



1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

Plymouth Tree People Annual Report

Objectives

As a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Plymouth Tree People's mission is to help others plant, care for and learn about trees. Each aspect is important when supporting individuals and communities seeking to improve their special places with trees.

This year, Trustees have found themselves increasingly asked to help with retaining existing mature trees being threatened by new developments. In places as diverse as Armada Way, Wilmot Gardens, the Hoe and Woolwell, they have needed to point out how more existing trees could have been retained had the schemes' designers been presented with a broader remit, especially to give greater weight to the sense of place considerations.

Planning and planting new and replacement trees

As a charity, Plymouth Tree People would want to satisfy every request it receives for new and replacement trees. Resources are finite, however, and it can be difficult identifying where needs are greatest. For this reason, Trustees developed a scoring matrix based on the Woodland Trust's tree equity model but modified to take account of factors like ease of delivery, availability of funding, levels of support and local impact. The matrix has helped with prioritising projects and explaining why some have had to be declined or left on the waiting list.

Productive relationships with Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest (PSDCF) staff and with Plymouth City Council's Green Estates Team have seen Plymouth Tree People lead with planning and delivering projects in these places during the year:

- ★ Flats on Devonport Hill - Working with Plymouth Community Homes, 5 multi-stem Himalayan birch and a dogwood hedge were planted to enclose a grassy area and make a sitting-out place on 11th March. PTP were also able to obtain funding for a picnic bench.



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- ★ Victoria Park - 16 trees, selected for their interest and amenity value, were planted in gaps along the park's southern edge and around the playground on 21st February.
- ★ Radford Park - 12 trees were added to the park's growing arboretum on 28th February.

Two street tree projects requiring contract support were approved late in the season and they will now be planted in autumn 2025. They are to fill 12 empty tree pits between the Life Centre and Home Park stadium, and 6 empty pits on Durnford Street.



The project to plant 12 trees on Patna Park's dog exercise area had to be paused at the last minute while an issue around land ownership was investigated and it is anticipated that planting can take place early in the next reporting year. The approved plan for planting 17 trees in the open spaces around the Wingfield Road flats had to be suspended at the last minute because Plymouth City Council wanted to reassess future development options across the city. The trees that were delivered are being husbanded over summer in the hope that the approved plans can be resumed in time for the coming planting season.

All the above projects were funded under the government's 'Trees for Climate' programme, which is managed locally by the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest through its 'Neighbourwood' scheme. Other grants and donations have made it possible to plant trees in these places:

- ★ Tothill Park - An English oak, grown from an acorn from the Meavy Oak was planted on 1st November in a space deserving of a large, long-lived tree.
- ★ Mutley Park and Thorn Park - A mulberry and a golden rain tree were planted on 29th November. The mulberry was to introduce a focal point between two rows of fruit trees and the golden rain to fill a gap in the parks' interesting collection of trees.
- ★ Central Park - Coronation Avenue. 2 red horse chestnuts were planted on 17th January to fill gaps in the avenue commemorating the coronation of King George VI in 1937.
- ★ Freedom Park - An Amelanchier purchased by Plymouth Tree People was planted by the Friends Group in February to fill a gap in the park's central avenue.
- ★ Patna Park - A whitebeam was planted at the southern end of the park on 7th March to replace a young tree that had failed to establish.

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In addition, Plymouth Tree People members supported planting days on Central Park's golf course and at Stonehouse Creek, both of which were arranged by PCC's Green Communities team, and on the Hoe where the Hoe Neighbourhood Forum had arranged for another 15 trees to be added to the young orchard there.

We continue to receive requests to help with planting commemorative trees. The Family Tree Scheme in Central Park closed in 2022, so any new planting depends on finding an appropriate site. There are many hurdles, and, regrettably, it has not been possible to satisfy most potential donors although we managed to help one family plant a seedling oak in a site overlooking the Sound.

Caring for young trees

Tree Wardens

Plymouth Tree People depends on its volunteer Tree Wardens for tending young trees and explaining why such work is necessary. Trustees have actively sought opportunities to broaden Tree Warden skills and to build their confidence, which have included these training events:

- ★ Aftercare techniques - Tree Wardens learn most from working with others, but this can be difficult for those in full-time employment. To fill the gap and attract people interested in becoming a Tree Warden, a two-hour taster session was held at the Family Tree Field in Central Park on Saturday, 21st September.
- ★ First aid - 8 Tree Wardens attended a First Aid at Work course on 9th May 2024, and further courses are being planned with the aim of having most Tree Wardens qualified in first aid.
- ★ Hedge laying - 4 Tree Wardens attended a hedge laying course run by the Devon Rural Skills Trust near Totnes on 11th January.
- ★ Fruit tree pruning - 7 Tree Wardens attended a fruit tree pruning workshop on 8th March run by local experts Tess Wilmot and Dave Curno at Keyham Green Places and in Alexandra Park.

A locally produced competency framework was launched during the year to help Tree Wardens see for themselves how their tree skills and knowledge are developing. It is aimed to share it more widely once its usefulness is confirmed.

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There were 54 Tree Wardens on the roll at the end of March 2025, and the areas they cover are shown at Appendix A. Together with other volunteers, they have spent more than 2000 hours on practical activities throughout the year.

The mobile group has met every 3 weeks between September and April to provide additional effort where needed most, and it has been well supported. They have assisted park groups and individual Tree Wardens in these places, sometimes with a coffee break included to provide a welcome social dimension:



26 th April	Hoe orchard – last of 2024 tree care season
20 th September	Devonport Park – Ferry Road Field
11 th October	Blockhouse Park
1 st November	Tothill Park
22 nd November	Herbert Street playground
13 th December	Orchard in Zoo Field, Central Park
17 th January	Orchard below Swarthmore allotments in Central Park
14 th March	Astor Playing Field

Watering young trees

We know the importance of watering young trees in their first few years and how demanding this can be for volunteers. Trees for Climate funding enabled us to contract Glendale Countryside to water the trees they planted in Beacon Park Road and Wilton Street in 2024, and irrigation bags were fitted to minimise the time involved.

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In addition, 'water me' tags were attached to the trees to encourage local involvement. The response was generally favourable, which led us to develop a 'Watering Hero' scheme whereby individuals could commit to watering one or more trees. They were supported with tips for staying safe and watering effectively, as well as a free hi-viz vest and watering can if needed. Trustees expect to develop the scheme further in 2025.



Also, for the approaching summer, Plymouth Tree People has awarded a contract for watering selected trees to a local company, Miller's Cleaning Specialists. Their vans are fitted with tanks and long hoses but practical considerations mean that they can only provide enough water for a tree's basic needs. More water will be needed for trees to thrive and local people and PTP members are encouraged to participate as much as possible.

Corporate volunteering

Enquiries about corporate volunteering opportunities have started to pick up after the Covid pandemic and Plymouth Tree People were pleased to host 11 staff from SUEZ Recycling and Waste Management Services on 18th October. With a threatening weather forecast, they concentrated on mulching trees on the Family Tree Field in Central Park but also found time to plant two replacement trees, follow a pruning demonstration and plant a hundred bluebells.

A similar package of practical work could be provided in any of Plymouth's major parks and Trustees are considering whether to develop a formal corporate volunteering offer.



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Surveying established trees

Plymouth City Council records its trees on an asset management system. There are hopes that, in future, suitably trained volunteers may be able to assist by comparing the state of individual trees against the recorded information and advising what changes are necessary. This will allow tree officers to focus on the most pressing issues and the city's canopy cover should improve as a result. A training session was held on 18th April and three pilot surveys have taken place on the Hoe since then with several teething issues being encountered.

Learning about trees

The final lesson of a six-part course took place on 26th April when its tutor, Dom Scanlon from Aspect Tree Consultancy, led a walk through Drake's Gardens and the streets around The Box to appraise the area's trees. This lesson was joined by a few Tree Wardens.

Urban Tree Festival

This was the second year of Plymouth's participation in what has become an annual national fixture since the first Urban Tree Festival in London in 2018. Plymouth Tree People's co-ordinator, Alison White, invited groups and individuals to hold an event of their choosing and 43 separate activities were held across the festival period from 11th to 19th May 2024, all bookable through the dedicated website she had set up. They included walks and talks, mindfulness and exercise sessions, art and craft classes, and poetry and story-telling groups. Bat-watching walks were especially popular with adults and the expert tuition in tree climbing skills with children.



There were 800 attendees in total, 300 hours of volunteer time were recorded and £400 was collected in donations. The variety of events at Plymouth's two festivals has been commended by the festival's national organising committee.

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Evening talks

Accomplished speakers have opened our eyes to a range of different tree-related topics as summarised here:

15 th April	<u>Establishing a Community Forest in Plymouth and South Devon</u> . Peter Hawking-Sach, the Forest's programme manager, and Stephen Hill, its projects' co-ordinator, described their work and future objectives.
16 th May	<u>Tree Equity and Environmental Justice</u> . Kenton Rogers shared his wide experience as a Chartered Forester and Environmentalist to explain how urban trees make better places to live and work.
23 rd September	<u>The History of Tree Huggers and Why It's Not an Insult</u> . Liz Richmond, who founded Rebel Botanists, spoke about the fascinating and surprising history of the term 'tree hugger'.
25 th November	<u>Scanning Britain's most Ancient Oak Trees</u> . Dr Cecilia Chavana-Bryant attracted a full audience when she explained the research techniques used to understand how ancient oaks have acquired their own unique shapes.
3 rd February	<u>The Suffragette Arboretum</u> . Shelley Castle and Anne-Marie Culhane from the Walking Forest group told the incredible story of the Suffragette Arboretum planted in Batheaston, Somerset, between April 1909 and July 1911, to commemorate individual suffragettes and suffragists. We also heard about plans to plant an 'Intentional Woodland' to celebrate women who stand up for and protect the natural world.

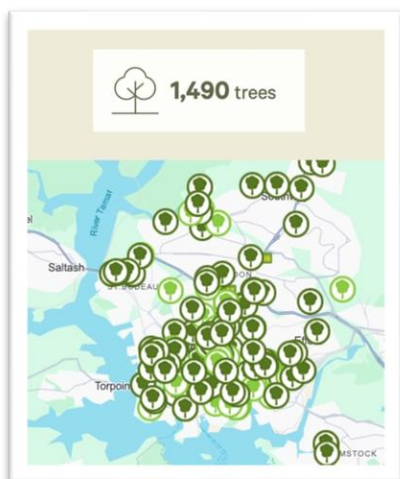
Trees, People and the Built Environment conference

Plymouth Tree People's Trustees attended this high-profile conference, 23rd and 24th April 2024, using remote-working technology. Collaboration, both across sectors and disciplines, was seen as essential for providing the high-quality places that people want to have. We also heard that not-for-profit groups such as Plymouth Tree People are often regarded as 'thought leaders' regarding amenity trees.

Regional Tree Warden conference

Nine Tree Wardens attended this annual conference organised by The Tree Council, which was held this year in Bodmin on 9th November 2024. There were the usual stimulating talks and a guided walk around some recent 'Forest for Cornwall' plantings to show the different techniques being trialled to reduce interference by browsing animals and careless humans.

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Tree projects map

Details of tree projects which Plymouth Tree People has either led or supported since 2010 were entered into a spreadsheet and then translated into a graphical map display for the charity's website. It means that anyone can see instantly where new or replacement trees have been planted, whilst behind each pin is a photo gallery and description of what each project entailed.

Library display

Plymouth's central library willingly made space for a display about trees at the beginning of National Tree Week and Plymouth Tree People members attended to chat to visitors. Alison White, Plymouth Tree People's co-ordinator, had thoughtfully provided colouring and cut-out materials for children, which kept them engaged while parents told us their hopes and fears for the city's trees.



Guided walks

In addition to 13 guided walks as part of the Urban Tree Festival, walks in Alexandra Park after the AGM and in Ham Woods during National Tree Week discussed how trees and woods are constantly changing living systems and how management should be tuned to their needs.

Organisation and administration

Tree Warden co-ordinator

In addition to her community engagement role, Alison White relieved Andrew Young as co-ordinator for the city's Tree Warden network on 1st April 2024. The main development during

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Andrew's long tenure was establishing the mobile group to support individual Tree Wardens and others caring for trees. It has increased the network's effectiveness by providing a focus for action.

Trustees

Chris Hunt stepped down at the 2024 Annual General Meeting, having served for a second term as a Trustee. His knowledge of practical conservation work has been especially valuable when addressing Tree Warden matters and he oversaw the purchase of a road trailer to support volunteering activities. We are very grateful that Chris continues to instruct other Tree Wardens and is always ready to collect and deliver materials for group sessions.

Louise Henry was elected as a Trustee at the 2024 AGM and brings with her an extensive background in ecological management.

Trustees act in a voluntary capacity and the following have served during the year from 1st April 2024:

Roger Atkin	Treasurer
Dave Curno	
Louise Henry	
Penny Tarrant	Chair
Matt Underwood	
Andrew Young	Secretary

All trustees are actively involved in managing the charity and they have access to all its records and policies, including the Charity Commission document 'The Essential Trustee.' No incidents of a serious nature occurred during the year.

Developing Plymouth's Plan for Trees

Plymouth Tree People is represented on the Plan for Trees steering group which exists to develop and implement tree-related policies. This year, its discussions have included how to attract and manage sponsorship offers, how Plymouth's tree initiatives might be co-ordinated with other plans and how tree equity might be applied in practice.

Funding

The unspent balance of grant from the Co-op's Local Community Fund in 2019 was used to close a gap in one of the Family Tree Field's hedge banks. It had become something of a thoroughfare and was starting to spoil the quietude which many enjoyed under nearby trees.

As already appreciated, the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest funded most the planting projects undertaken this year. In addition, we were grateful for a Community Forest funding grant to support the Urban Tree Festival in 2024 and ongoing community engagement throughout the year.

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The courses in hedge laying and fruit tree pruning were enabled by a Tree Council funding programme, and we greatly appreciate the Tree Council's readiness to search for and advise about similar opportunities.

The course in first aid training was funded out of the grant awarded by the Benefact Group in August 2023 to increase the charity's capacity.

The charity's aim to retain sufficient unrestricted funds to continue operating for a minimum period of twelve months was achieved across the whole year.

Thanks

So many individuals have given their time or money to growing Plymouth's tree canopy and explaining to others why it is so important. The planting days especially were well supported and sincere thanks go to everyone who has contributed in some way; it would be impossible to name them all.

We have received warm hospitality from Snapdragons at the eastern end of Victoria Park, the Park Pharmacy Trust in Thorn Park and Keyham Green Places by Alexandra Park for different events during the year. It makes a big difference to be welcomed inside when the weather is threatening, and to enjoy the food and drink so thoughtfully provided.

Richard Cosgrave from Beside the Box has kindly overseen the Office 365 suite provided by Microsoft with free licences for qualifying charities as he has done for us for over nine years. It involved considerable work recently to migrate the charity's files into Sharepoint as a better technical solution than the previous team drive.

We are most grateful to chartered accountant, Paul Marker, who has carried out the independent examination of PTP's annual accounts for the seventh consecutive year, each time generously providing this professional service free of charge.

Mark Thomas from Nettio has been similarly generous with his administration of Plymouth Tree People's website and social media accounts for a second year, as well as offering charity rates when developing new online services, such as the map of tree projects and a call for Watering Heroes.

As in previous years, we admire the work that the teams in Plymouth City Council's Street Services and Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest do for trees, and hope they benefit from having us around as much as we do them.

All this freely given support makes a massive difference to Plymouth Tree People's reach and is very gratefully appreciated.

In numbers

Plymouth Tree People has:

- 352 Members including 54 who are Tree Wardens

Contributing:

- More than 2000 volunteer hours, planting and caring for trees

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Achieving:

- 41 trees planted, with PTP as the lead partner
- More than 500 young trees tended
- 15 guided walks
- 5 educational talks

Appendix A – Tree care and surveys

Plymouth Tree People's volunteer Tree Wardens have been delivering care to young trees or undertaking tree surveys in the following places during 2024-25.

Location	Tree Warden
Central Park	Martin Blacher Chris Hunt (Family Tree Field) Nicola Westlake (Alma Road) Matt Underwood (Swarthmore Orchard) Amanda Pannell
Cremyll Street	Mick Nightingale Sue Johns
Devonport Park	Fairfax Luxmoore
Down Horn Park orchard	Nigel Jackson
Freedom Park	Jacques Marchal Jasper Bradley Krista Dunkers
Haddington Road	Fairfax Luxmoore
Ham Woods	Dave Curno
The Hoe	Marcus Knight
Patna Park	Ali White Mark Thomas Emily Triplett
Pemros Road	Ken Hamblin
Plympton	David Frost
Plymstock	Alice Thompson Emma Stuckey
Pryne Close	Diane Barrall
Radford Park	Kevin Warley Jenny Floyd
Staddiscombe Playing Fields	Alan and Menza Ramage
Thorn Park	Gloria Dixon
Torr Lane	Roy and Liz Harris
Tothill Park	Nick Reid
Mobile Group	26 Tree Wardens who lend a hand anywhere.