

Leisure & Recreation Committee

Report: Tiny Forest Report

Date: 2nd July 2026

Report Author: Andrew Briggs – Head of Operations

1. Purpose of Report

To update the Committee on the progress of the St Mark's Park Tiny Forest following its planting in January 2026, and to inform Members of the proposed Earthwatch Tiny Forest Discovery Day planned for summer 2026.

2. Background

The St Mark's Park Tiny Forest was planted in January 2026 as part of the Earthwatch Nature in Cities programme, delivered in partnership with Earthwatch Europe, Admiral and Central Swindon North Parish Council.

St Marks Park Tiny Forest



Welcome - come in and enjoy Planted: January 2026



Tiny Forest brings the benefits of woodlands into the heart of our cities and urban spaces; connecting people with nature, helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change, as well as providing spaces to support wildlife



What is a Tiny Forest?

A Tiny Forest is a dense, fast-growing native woodland, about the size of a tennis court made up of 600 Trees. The forests are not only great homes for butterflies, birds, bees and other wildlife but also a place for people to connect with, and learn about, nature. Tiny Forests are planted based on the work of the Japanese botanist Dr Akira Miyawaki.

Get involved

This Tiny Forest is cared for by a group of Tree Keepers who are kept busy throughout the year with activities such as weeding, watering, mulching, or litter picking. We warmly welcome new volunteers - scan the QR code to find out more or email us: tinyforest@earthwatch.org.uk

There are 16 Tree and shrub species inside!

- Alder
- Alder Buckthorn
- Aspen
- Beech
- Bird Cherry
- Broom
- Dogwood
- English Oak
- Guelder Rose
- Hawthorn
- Hazel
- Holly
- Hornbeam
- Rowan
- Silver Birch
- Sweet Chestnut



Your Tiny Forest is part of a growing network of Miyawaki forests across the UK, Europe and other parts of the world.



This is a 3 year old Tiny Forest in Witney. They grow fast indeed!



SCAN HERE

Please respect this area as a valued community space and feel free to come in and enjoy at your leisure.




Working in partnership with:





Please report any damage to 01793 466499

The planting event took place at St Mark's Park, behind Swindon North End Bowls Club, and was promoted as a free community event for children and adults, with tree planting, science activities, community building and family engagement.



The Tiny Forest contains approximately 600 trees and shrubs, planted using the Miyawaki method. The site includes 16 native tree and shrub species, including Alder, Aspen, Beech, Bird Cherry, Dogwood, English Oak, Hawthorn, Hazel, Holly, Hornbeam, Rowan, Silver Birch and Sweet Chestnut.



3. Current Site Update

The Tiny Forest is establishing well. Recent site visits show good early growth across the planted area, with the protective fencing remaining in place and the interpretation board has now been installed.

As expected during the early establishment period, some weed growth is present across the site. This will need to be managed ahead of the proposed Discovery Day to ensure the forest is presentable, accessible and suitable for the planned public and school engagement activities.

The interpretation board encourages the community to enter and enjoy the space and promotes ongoing involvement through Earthwatch's Tree Keeper programme. Tree Keepers help care for the Tiny Forest through activities such as weeding, watering, mulching and litter picking.

4. Proposed Tiny Forest Discovery Day

Earthwatch have now confirmed the proposed structure for the St Mark's Park Tiny Forest Discovery Day, which is expected to take place on Tuesday 14th July 2026.

The day will be split between school engagement sessions in the morning and an open community session in the afternoon.

Proposed Programme

Morning session: 09:30 – 12:30

Earthwatch are proposing school-focused sessions with the local schools involved in the original planting:

- **Ferndale School**
A one-hour session, currently assuming approximately 12 students.
- **St Mary's School**
A one to two-hour session, depending on the number of students attending. This could be delivered as either one longer session or two separate one-hour sessions for different classes or year groups.

Afternoon session: 13:00 – 16:00

The afternoon will be an open community session, allowing residents and wider community members to visit the Tiny Forest, take part in activities and learn more about the site.

The Council will coordinate with Earthwatch on the afternoon arrangements, including promotion, site access and any operational requirements.

The Discovery Day will be led by Earthwatch and will include citizen science activities to monitor the progress of the Tiny Forest, while engaging schools and residents with biodiversity and nature study. The Earthwatch information provided explains the wider purpose of Tiny Forests, including their role in supporting

biodiversity, creating habitats, storing carbon, improving nature connection, helping reduce flooding, and supporting cooling in urban areas through shade and evapotranspiration.

Once final details are agreed, Earthwatch will lead on event promotion and outreach, with the Council supporting through its usual communication channels.

5. Additional Volunteer Session

The Council also has a planned volunteer session with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) on 15th July 2026.

This provides a useful opportunity to support the continued establishment of the Tiny Forest immediately after the Discovery Day. Subject to confirmation of the volunteer session arrangements, work could include further weeding, tidying, mulching, litter picking or other light maintenance activities agreed with Earthwatch.

6. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to:

- a) **Note** the update on the St Mark's Park Tiny Forest;
- b) **Note** the confirmed Discovery Day structure for Tuesday 14th July 2026, including school sessions during the morning and an open community session in the afternoon;
- c) **Support** the Council assisting with reasonable pre-event weeding and site preparation;
- d) **Note** the planned ESRC volunteer session on 15th July 2026; and
- e) **Agree** that the Council supports promotion of the open community session once final promotional material is provided by Earthwatch.