

Greening the Cinder Track

In March 2019, Whitby Naturalists were awarded £1400 from the Betty's Trees for Life Fund for their project 'Greening the Cinder Track' to plant diverse trees with wildlife value along the Cinder Track.

The Cinder Track is the multi-use trail along the route of the disused railway from Whitby to Scarborough. Scarborough Borough Council acquired the track after the railway closed in 1965, and it has developed into an important wildlife corridor. It goes through some woodlands, such as Cock Mill Wood just south of Whitby, and the woodland around Staintondale. For much of the length, it is sparsely lined by trees, predominantly grey willow, *Salix cinerea*, with occasional apple trees, (probably from cores thrown from railway carriage windows) and some hawthorn scrub. Introducing diverse native tree species could greatly increase the wildlife value of the Cinder Track. Working with Tim Burkinshaw, SBC Ecologist, suitable tree species were chosen, and a grant application submitted to buy trees for planting during the winter months of 2019/20.

The plan was to plant 500 whips of the following species: Alder buckthorn, Field maple, Oak, Crab apple, Wild cherry, Hornbeam, Small leaved lime, Wych elm, Holly, Dog rose. Species were chosen for the value of the blossom for pollinators, the fruits for food for birds and mammals and/or foliage as the food plant of butterfly larvae. Castle Howard Tree Nursery specialise in supplying native trees, some grown from locally collected seed. Thanks to their generosity when they understood the aims of the project, we were able to purchase nearly 1000 trees and guards with the funds awarded.

Planting started in November at Stainsacre, with the Cinders National Park volunteer group, led by Bernie McLinden. Since then, whips have been planted at Whitby (Monkey Bridge), Hawsker (4 sites), Hawsker Bottoms (2 sites), Bayness (3 sites), Ravenscar, Staintondale (2 sites), Cloughton and Scalby. In addition, whips have been provided to Airy Hill primary school for their wildlife area, and Larpool walled garden community project, both close to the Cinder Track. The whips have been planted individually or in small groups, and often on sites where considerable preparation work was required. Tim Burkinshaw gave advice on site selection and tree numbers, as well as giving practical help on tasks. Volunteers from Whitby Naturalists' Club, Cinders, National Park Young Rangers, Scarborough Conservation Volunteers and a corporate volunteer day have all been involved in practical work.



It was intended that the Cinders volunteers would return to planting sites to clear any encroaching bracken, bramble or other competing vegetation in spring/summer, although that is not possible at present. However, healthy leaf growth has been observed at several sites, despite a very dry spring. Cinders will also remove tree guards as the whips develop. As they mature, the trees should be able to achieve the project aim, and further improve the value of the Cinder Track as a wildlife corridor.

Thanks to Betty's Trees for Life Fund, Castle Howard Tree Nursery, all the volunteers who have helped with planting the trees, Bernie McLinden for leading and supporting most of the volunteer tasks and Tim Burkinshaw for ecological help and advice.

Wendy English
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