

Plymouth Tree Partnership

Annual Report 2020 – 21



Plymouth Tree Partnership's reporting year started nine days after the first national lockdown began and Coronavirus restrictions have remained in force to some extent all year. In consequence, most of the partnership's usual activities have had to be cancelled or curtailed, and this report is necessarily thin.

Activities

Tree Wardening

Organised volunteering activities have not been possible and the bigger jobs where two or three people are required to work side-by-side have mainly been left undone. More typically, individual Tree Wardens have used their initiative to see what needs doing and have applied themselves accordingly.

Watering young trees remains the biggest challenge and we have heard how it has been met in different places. The 'Please Water Me' signs next to Plymouth Community Homes trees have seen people out with small containers, whilst some Tree Wardens have brought in wheel-barrows and trailers to transport the heavier loads.



Dave Curno with his trailer at the Family Tree Field

Meetings and tree talks

No physical meetings could be held during the year and, in line with advice from the Charity Commission, the 2020 Annual General Meeting did not take place.

With growing familiarity with web-based applications, Plymouth Tree Partnership held its first online tree talk on 17th March 2021 when member, David Frost, gave a lively and informative presentation about Ancient Trees in the local area.

Communications

Every month, a newsletter has been compiled and emailed to members and volunteers. Quite recently, however, it became apparent that many of the group mailings were going into spam folders and not being opened. The problem is ongoing and potential solutions are being investigated.

Plymouth Tree Partnership's Facebook group has 141 followers. There have been no posts during the year and, if rejuvenated, it should prove to be a useful communication channel.

Office

The Coronavirus situation meant that access to the office facilities at Poole Farm was controlled and Plymouth Tree Partnership volunteers were unhappy about using it despite precautions.

In consequence, a rent holiday was quickly agreed in principle with Poole Farm managers. However, difficulty was encountered within corporate Plymouth City Council departments, wishing to charge an administration fee for suspending and resuming the lease. The amount turned out to be little different from the cost of continuing to pay the lease for the six months in question and so the matter was not taken further.

Trustees have agreed to keep the need for an office base under review. Technology solutions make remote working a distinct possibility and up to nine Trustees can have free Microsoft Office accounts because of the Partnership's charitable status. We are extremely grateful to IT specialist Richard Cosgrave, who administers the Partnership's systems, for making this possible and the Microsoft application with its shared drive for documents and pictures is working well.

Trustees

With no AGM in 2020, Andrew Young and Dave Curno were appointed as Trustees in December and February respectively.

Chris Hunt stepped down in January after five years as a Trustee. He brought a wealth of experience from his professional background as an arboriculturist which was particularly useful when developing the partnership's policies. We are grateful for his work and delighted he is going to continue as a Tree Warden with the Family Tree Field remaining his main focus.

Other Trustees this year have been:

Roger Atkin	Treasurer
Diane Barrall	
Sandy Borthwick	
David Curry	Chair
John Stone	
Penny Tarrant	

Trustee meetings have taken place every two months using internet technology, with other communications by email.

Membership

Membership numbers have fallen sharply from 68 last year to 45 currently. It is attributed to not having opportunities to collect cash for subscription renewals, failures in communicating with existing members and not being able to meet new people. It is a concern for Trustees and being actively addressed.

Achievements

Family Tree Field

Having completed two key enhancements to the Family Tree Field in 2019 – the central seating area and remade entrances on Gilbert Lane – we had expected to rest a little before starting something else. That changed in January 2020 when the Co-op, one of the funders in 2019, called to ask if we wanted to join their Community Fund scheme because another charity had dropped out.

In November, we heard the exciting news that a total of £8,550 had been raised because of Co-op members at four local stores making Plymouth

Tree Partnership their chosen cause. The money is being used to introduce a new tree labelling system, replace the damaged interpretation panel, install a new bench and make hedgebank repairs. Surplus funds are being used to buy more tools and to support future plantings.



New tree label bought with the Co-op Community Fund grant

American Tree Trail

The Plymouth Trails app went live on 20th July 2020 and the Council Officer leading the project said this about the American Tree Trail:

“It has been wonderful to work with Plymouth Tree Partnership to develop their new American Tree Trail for the new Plymouth Trails app. They were our first partner trail and worked closely with me to explore the best way to adapt the trail to work well in the app. It has been a long process, but I think that the American Tree Trail is a great addition. It's perfect for locals and visitors to the city to discover our American trees and connections, especially during this year and the Mayflower 400 commemorations.”

Thanks are due to Heather Barriball for all her tremendous work with the trail and seeing it through to a successful conclusion.

Pilgrim 400

The original offer to schools and community groups to buy a Pilgrim 400 apple tree for the Mayflower 400 celebrations opened 1st November 2019. However, only six applications were received by the original 1st May 2020 deadline, so this was extended to 1st September 2020. At one

stage, it appeared possible that the Daily Mail might have bought all forty special-edition trees for its school orchards campaign, but the logistics challenges proved too great.

With no further applications having been received by the new deadline, it was decided to make the trees available to schools and community groups free of charge, provided they were able to collect from Endsleigh Gardens Nursery at Milton Abbot. This resulted in a flood of applications and all forty trees were quickly allocated.



Widey Court Primary School pupils plant their Pilgrim 400 tree

Project costs were borne by the Mayflower Community Sparks fund, so the only financial impact for Plymouth Tree Partnership was some loss of sales revenue. The original six applicants declined offers to reimburse the money they had paid so, overall, the project made a profit of £270, which will be used to support more tree planting.

Plymouth Tree Challenge

During 2019, Plymouth Tree Partnership collated proposals for planting trees in fifty different locations, in support of an application by Plymouth City Council to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCF) with its strict eligibility criteria.

Several months later, in February 2020, we heard that the bid had been approved subject to confirmation of Plymouth City Council's match funding, which was finally announced in July 2020. It was only then that Plymouth City Council's Natural Infrastructure Team could start to mobilise for the planting season.

Although not actively involved with the planting programme, we followed developments closely and were delighted with the totals achieved. 778 standards were planted with UTCF funding and 173 standards with other funding, making a total of 951 trees planted over a four-month period; a very creditable achievement.

The funding grants included provision for aftercare and watering has already begun. Furthermore, discussions have started about the best means for delivering long-term aftercare, with the Tree Warden network being seen as a key asset.

Donations

Several donations have been received over the year and we are extremely grateful for each one. A special mention goes to Drew and Co Ltd, a regional Mechanical and Electrical engineering company based in Plympton, for donating £5,000 for tree planting schemes in the city. The firm is committed to reducing its environmental impact and taking a lead towards sustainability. The donation is a huge boost for schemes that require expensive site preparations, and we are looking for places where it will make a real difference.

Homes found

When a site was being cleared for development in February, the contractors needed to dig up four young trees but had nowhere for them to go. They contacted Plymouth Tree Partnership and, through our networks, we found them good homes. A silver birch went into Hartley Park and 3 fastigiata beeches went to Wyoming Close.



Transplanted tree in Wyoming Close

Plymouth Tree Partnership

Annual Report 2020 – 21



Message from the Chair

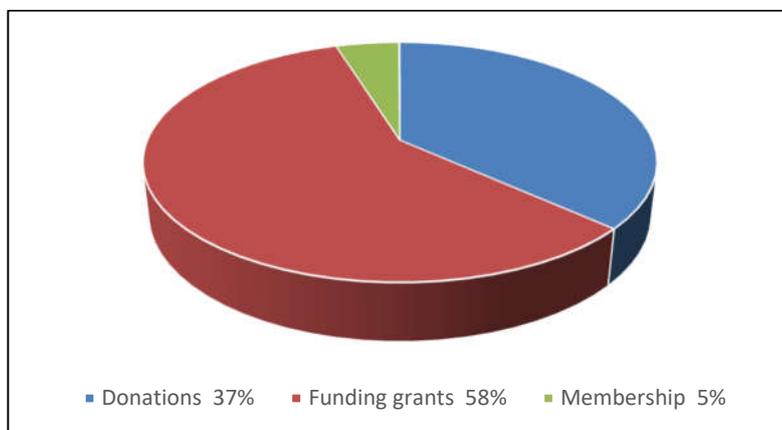
Everyone understands how difficult the last year has been. As a charity, Plymouth Tree Partnership is about helping others plant and care for trees and, despite everything, we have stayed true to that aim. This report cannot cover everything, and it is the willingness of individual members and volunteers to stay involved which has been vital. Because of that, the partnership is in a good place for moving forward and the coming year shows much promise. We sincerely hope that all the usual activities can start again soon.

Financial summary

We are most grateful to Chartered Accountant, Paul Marker, for carrying out an independent review of the charity's accounts and a summary is provided here.

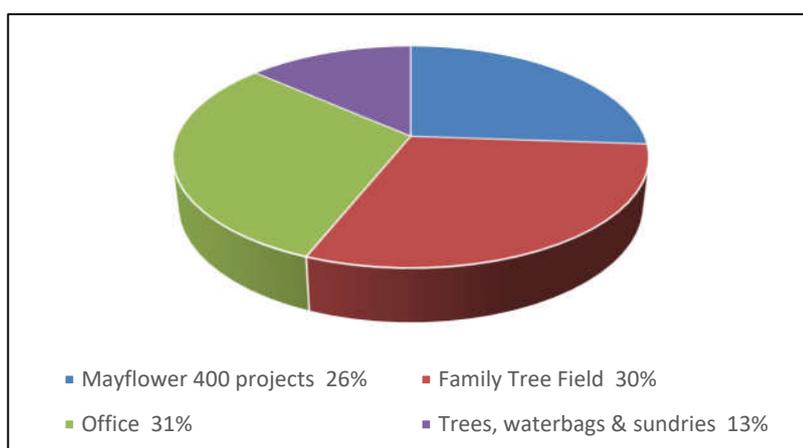
Income

Plymouth Tree Partnership's income for the year 2020-21 was £14,618.17.



Expenditure

Total expenditure for 2020-21 was £4,822.



Charity management

Policies have been kept under review and the reserves policy to retain sufficient unrestricted funds to continue operating for a minimum period of twelve months was achieved. There were no incidents of a serious nature during the year.