deal with Gazeley Properties Ltd., Marston Vale has recently acquired 11 hectares of farmland to turn into community woodland. The land is adjacent to existing Forest landholdings, and together they make up 32.5 hectares of open greenspace in an area that is expanding rapidly with new housing and business development.

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