

Plymouth Tree Partnership

Annual Report 2015 – 16



What we have known in our hearts for so long – that amenity trees are good for a city’s prosperity and the health of its people – is now widely understood, largely as a result of academic studies from around the world.

Plymouth has seen some notable initiatives to restore its tree cover but more is needed to reverse the gradual decline that has taken place over several decades. The challenge is becoming even greater as many of the large trees from the early 20th Century and flowering trees planted with the post-War re-building are coming to the ends of their lives. It will require a concerted, sustained approach with public, private and voluntary sectors all playing their part.

Plymouth Tree Partnership offers volunteer time and charitable funding as part of the solution. Money is needed to buy trees and materials – and it can come from a wide range of sources – but the dedication of volunteer Tree Wardens to identify planting opportunities, engage with local groups and provide the aftercare needed to get new trees established is just as important, if not more so.

This annual report describes Plymouth Tree Partnership’s main activities and achievements over the past year; there have been plenty of both.

Main activities

Activities over the last year (1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016) have supported our mission to:

- Promote the use of trees as a key feature of streets, parks, schools and public places.
- Support groups and individuals so that they will plant and care for more trees.
- Help select the right tree in the right place.
- Work with others to deliver projects for a greener, healthier and more beautiful city.
- Contribute to initiatives that celebrate the city’s heritage and culture.
- Ensure there are Tree Wardens ready to take our work onto the next generation.

Tree and hedge planting

The process of identifying and agreeing where to plant trees starts at least six months beforehand and Gloria Dixon and Andrew Young have been Plymouth Tree Partnership’s main contacts for this. They have met with resident and community groups and schools; sometimes in response to requests and sometimes to offer advice and assistance. All potential planting sites have been visited at least once and planting proposals have been developed progressively, taking local requirements and constraints into account.



Fundraising has been a significant challenge after the Big Tree Plant programme finished in March 2015 and considerable effort has been spent attracting donations and persuading Councillors to allocate some of their discretionary Community Fund allowance towards tree planting.

Once schemes have a realistic prospect of being delivered, landowners have been approached for consent and plans made for planting. Plymouth City Council has assisted in most cases by ordering the nursery stock and either providing labour or arranging for contractors to do the planting work.

Aftercare

Aftercare covers all the activities needed to get new trees established and growing well in the public realm. They include watering in summer, adjustments and removal of ties and stakes and formative pruning.



Tree warden volunteers have worked on their own or in twos and threes, as available, to deliver this aftercare. Tree Care sessions were also organised during November in Freedom Park, Central Park, Patna Park, Tothill Park

and Crownhill carpark so that newcomers could get to see the tasks involved and have a go too.

Woodland management

Whilst most Tree Warden effort has gone into establishing urban trees, some volunteers have worked on establishing new woodlands at Staddiscombe playing fields, Woodland Wood and Ernesettle Creek and in Central Park. It involves the removal of tree shelters and selective thinning.

The Friends of Ham Woods and Radford Woods have Tree Wardens in their membership who keep an eye on the health of those woods, sometimes removing alien species or undesirable plants.

Family Tree Scheme

Plymouth Tree Partnership's annual planting day at the Family Tree Field in Central Park coincided with the start of the UK's 40th National Tree Week on 28th November 2015. We were joined by volunteers from Plymouth University's Biological Society and together planted one new tree, replaced four failing trees and moved two others to more suitable places.



Walks and talks

The University of Plymouth has continued to support our winter meeting programme by providing free use of a lecture room as a valuable contribution to community learning. We have benefitted from listening to knowledgeable speakers across a range of tree-related subjects and details are at annex A.

May's walk around Radford Park led by its Friends Group vividly demonstrated how beautiful landscapes can come from the commitment of a few volunteers working steadily over time.

After the Annual General Meeting in June, we got close to the recently planted trees in Freedom Park and discussed what aftercare was needed to get them established and growing well.

Meet the public events

We held a stall at the annual All Ways Apples festival on 28th October 2015 and showed children how to plant apple pips in fibre pots with some trees grown from previous years on display.



The stall had a range of information for visitors to browse and they were encouraged to ask questions and to share their tree stories.

Tree Warden forum

Plymouth Tree Partnership hosted the Tree Council's South West Region Tree Warden forum on 14th November 2015. Attended by over 50 Tree Wardens from across the region, there were talks about the role of volunteers in shaping new landscapes and a visit to the Family Tree Field in Central Park.

Planning applications

Plymouth Tree Partnership objected to the planning application for a bus interchange in front of Derriford Hospital where the loss of trees was described by the applicant, Plymouth City Council, as “severe”. With the Hospital’s Environment Group, we met the scheme’s designers and proposed an alternative design which would have retained most of the large trees but were told that late changes could result in funding being withdrawn. The experience has again emphasised to us the importance of working for early and effective stakeholder engagement.



Heritage matters

Plymouth Tree Partnership remains a member of Plymouth’s Heritage Consortium where the main topic has been progress towards the new History Centre. During the History Festival in May, we led three guided walks around the city centre to look at Plymouth’s heritage through the lives of its trees. One of Plymouth Tree Partnership’s members has started to research an American-themed tree trail as a contribution to the Mayflower 400 celebrations in 2020.

Tree Pests and Diseases

With UK tree species facing growing threats from new pests and diseases like Ash Dieback, Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner and Phytophthora, relevant information has been forwarded to tree partnership members and volunteers. They have an acknowledged role in educating others, reporting any outbreaks and helping to contain their spread.

Plan for Trees

Urban tree management was one of the topics at Plymouth City Council’s Natural Infrastructure Conference on 21st January and several informal discussions have also taken place. Plymouth Tree Partnership trustees have looked at practices in other cities and, with some ‘pro bono’ consultancy advice, have proposals for Plymouth’s ‘Plan for Trees’ which are due to be shared at a joint Tree Summit presently.

Information technology will be one of the enablers for the Plan for Trees and we are working with Plymouth University to develop an interactive Tree Map. The initial stages are being funded by a £2,000 award for Open Data ideas.

Main achievements

Amenity tree planting

Remarkably, there has been no dedicated public funding provision for amenity tree planting so it relies heavily on funds that Plymouth Tree Partnership can secure from grant programmes and from donations, as well as the contributions which Councillors choose to make from their Community Fund allocations. However, the extent and timing of these funds is uncertain which makes project planning unnecessarily difficult.

This year, Plymouth Tree Partnership has received donations amounting to £1,790 for tree planting; this does not include the Family Tree Scheme which is covered below. In addition, by working closely with Friends Groups, Plymouth Tree Partnership has helped three of them secure Big Greenspace Challenge grants worth £5,132 for tree planting and related work in their parks.

Approaches to Councillors have caused them to allocate a total of £2,100 for tree projects in Budshead, Devonport and Peverell wards. This money is not paid to Plymouth Tree Partnership but transferred to Plymouth City Council’s Street Cleansing and Grounds section.

All these efforts have enabled a total of 60 new amenity trees to be planted; details are at annex B.

Elm avenue restoration

We received a further grant from the Big Greenspace Challenge programme of £3,260 for restoring the elm avenue in Central Park. This means that the cost of raising new nursery stock from cuttings is fully covered although more funding will be required to plant the trees when ready in a few years' time.

Following unsuccessful attempts to propagate from root and softwood cuttings in 2014, Kew Gardens sent an arborist on 3rd February 2016 to collect hardwood cuttings for grafting. Initial reports indicate that the grafts have taken and there is a good prospect of producing sufficient stock plants. Once they are established, it should be relatively straightforward to take further cuttings in the nursery at Kew.

Family Tree Field

There was one new donation during the year and a *Cydonia oblonga* 'Serbian Gold' was planted at the annual planting day.

The aim has always been to create a complete landscape as opposed to merely a collection of individual trees. Thanks to an approach by a Plymouth Tree Partnership volunteer, the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences at Plymouth University carried out an aerial survey on 22nd October 2015. The resulting photograph provides a valuable starting point for a landscape design and there has been a further offer of help with this.



Individual volunteers have attended to tree care tasks throughout the year but more resource is needed to implement the projected improvements. An application to the Postcode Local Trust to fund 3 corporate volunteering days in 2016-17 was successful and, as result, Plymouth City Council has committed to converting a nearby empty building into a tool store.

Hedge projects



As The Tree Council's chosen delivery partner for its "Wild Hedges for Urban Edges" project, we worked with Chaddlewood and Beechwood Schools to agree where fruiting hedges would enhance their school grounds and pupils' understanding of food growing. The planting days on 25th February and 3rd March were led by the Tree Council's project manager with good support from teachers and parents and with very large numbers of pupils taking part.

Membership

Since becoming a registered charity on 7th May 2015, Plymouth Tree Partnership has grown to over 50 individual and corporate members. Without their committed support, none of the activities in this report could have happened. Ten members are also volunteer Tree Wardens.

Trustees are elected by the membership and the following have served in the current year:

Stephanie Ackland	Treasurer
David Curry	Volunteering
Gloria Dixon	Events and tree projects
Alan Harvey	Family Tree Scheme

Jackie Perry	Secretary
Soraya Phillips	Charity development
John Stone	Planning and site research
Andrew Young	Chairman & tree projects

Tina Wilson kindly took on the role of membership secretary in January 2016.

Volunteers

Plymouth is fortunate to have 36 volunteer Tree Wardens currently who individually and together make a vital contribution to the city's trees.

Experience has highlighted several places where Plymouth Tree Partnership could support its Tree Warden volunteers more effectively and steps are being taken to make the necessary changes.

Website

After nearly fifteen years of maintaining the tree partnership's website Rob Miles has handed over his voluntary role as web admin. It is a major achievement to keep a website running without any disruption and we are hugely grateful to Rob with his considerable IT experience for managing it so successfully. We welcome Richard Cosgrave of Beside the Box (an IT Support business) who is lending his firm's professional services as part of his commitment to assisting selected local charities with IT support.

Thank you

A big thank you to all of our individual and corporate members who together have championed the cause of trees in Plymouth and made Plymouth Tree Partnership's first year as a registered charity a success.

Annex A – Speakers at meetings

The meetings have been attended by 46 different people with an average audience size of 18.

9 th September 2015	Suzy Kraike, Horticulture Manager at Eco Land Management, explained the reasons for botanical names and how plants are classified.
14 th October 2015	Jon Stokes, Projects Director at The Tree Council, described how the "Wild Hedges for Urban Hedges" project would plant and care for fruiting hedges in four towns and cities, including Plymouth.

And another big thank you to everyone who has donated money, whether for a specific project or for wider activities in support of Plymouth's trees.

None of the achievements would have been possible without the unstinting work of volunteers who have applied their considerable skills and talents in all kinds of ways.

We are also grateful to:

- Plymouth University for its generous provision of classroom space for meetings.
- Plymouth City Council officers who have assisted with funding applications and advice generally.
- Staff at The Tree Council who have met every request with unfailing enthusiasm.

What's next

With other city stakeholders, in the coming year to 31st March 2017, we aim to:

- Continue to develop the Family Tree Field with the benefit of corporate volunteering days.
- Update guidelines for individual volunteering.
- Agree a Plan for Trees and start implementation work, including an interactive tree map.
- Plant at least 10 different schemes with standard trees.
- Plant 3 fruiting hedges as part of the "Wild Hedges for Urban Edges" project.

11 th November 2015	Jenny Wytcherley from Plymouth City Council's Natural Infrastructure Team facilitated a workshop to identify actions to consolidate and deliver a woodland management plan for Central Park.
9 th December 2015	Andrew Young, Plymouth Tree Partnership's Chairman, gave a slide show of tree projects since 2005 and highlighted the successes and failures.
13 th January 2016	Vix Hill-Ryder and her team from the Family Foraging Kitchen showed us how to use hedgerow plants and trees for food.
10 th February 2016	Ellen Carvey, Retail Manager at Barcham Trees, considered the challenges involved in selecting the right tree for the right place.
9 th March 2016	Dr Jan Knight spoke about the medicinal value of trees and plants in the context of the work of the Park Pharmacy Trust.

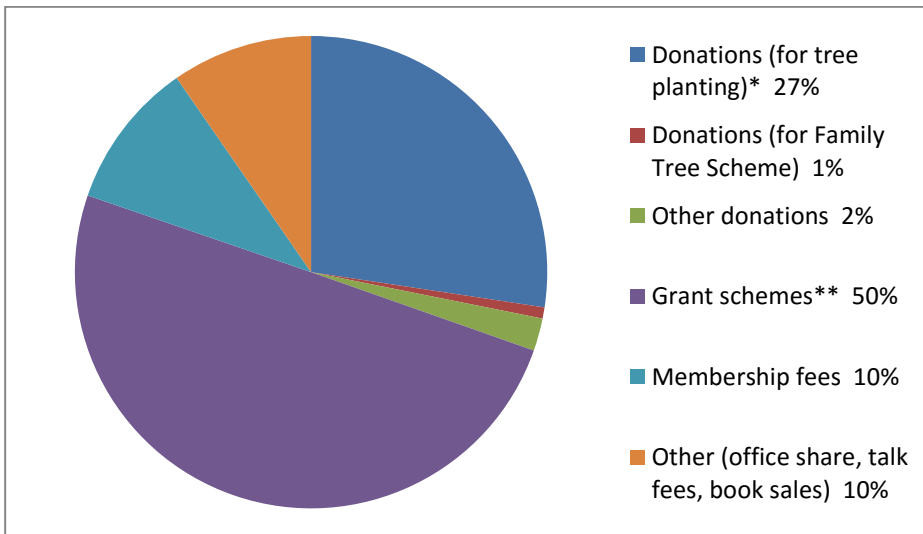
Annex B – Tree plantings

Burleigh Park Road	4 pavement tree pits reinstated and planted with <i>Acer campestre</i> 'Elegant'.
George 'Park and Ride'	2 dead trees from previous plantings removed and replaced with <i>Pinus sylvestris</i> .
Crownhill carpark west	1 failed tree from previous planting removed and replaced with <i>Acer platanoides</i> 'Cleveland'.
Aylesbury Crescent	3 <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> 'Rossica Major' planted in a group on grassy area. Plans continue to replace the old street trees which are in decline.
Mount Wise play park	5 broken trees from previous plantings removed and replaced with <i>Platanus x hispanica</i> .
Bennett Street	1 broken tree from previous planting removed and replaced with <i>Corylus colurna</i> .
Patna Park	1 failed tree from previous planting removed and replaced with <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> 'Rossica Major'. 4 tree pits prepared and planted with <i>Sorbus aria</i> 'Lutescens'.
Victoria Park	2 gaps in a tree avenue planted with <i>Crataegus x lavallei</i> . 1 new specimen tree planted; <i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i> 'Lane Roberts'.
St Budeaux Park	1 broken tree from previous planting removed and planted with <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> .
Tothill Park	6 crab apple trees of incorrect variety removed and planted with <i>Malus</i> 'Rudolph'.
Cannon Street	Italian alder removed from planter which it had outgrown and damaged. Work remains outstanding to repair the planter and plant with <i>Cordyline australis</i> .
Central Park	3 <i>Betula pendula</i> and 3 <i>Betula pubescens</i> planted in a group on the golf course. 2 <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> and 1 <i>Acer Buengerianum</i> planted along the valley path. 18 incorrectly supplied trees removed and replaced with correct stock: 5 <i>Quercus robur</i> , 4 <i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i> , 3 <i>Carpinus betulus</i> and 6 <i>Aesculus x carnea</i> 'Briotii'.
Beechwood School	1 <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> planted.
Ford Park Cemetery	1 failed tree from previous planting removed and replaced with <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> .

Annex C – Income and expenditure summary

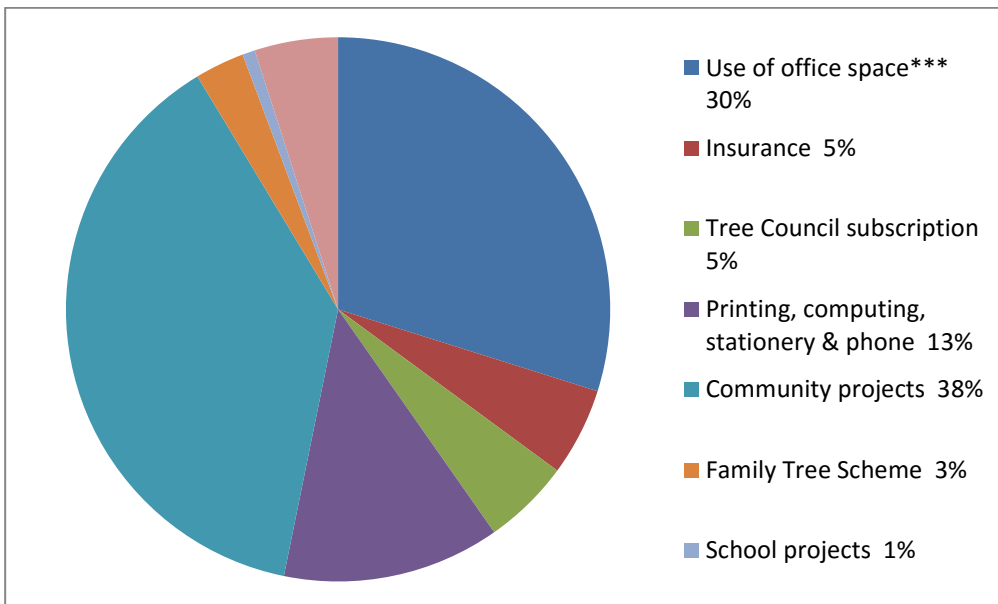
Income

Plymouth Tree Partnership's income for the year 2015-16 was £6,536.



Expenditure

Total expenditure for 2015-16 was £4,822.



* Includes £448 for future work in Burleigh Park Road.

** The Big Greenspace Challenge programme made a grant of £3,260 towards restoring the elm avenue in Central Park.

*** Prior to 2014, this expense was covered by a support grant from Plymouth City Council. In 2014-15, it was covered by management fees for projects. In 2015-16, some office costs were shared with Plymouth Environmental Action while alternative provision is being investigated.