

North Merseyside BAP

Urban Trees

1 Current status

1.1 National

- 1.1.1 Urban trees can be defined as those that occur as individuals or small groups rather than in woodlands. Sites include roadsides and verges, parks, cemeteries and private gardens.
- 1.1.2 No national information is available on numbers, species or distribution. Trees in Towns' 1994 gives representation data status, species and quality.
- 1.1.3 Trees have important non-wildlife functions in the urban context, principally in softening and 'greening' landscapes, screening undesirable views, reducing noise pollution and mitigating the effects of aerial pollution, especially from vehicle emissions. They contribute hugely to people's perceptions about their quality of life.
- 1.1.4 Their contribution to biodiversity is to a large extent dependent upon their context. Suburban areas with large numbers of scattered trees in proximity to shrubs and bushes, large gardens or parkland are especially valuable, particularly to mobile animals. Such areas provide important nest and feeding sites for birds and feeding and roost sites for bats. Native species are of greatest importance since they usually support a larger diversity of invertebrates.
- 1.1.5 Ancient trees are often of great cultural and historical significance and can not be replaced.

1.2 Local

- 1.2.1 None of the local authorities has a complete database of its urban tree stock. However, Liverpool has an estimated 12,300 park and street trees and 2550 privately-owned trees are covered by Tree Preservation Orders.
- 1.2.2 The variety of species is very large and includes a number of unusual exotics. Most urban trees are probably not locally native species.

1.2.3 Most major planting schemes were carried out in the latter part of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. In many areas the stock is therefore evenly aged and declining in condition.

1.2.4 In areas of Southport, Formby and Blundellsands urban trees, particularly in gardens, provide important habitat for Red Squirrels.

1.3 Legal

1.3.1 Trees of high amenity value are protected through the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Tree Preservation Order legislation and by Conservation Area orders.

1.3.2 Large-scale removals of the urban tree resource would require a felling licence under the terms of the Forestry Act 1976.

1.3.3 All trees that contain bat roosts and Red Squirrel dreys are protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act. Trees with nesting birds may not be felled or managed during the breeding season.

2 Current factors causing loss or decline:

2.1 National

2.1.1 Dutch Elm Disease caused wholesale losses and other diseases, such as Horse Chestnut Scale, may be poised to add to these losses.

2.1.2 Urban trees are subject to similar stresses as other trees, such as drought and high winds but the urban environment may exacerbate these. Street trees, in particular, may be particularly vulnerable to airborne pollution, drought, excavation works, development and inappropriate treeworks.

2.1.3 Climate change may disproportionately affect those urban trees that are already growing in stressed circumstances.

2.1.4 Issues of public safety often lead to over-manicuring and the removal of moribund and dead specimens.

2.1.5 Breaches of Tree Preservation Orders may go unnoticed and fines and replanting may not address the losses.

2.2 Local

2.2.1 All national factors are relevant.

2.2.2 Establishment of new plantings is often problematic due to vandalism and lack of aftercare. Very large proportions of some recent plantings have succumbed to the combined effects of inadequate fertilisation or water provision, strimming operations and deliberate damage.

2.2.3 A too-zealous concern with public safety or tidiness may lead to unnecessary removal of valuable deadwood habitats in areas of public parks or cemeteries.

3 Current action:

3.1 National

3.1.1 Guidelines (BS5837 “Trees in Relation to Construction” and NJUG10) have been developed that can be imposed as planning conditions to afford trees subject to development a degree of protection.

3.1.2 Many groups such as the Tree Council have enabled the promotion of trees; public appreciation of trees is high.

3.2 Local

3.2.1 The Mersey Forest (MF) has established an Urban Trees Action Group, which has drafted an action plan. The Plan is not principally for biodiversity although it recognises the wildlife contribution made by urban trees.

3.2.2 The ‘Trees of Time and Place Project’ has been established locally by MF.

3.2.3 MF is currently investigating a method of ‘valuation’ for urban trees; its target is to enable more funding for better urban tree management.
MF is investigating tree management systems; again, these will lead to better urban tree management.

3.2.4 MF is proposing that local authorities should develop policies to minimise disturbance to urban trees, promote a ‘tree-friendly’ contractor scheme and guidance in relation to development sites. An SPE is being developed in Sefton for Trees and Woodland.

3.2.5 Local authorities require surveys for all developments that involve trees that may contain bat roosts or Red Squirrel dreys.

3.2.6 St Helens MBC generally specifies native species for replanting.

3.2.7 Liverpool City Council is seeking funding to replenish and manage trees in some of its Victorian parks.

4 Key species

- Breeding birds, bats, Red Squirrels, invertebrates and lichens.
- Ancient trees and rare tree species or arboreta collections.

5 Objectives and targets

5.1 Gather information on all significant trees and groups of trees by 2005.

5.2 Increase the weight given to biodiversity in urban tree management by incorporating for example into Urban Tree Strategies.

5.3 Maintain the current urban tree population and increase it by X% by 2005 and y% by 2015.

5.4 Encourage the planting of native tree species of local provenance, where possible and appropriate. X% of urban tree stock establishment to be native stock by 20??

5.5 Encourage better management of the urban tree resource, in accordance with good arboreta ? practice and published guidelines.

6 Proposed action

6.1 Policy

6.1.1 Ensure that the Mersey Forest Urban Tree Action Plan reflects the urban tree BAP. (High Priority) MF/EAS/LA

6.2 Site safeguard

6.2.1 Ensure that all significant trees or groups of trees are afforded protection. (High Priority) LA

6.2.2 Involve ecological advice in the planning process. (Medium Priority) LA

6.2.3 SPEs to be operative as guidelines in all LA areas by 2005.

6.3 Tree management

6.3.1 Ensure that significant urban tree planting or establishment adjacent to designated habitats is of appropriate species. (High priority) LA/LWT/MF

- 6.3.2 All veteran trees to have protection and individual management/(retention plans by 2002. (High priority) LA/MF/land owners
- 6.3.3 All other significant areas of trees to have protection and management plans by 2005. LA/MF/landowners. (Medium Priority) LA/MF/landowners
- 6.3.4 Facilitate appropriate management of the private urban tree stock by entering into long-term (stewardship type) grant funding with private owners. (Medium priority) LA/MF
- 6.3.5 Consider establishing globally rare trees in species collections, ensuring genetic segregation from related wild stock. (Medium priority) LA

6.4 Advice

- 6.4.1 Produce and distribute guidelines on best practice for management and planting of urban trees. (High Priority) MF/LA

6.5 Research and monitoring

- 6.5.1 Collect and collate data on significant trees and groups of trees. Establish a database, possibly linked to the tree management systems as promoted by the MF, and/or use the existing recorder as applicable. By 2002 for public trees and 2005 for private trees. (High priority) LA/MF/EAS

6.6 Communications and publicity

- 6.6.1 Involve the community, especially in issues of tree management and preservation and retention of deadwood. One-off leaflet and minimum of 12 interpretative events. (Medium priority) LA/MF

7 Resource implications

7.1 North Merseyside BAP

- 7.1.1 Initially monitoring significant trees and groups of trees will be facilitated by local authorities, via municipal tree stock management and control of private trees through the TPO legislation. However after initial identification, specialist identification of associated fauna and epiphytes will be required: this will require resource allocation.
- 7.1.2 Management of important private trees that are not subject to legal protection may involve the allocation of resources.

8 Links with other action plans

- 8.1 **UK BAP** - Red Squirrel SAP, Pipistrelle SAP, Lowland Wood Pasture HAP
- 8.2 **North Merseyside BAP** - Bats SAP, Urban Birds SAP, Red Squirrel SAP, Song Thrush SAP, Invertebrate SAPs and Woodland HAPs.

8.3 Conflicts

- 8.3.1 Urban Grassland HAP. Red Squirrel SAP refuge areas and buffer zones.

9 Contacts

Mersey Forest
Relevant local authority tree officers.
EAS