

New Whip Planting at Lynnsport - Opinion



Site	Land to the south west of Lynnsport
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Client	Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

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1. Scope of Works

- 1.1 The purpose of this brief written report is to summarise my findings following a site visit.
- 1.2 Golden Tree Surgeons were appointed by the Tree Officer for BCKLWN, Richard Fisher, to give an opinion on the quality of planting and establishment of whips at Lynnsport and comment on the condition of any new trees.
- 1.3 Although Golden Tree Surgeons are contractors and carry out such works themselves, I am a consultant and have no bias or interests other than commenting on what I was asked to look at. My goal is to see successful new tree establishment and to give opinion on whether this is achievable or how it can be made real.

2. Site Visit

- 2.1 I attended site to inspect the trees on 11 August 2022.
- 2.2 The site was parched and the weather was hot and dry with temperatures in the high 20s or even 30 degrees Celsius. This is consistent with much of East Anglia during a period of significant heat and drought since early Summer 2022.
- 2.3 My observations were mainly visual. Some plants were handled and tubes or supporting stakes examined. Photographs were taken as necessary.
- 2.4 The inspections were made following a meandering path through the entire site away from Lynnsport and back again.

3. Observations

- 3.1 The trees appear to have been notch-planted and inserted into the soil at or around the nursery mark and then supported and guarded with a protective tube that is secured by a treated wooded stake. This is in line with industry best practice.
- 3.2 The soil was found to be hard and baked across all of the site. Many tubes were lying on the ground either as a result of having had the stakes removed or broken. In some cases they were leaning despite having a stake attached to the protective tubes.
- 3.3 The vast majority of plants were devoid of green leaves. Many trees (up to 50%) were found to be wholly dead, brittle sticks with little chance of recovery. Many of the dead trees could be pulled from the ground with ease.
- 3.4 The notch holes in several instances were found to have opened in the dry weather releasing the young tree and exposing the roots to the air.
- 3.5 No mulch or mulch mats were noted. No signs of herbicidal weed suppressant were noted. Competition from weeds and grass was obvious, either around the tree shelters or inside.
- 3.6 Signs of life were present in around 50% of the trees and these signs included leaves (brown and dying, small or otherwise), being rooted securely in the ground, flexibility in the stem and tip and green cambium visible when lightly scratched from the surface.

3.7 The most likely species found to be flexible and presumed still viable were Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Lime.



Fig 1: Example of unrestricted herbaceous competition around a tube,



Fig 2: Example of unrestricted herbaceous competition in a tube.



Fig 3: Notch planting holes opening up in the heat.



Fig 4: A young dead plant that was easily extracted from the soil with little resistance.



Fig 5: Brown, twiggy, leafless plant with a small degree of flexibility.



Fig 6: Brittle apex of a wholly dead plant.



Fig 7: Plant with little or no fibrous roots.



Fig 8: Unsupported tree shelter.

4. Opinion on Observations

- 4.1 Based on a walk-over of the whole newly-planted area I would estimate that 50% of the plants have failed.
- 4.2 Of the total tube shelters between 10% and 20% are lying on the ground, with the plants therein presumed dead.
- 4.3 Many plants could be pulled from the soil with ease. This is almost certainly due to the notch planting opening up in the dry weather.
- 4.4 The soil is very dry therefore it is unlikely to have received sufficient water to sustain the plants in good health.
- 4.5 A lack of mulch and the presence of competing herbaceous plants will have increased the likelihood of failure.
- 4.6 Vandalism is likely to have been a contributing factor to the failures, mainly those that are lying in flattened shelters. Grass cutting activity may also have played a part in the breakages.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 It has been exceptionally hot and dry in the summer of 2022.
- 5.2 Around 50% of the whip planting may not be viable.
- 5.3 The young trees appear to have been planted correctly however the soil around the notches may not have been adequately heeled down.
- 5.4 A lack of water and mulch/weed suppressant will challenge any new planting and this appears to have been missing from the maintenance of the trees.
- 5.5 Regular checking of new planting should be carried out in order to assess the progression of weeds and grasses, check for failures, adjust stakes and ties and keep a note of vandalism. It is not known if that has been carried out. If it has, there should be a record of the condition of the planting.
- 5.6 Despite a lack of leaves or dead foliage, some of the whips displayed stem flexibility and root sureness which suggests that they may still be viable.
- 5.7 Watering and mulching of the plants that appear viable should take place immediately.

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