

Freshford PC – Natural Environment Report, Oct 2024

Cllr Elli Bate

1. Tynning matting

As agreed at the September meeting, I met with Gez Rideout to take up a small test area of the matting. Findings from doing this were:

- Relatively easy to remove the matting – Gez took up a c.8m section in about 45 minutes with minimal help from me! Gez would be happy to form a volunteer group to complete the work for free.
- We were able to remove a thick layer of grass and soil from the top of the matting which we put back down on the bare soil. If the weather was right this might largely remove the need for re-seeding.
- The 'route' of the mowing appears to have changed so the current path is largely not aligned with the matting anyway – this (added to the thick layer of earth now on top of the matting) suggests the matting is not making a huge difference to any potential impact from footfall.

We have also confirmed that the matting is made from HDPE which is 100% recyclable:

<https://www.scrantonproducts.com/makes-hdpe-sustainable/>

If we could remove the matting for free with volunteers, and then send it for recycling, two of the arguments against removing the matting (cost of removal and matting going to landfill) therefore no longer apply.

Given that the PC promised that the matting would be temporary and that it will eventually degrade and release plastics into our local ecosystem, my view is that we should remove it.

Please can we discuss (at this meeting or the November one when I will be present) whether the PC feel we need further community consultation or can arrange for volunteers to go ahead and remove it next Spring.



Test section of matting removed by the Tynning gate

2. Volunteer tree work

As previously reported, two volunteers who also look after the woodland in Winsley, John Kerr and Glyn Williams, have offered to do some tree work for Freshford PC. Many thanks to them for their first day's work:

- removed a low-hanging branch from a Chestnut at the edge of the Tying (T44 on the Bawdens survey map) which was obstructing the footpath and also likely to break at some point. (See photo below).
- removed a single stem, ivy-covered Oak which was over-shadowing a much healthier Oak (T47) on the same footpath.
- removed a broken branch which was hanging from a conifer (T03) in the cemetery.



John and Glyn are doing some further work during October to prune certain trees to make more light for others which have better potential to improve local biodiversity.