

Plymouth Tree Partnership

Annual Report 2016-17



The emerging Local Plan for Plymouth and South West Devon has been a welcome backdrop for the year with its new policies for trees as part of place shaping in the built environment and conservation of the natural environment.

The Tree Canopy Cover Assessment undertaken for the plan showed wide disparities across the city and it pointed to a strong correlation between canopy cover and health outcomes. Life expectancy is longer and hospital admissions are fewer in areas with good canopy cover. It is very clear that well-chosen, well-grown trees are extremely important for quality of life.

Making places more liveable requires a sustained, co-ordinated approach across all sectors and community groups like Plymouth Tree Partnership have an important role to play. We can help to attract funding to buy trees and materials but everything depends on volunteer Tree Wardens going out to identify planting opportunities, engage with local people and, critically, to provide the aftercare needed to get new trees established.

We hope you enjoy reading about Plymouth Tree Partnership's activities and achievements over the year from April 2016 to March 2017.



Main activities

Tree planting

As Plymouth Tree Partnership becomes better known, more resident and community groups are asking for our help to replace trees that have died or to fill other gaps in the landscape. Fundraising remains a big challenge but several places, like Torr Lane this year, have shown that people are prepared to contribute to improvement projects close to them, especially when supported by Ward Councillors allocating some of their some of their discretionary Community Fund allowance.

Another challenge has been getting the necessary approvals and agreements, especially for street tree schemes. A great deal of time has been spent identifying who needs to be consulted, presenting proposals and then chasing replies. Several planting schemes have been delayed in the absence of an accepted process and this is becoming critical to future work.

Aftercare

Newly planted trees require regular attention over several years to get them established and growing well. The tasks are quite simple, such as watering in summer and adjusting ties and stakes, and very suitable as a voluntary commitment.

Most new plantings have dedicated volunteer Tree Wardens but additional support is sometimes required. This year a mobile team was formed to provide that and to care for un-adopted trees.

Open-invitation Tree Care sessions were held during November and December in Tothill Park, the George Park and Ride carpark, Patna Park and around the Life Centre. We were pleased that Plymouth Environmental Action could join us in Tothill Park and members of the Patna Green Group in Patna Park.

Family Tree Scheme

Run by Plymouth Tree Partnership, the Family Tree Scheme occupies a four-acre field in Central Park.

Plymouth Tree Partnership

Annual Report 2016-17



Over a hundred trees have been planted so far and space considerations mean that smaller trees, shrubs and wildflowers are wanted now. Six trees and shrubs were planted this year.

From January 2017, the minimum donation for a tree was increased to £100 in response to rising costs, having been £50 for many years. Donations are still recorded in the dedications book.

With the emphasis changing from planting large trees to enhancing the site as a whole, we continue to look for someone who can help with designing the next stage of the Family Tree Scheme's development.

Walks and talks

A well-attended guided walk in May looked at trees in the city centre and discussed what they need to grow in hard surfaces.

After the Annual General Meeting in June, we were pleasantly shown around Devonport Park by James Brown and Fairfax Luxmoore, both Friends of Devonport Park, and were impressed by the Friends Group's work in keeping it looking good.



Plymouth Tree Partnership has held a programme of winter talks in each year since 2008 and this year was no exception. We were privileged to listen to knowledgeable speakers across a range of tree-related subjects (see summary at Annex A) and to enjoy free use of a lecture room provided by the University of Plymouth as a community learning resource.

Meet the public events

Preparations for a Family Tree Field open day at the Love Parks Festival on 3rd September 2016 had to be abandoned due to heavy rain and instead we mixed with other exhibitors in the marquee.

At the annual All Ways Apples festival on 26th October 2016 we showed children how to plant apple pips in fibre pots and presented a range of tree material for visitors to browse.

Tree Health awareness

David Curry and Andrew Young, trustees and volunteer Tree Wardens, attended DEFRA's ash-dieback conference on 19th April 2016 and could see how the disease is spreading towards Plymouth. Information about all tree diseases has been forwarded to tree partnership members and volunteers since they have an acknowledged role in educating others and reporting any outbreaks.

Tree Warden forum

Plymouth Tree Partnership and South Hams Tree Wardens were joint hosts for the Tree Council's South West Region Tree Warden forum on 14th November 2015. Held in the education centre at Saltram House, it was attended by over 50 Tree Wardens from across the region. The day included detailed appreciations of the parkland landscape largely characterised by older trees in decline.

Planning applications

Plymouth Tree Partnership objected to the planning application to install a large statue outside the Theatre Royal because it involved felling one of Royal Parade's historic lime trees. They were planted in 1948 in the first phase of reconstruction after the war and, seventy years later, they have grown into a significant feature with many environmental benefits. It seemed inconceivable that anyone could consider degrading such a valuable asset but that is exactly what happened when the Planning Committee approved the application on 9th February 2017.

Plymouth Tree Partnership

Annual Report 2016-17



Joint Local Plan

We expect the kind of situation experienced at the Theatre Royal and, indeed elsewhere, will become less common as new Local Plan policies take effect.

Preparations for the Local Plan included a Tree Summit on 26th July 2016 when Plymouth City Council invited interested parties to identify the main issues around urban trees. The event made it clear that Plymouth needed stronger policies for trees on new developments and a delivery plan for replacement planting.

Following the Tree Summit, Plymouth City Council convened a steering group to work on a Plan for Trees and Plymouth Tree Partnership is one of its six consultative members.

Main achievements

Tree planting

Plymouth Tree Partnership has been closely involved with planting schemes for 60 standard trees in 9 locations, sometimes taking the lead and sometimes providing information or other services, like fundraising or canvassing opinions. A list of this year's tree projects is at Annex B. Each is already making a big difference to the way places look and how people think about them.

Despite this achievement, more new trees are needed each year just to maintain the city's tree cover at existing levels. It is good to know, therefore, that others have been planting trees, including 24 standards in Efford Valley. There have also been plantings in part mitigation for trees lost to developments, including new orchards at Derriford Hospital and in Derriford Country Park.

Hedge planting

This was the second year of The Tree Council's "Wild Hedges for Urban Edges" project and we worked with the Active Neighbourhoods team at Ernesettle to join up fragments of ancient hedgerow and with the Swarthmore Allotments association to reinforce the boundary with Central

Park. Ernesettle's planting day was rainy but still well attended whereas Swarthmore Allotments was on a day full of warm sunshine and a good crowd of allotment holders – nearly 50 in total – joined in the work.

Volunteer management

A more formal approach to Plymouth Tree Partnership volunteering was introduced during the year in order to meet new insurance requirements. Volunteers now have to complete a volunteering agreement once they can show they are proficient and confident in their chosen roles.

Supporting documentation includes descriptions of Tree Warden roles, a revised risk assessment and an Activity Record for Tree Wardens to keep track of the times spent volunteering.

The new approach was phased in from July onwards but it is already giving a better idea of the amount of time that volunteers are contributing as a free resource to conserve and improve the city's trees. In 2016-17, we estimate that 30 volunteers with Plymouth Tree Partnership spent at least 600 hours on practical tasks. It makes a big difference.



Plymouth Tree Partnership

Annual Report 2016-17



Foundation level training

Discussions about a new vocational training course in arboriculture have taken place with Dominic Scanlon from Aspect Tree Consultancy and initial proposals were presented at March's partnership meeting. The aim of the course will be to provide foundation learning for staff and volunteers and, although unaccredited, it will be a step towards the nationally recognised NVQ Level 2 Theory Qualification. More details are expected soon.

Open Data award

Working with the School of Biology and the Institute of Digital Arts and Technology at Plymouth University, we secured a funding award to produce a demonstration, web-based tree map and a report describing how it could be used to share information between tree managers, volunteers and the wider public.

The tree map was demonstrated at the Tree Summit on 26th July 2016 and the report is expected shortly.

Mayflower 400 celebrations

Volunteer Tree Warden, Heather Barringall, has researched local trees where a connection with American places or people is suggested. As a result, we have been able to contribute ideas for celebrating the Mayflower 400 anniversary in 2020 with a themed tree trail and commemorative plantings.

Corporate volunteering

Plymouth Tree Partnership was one of twelve local groups selected by Marks and Spencer for its 'Spark Something Good' initiative. Staff from the Plymouth store joined us on 6th September 2016 to plant 2500 crocuses around the young Magnolia at the Barn Park entrance to Central Park and another 7 trees along Jubilee Row.

With funding from the Postcode Local Trust, we were able to run 3 corporate volunteering days in the Family Tree Field, each led by expert instructors from Eco Land Management (ELM).

The first day with Jurys Inn on 7th November 2016 planted 1000 bluebells and cleared grass and weeds from around young trees. The second day with staff from Unite Students on 23rd February 2017 tackled an overgrown boundary hedge. Both Jurys Inn and Unite Students enjoyed coming and want to hear about future opportunities.



The third volunteering day on 1st March 2017 had to be re-cast as an all-comers event when the corporate which had been booked pulled out. We managed to make a start on labelling trees and, with a kind offer by ELM, hope to complete the job when a further volunteering day can be arranged.

Tools

The Postcode Local Trust funding enabled us to buy a range of tools for work at the Family Tree Field and for tree care generally. As a contribution to the project, Plymouth City Council converted an old building close to the Family Tree Field for use as a tool store. This has been an enormous help by giving volunteers the ability to carry out tasks which could not have been considered previously.

Fundraising

Thanks to work by our treasurer, Stephanie Ackland, it has been possible to claim Gift Aid on donations for the first time this year. It is making a big difference in meeting running costs.

Give As You Live is also becoming a useful source of income as members and other tree lovers use www.giveasyoulive.com for on-line purchases.

Plymouth Tree Partnership

Annual Report 2016-17



Membership

Membership has remained steady over the year with 55 individual and 6 corporate members. Members are vital to Plymouth Tree Partnership's success. We are united in wanting Plymouth's tree-scape to be the best it can be and are prepared to commit to making it possible. Thank you for such valuable support – nothing in this report could have happened without it.

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

Stephanie Ackland	Treasurer
David Curry	Volunteer management
Gloria Dixon	Events and tree projects
Alan Harvey	Family Tree Scheme
Chris Hunt	Practical volunteering
Jackie Perry	Secretary
John Stone	Planning and site research
Tina Wilson	Membership Secretary
Andrew Young	Chairman & tree projects

Gloria Dixon and Andrew Young come to the end of their terms as trustees at the coming Annual General Meeting having been committee members since 2008. Gloria's achievements include the 'Plymouth Favourite Trees' book and managing the Diamond Jubilee plantings. She has also led tree plantings in 17 schools, and organised the programme of events since 2010. As well as chairing the Partnership, Andrew has co-ordinated many community projects – notably during the 'Big Tree Plant' from 2010 to 2015 – and can point to a good success rate. We are grateful to them both for their work as trustees and delighted they are going to continue as volunteers. However, it still means that someone new is needed to run the programme of events which is so important for sharing knowledge and experience.

Acknowledgements

Plymouth Tree Partnership works with others to conserve and improve trees in Plymouth and we

are grateful for the generous assistance provided by many different organisations.

We are especially grateful to:

- Plymouth University for making classroom space available for meetings.
- Mansbridge and Balment estate agents who provide us with discounted use of office space.
- Tree officers in Plymouth City Council and Plymouth Community Homes for their professional advice and encouragement.
- Staff at The Tree Council for making Tree Wardening relevant and satisfying.



What's next

With other city stakeholders, in the coming year to 31st March 2018, we aim to:

- Continue to support volunteers in caring for young trees.
- Plant at least 10 different schemes with standard trees.
- Make further improvements to the Family Tree Field.
- Agree a Plan for Trees and start on implementation with other stakeholders.

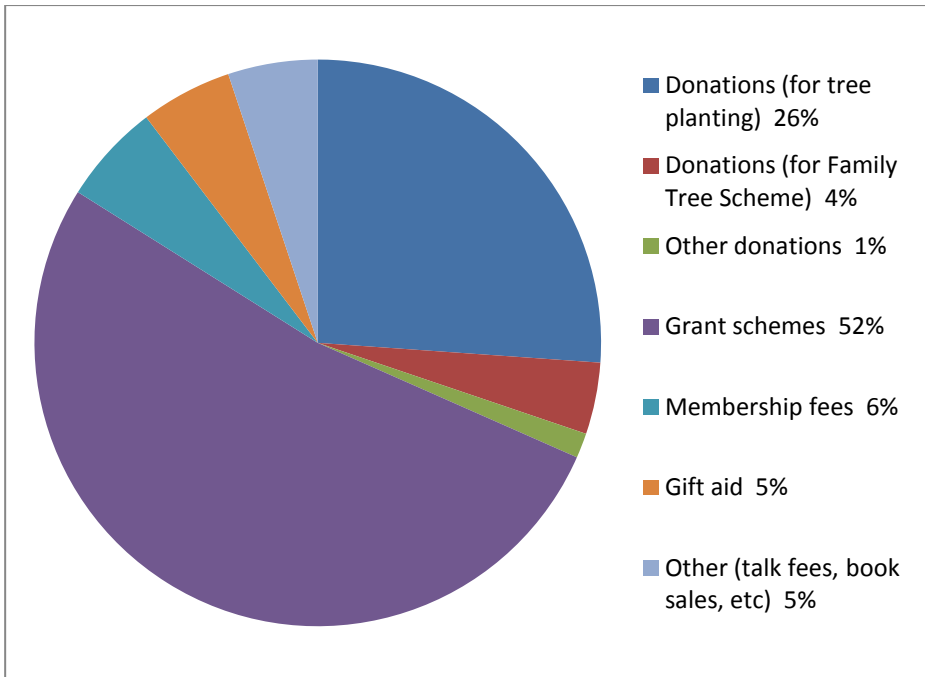
Plymouth Tree Partnership Annual Report 2016-17



Financial summary

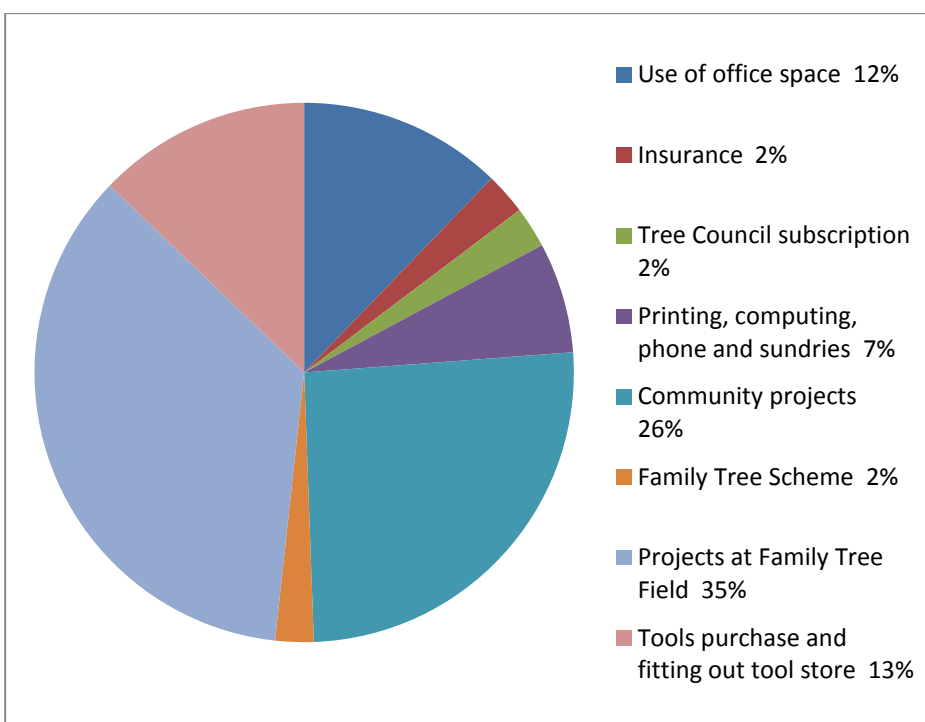
Income

Plymouth Tree Partnership's income for the year 2016-17 was £9,788.



Expenditure

Total expenditure for 2016-17 was £10,146.



Plymouth Tree Partnership

Annual Report 2016-17



Fixed assets

Plymouth Tree Partnership has fixed assets valued at £1,626.23. They comprise tools, support equipment, office furniture and office equipment.

Current assets

Plymouth Tree Partnership has current assets of £5,382.71 cash at bank and in hand, and £9,416.70 held on short term deposit which is reserved for projects in:

Burleigh Park Road (£438.82)

Central Park elm avenue restoration (£8,415.04)

Torr Lane (£562.84)

Liabilities

Plymouth Tree Partnership has no liabilities.

Reserves policy

Plymouth Tree Partnership aims to retain sufficient unrestricted funds to continue operating for a minimum period of twelve months.

Annex A – Speakers at meetings

The meetings have been attended by 48 different people with an average audience size of 20.

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| 14 th September 2016 | Jane Turner, Tree Officer in Plymouth City Council's Natural Infrastructure Team, outlined the steps being taken to develop and implement Plymouth's Plan for Trees. |
| 12 th October 2016 | Chris Hunt, Plymouth Tree Partnership trustee and trained arboriculturist, explained what newly planted trees need to grow well and provided some tips for pruning. |
| 9 th November 2016 | David Curry drew on his experience of co-ordinating community orchards to outline their history including their current revival through the work of local volunteers. |
| 14 th December 2016 | Celia Steven shared with us her adventures promoting the Bramley apple at home and abroad over many years. |
| 11 th January 2017 | Wendy Winstanley, Wildlife Officer at Pine Lodge Gardens, spoke about the garden's twelve champion trees and their medicinal values. |
| 8 th February 2017 | Terry Underhill, a well-qualified horticulturist whose career has included television and radio broadcasting, shared his wide knowledge of ancient trees. |
| 8 th March 2017 | Dominic Scanlon from Aspect Tree Consultancy presented proposals for a new foundation-level training course in arboriculture. |

Plymouth Tree Partnership

Annual Report 2016-17



Annex B – Tree plantings

Torr Lane	9 <i>Prunus</i> 'Tai Haku' planted in grass verges; 8 to replace stumps and 1 to replace a damaged tree planted in 2013.
Tintagel Crescent	4 <i>Crataegus x lavalleyi</i> planted in an empty grass verge.
Central Park – Golf course	4 <i>Acer platanoides</i> , 3 <i>Sorbus aria</i> , 5 <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> 'Laciniata', 6 <i>Betula pubescens</i> , 5 <i>Ulmus</i> 'Lobel', and 3 <i>Aesculus parviflora</i> planted in groups.
Central Park - Valley	1 <i>Nyssa sylvatica</i> , 1 <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> 'Zlatia', 5 <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> 'Alboplana' and 1 <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> 'Brilliantissimum'.
Central Park – Jubilee Row	3 <i>Castanea sativa</i> planted in gaps on Jubilee Row.
Life Centre	1 <i>Quercus robur</i> 'Fastigiata' planted in gap in row on west side.
Blockhouse Park	6 <i>Ulmus</i> 'Lobel' planted as a feature by the Packington Street entrance.
Adelaide Park	1 <i>Prunus</i> 'Shirofugen' and 1 <i>Sorbus aria</i> 'Lutescens' planted to replace damaged trees.
Victoria Park	1 <i>Quercus rubra</i> planted to replace missing memorial tree.

A total of 60 standard trees were planted in 9 different locations.