

Giving it some Welly! in the South West Forest

by Richard Irvine

To involve 1000 children and adults planting a total of over 3 hectares of new native woodland in the South West Forest this winter is an ambitious target but one which we are well on course to achieving.



Following a one day tree planting event for schoolchildren from Shebbear last winter, it was decided to expand the provision of such events and deliver forest education in a unique and very direct way. At the same time, the Woodland Trust launched their national 'Tree For All' campaign which aims to give over one million children the opportunity to plant a tree over the next four years. South West Forest has joined in partnership with the Woodland Trust to carry forward 'Tree For All' in our area.

Launched in National tree week, events at three sites involved around 100 children in planting trees for new native woodland creation schemes. Since then, over 800 pupils from Boscastle to Bolham have been planting broadleaves across the South West Forest. Out of school visits can form powerful lasting memories which continue to have an influence in adult life. To help reinforce those memories, each child made a symbolic tree guardian from natural materials collected from the hedgerow. Many children chose to plant their guardian next to their tree and others proudly took them away to show parents or to look over the school vegetable garden!

The response from landowners, pupils and teachers has been extremely positive and links have been made which will hopefully result in regular return visits to the new woodlands where strong bonds with special plants and places can be forged. It is important that the act of planting a tree is not seen in isolation and that children can be given the opportunity to care for young trees throughout the seasons.



To this end we have negotiated with Totnes timber framing company Carpenter Oak, to provide one standard Oak tree to each participating school to be planted in the school grounds. As concerns about increasing incidence of skin cancer as well as climate change grow, the issue of shade in school playgrounds is becoming more important. This spin off from Tree For All will directly address such potential problems and provide a valuable curriculum resource in addition to improving habitats and the landscape quality of the immediate area.



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