

Chelmsford City Council - Mass tree planting and woodland creation programme

Context

1. Urban trees and woodland are generally recognised as providing a diverse range of environmental and quality of life benefits and are seen as increasingly important in helping to alleviate the impacts of the current climate emergency. The proven benefits of trees in urban areas include:
 - Protecting conserving and enhancing the natural environment and increasing biodiversity through the introduction of native and pollinator rich plant species that provide habitats and food for wildlife
 - Improving the water holding capacity of an area, slowing water-flows, providing natural flood management, helping to mitigate flood risk
 - Providing shade and improving heat absorption during periods of hot weather
 - Reducing air pollution and improving air quality
 - Helping to manage and reduce carbon emissions
 - Providing opportunities for people to enjoy healthy and active lives, providing mental, physical health and wellbeing benefits
 - Improving environmental quality and the quality of life generally
2. A priority highlighted in 'Our Chelmsford Our Plan' is to *'undertake a greening programme to significantly increase the amount of woodland and the proportion of tree cover in Chelmsford'*. The key implementation action which is included in the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan agreed in 2020 is to:

'Put in place a sustained medium-term mass tree planting and woodland creation programme resulting in the planting of at least 148,000 additional trees and to create 71 hectares of woodland to achieve tree cover of at least 20% in the Chelmsford area by 2030'
3. Subsequent to this, the target for tree planting has been increased to 192,000 trees to reflect the anticipated population in 2030, representing one tree planted for every resident in the City Council area.
4. An assessment undertaken by Forest Research UK in 2018 suggested that the tree canopy cover in Chelmsford was 13.8%, compared to a UK average of 16%, whereas Forest Research conclude that there is evidence that a minimum of 20% tree canopy cover is needed to secure all the benefits that trees can provide in urban areas.
5. The Making Places Supplementary Planning Document [adopted in January 2021] extends the requirement for tree planting to new developments, requiring that at least three new trees are planted for every new home built. Based on the most recent

housing trajectory [April 2024] indicating that an additional 20,218 homes will be built by 2041, this would equate to an additional 60,654 trees to be planted. It is likely that the majority of these will be provided by house builders / developers on green spaces associated with the development.

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6. The tree planting and woodland creation programme has been underway since 2019/20 planting season. The table below shows progress to date and planned progress for 2024/25, including the tree giveaway programme which started in 2023/24. By the end of the 2024/25 planting season, 85,772 new trees will have been planted, equivalent to 45% of the overall target [of 192,000].

7.

Year	Whips	Standards	Total
2018/19	1,920	182	2,102
2019/20	14,170	188	14,358
2020/21	15,058	475	15,533
2021/22	16,872	691	17,563
2022/23	17,025	302	17,327
2023/24	790	159	
Tree Giveaway 23/24	1000		
Total 23/24	1790	159	1949
2024/25	15,446	94	
Tree Giveaway 24/25	1400		
Total 24/25	16,846	94	16,940
Greening Chelmsford Total	83,681	2,091	85,772

8. In order to achieve the targets and outcomes of the mass tree planting and woodland creation programme for Chelmsford, a combination of approaches will need to be adopted, involving local communities, businesses, public and private-sector landowners. It is essential that these efforts are co-ordinated and sustained to make the best use of available resources, land availability and to be able to deliver an affordable programme. The City Council will need to take a key role in this, leading by example and encouraging and facilitating others to act with concerted effort. A key initiative was to acquire more land suitable for further mass woodland planting with the recent acquisition of Back Lane, Gt Waltham.
9. The core elements of the mass tree planting and woodland creation programme are:
 - a. Tree planting on sites managed and maintained by the City Council, usually involving volunteer planting days/events.

- b. 'Gapping-up' existing woodland areas, tree belts, hedgerows and areas planted with whips with feathered trees.
 - c. Planting larger 'standard' or 'specimen' trees in parks, on communal green spaces and on highway verges. Some of this planting will need to be undertaken by, or on behalf of, housing associations or the Highway Authority as they are the predominant landowners in some of these areas.
 - d. Tree planting on other publicly owned land for example parish council sites, schools, housing associations including CHP [an example of this is the planned tree planting on CHP land in Westlands in 2024/25 planting season].
 - e. A campaign to encourage householders to plant trees in their gardens; the tree giveaway programme, successfully launched in autumn 2023.
 - f. The City Council acquiring additional land specifically for that purpose.
10. The Forestry Commission, currently through the Urban Tree Challenge Fund, and, on occasion Defra, offer funding support for tree planting and biodiversity improvements. The City Council may be eligible to apply for such grant funding at times.
11. In addition to the Council's own mass tree planting and woodland creation programme a number of other organisations such as the Woodland Trust and the Essex Forestry Partnership are actively promoting native tree and hedgerow planting, predominantly on farmland. This will help increase the tree canopy coverage in Chelmsford, but such schemes are outside the City Council's mass tree planting and woodland creation targets.
12. All planting areas and standard tree planting are subject to ongoing after-care and maintenance, including gapping up where required and regular on-site watering of standard trees. This is undertaken by parks and grounds staff, and by numerous volunteers as part of ongoing annual maintenance programmes.

13. Outline planting programme for 2024/25

The 2024/25 mass tree planting and woodland creation programme is due to commence in November 2024 and is planned to include:

- planting in total 16,913 trees. This is made up of 16,846 whips planted across Beaulieu Train Station and Back Lane. This is also made up of 100 standard trees across the city council area.
- At Beaulieu train station, plant 6,460 native whips and 750 Oak and Field Maple feathered whips. This will all be planted and after care provided by parks members of staff.

- At Back Lane, plant 8,136 native whips mainly made up of Field Maple, Hawthorn, Hornbeam and Hazel this first stage of planting is to strengthen the eastern boundary next to back lane. This will be all planted and after care provided by volunteers and corporate groups wanting to volunteer with us.
- Within the 100 standard trees plant this year is the creation of a new community orchard In Saltcoats Park in South Woodham Ferrers. This will be made up of 4 different apple tree species totalling 20 trees (5 of each) these are Malus discovery, Malus elstar, Malus Bramley's seeding, Malus jonagold. This will all be planted and after care provided by volunteers.
- Tree giveaway in autumn 2024 of 1400 native trees [cell grown whips]; Saturday 23rd November at Bell Meadow, Thursday 28th November at Compass Gardens, and Friday 29th November at Melbourne Park to coincide with National Tree Week.

14. Appendix 1 - Woodland Planting Native Species List – UK Grown and Sourced

- Field Maple (*Acer campestre*)
- Common Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*)
- Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*)
- Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*)
- Hazelnut (*Corylus avellane*)
- Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
- Wild Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*)
- Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*)
- Cherry Plum (*Prunus cerasifera*)
- Blackthorn or Sloe (*Prunus spinosa*)
- English Oak (*Quercus robur*)
- Goat Willow or Pussy Willow (*Salix caprea*)
- Guelder Rose (*Viburnum opulus*)
- Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*)
- Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*)
- English Yew (*Taxus baccata*)
- Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)
- Wild Service Tree (*Sorbus torminalis*)

2nd October 2024