



Wells City Council

TREE POLICY

Document No.15

Purpose	This policy has been adopted in order to provide guidance to both Councillors and Staff in the management of trees
Additional Papers	This document should be read in conjunction with: Document 1 Standing Orders
Reviewed by	City Centre & Open Spaces
Adopted	January 2020
Review Date	

Tree policy for Wells City Council

Background

Why are trees important?

- a) They make our City more attractive and desirable
- b) Absorb air pollution and noise
- c) Intercept rainfall and reduce runoff and flooding
- d) Provide shade and shelter for people and animals
- e) Create a variety of habitats for wildlife
- f) Help to emphasise the changing season
- g) Produce fruits, nuts and seeds
- h) Produce firewood
- i) Help to combat climate change by sequestering CO2
- j) Are a source of inspiration and have health and well being benefits

Why should Wells City Council take positive actions to protect and plant trees?

Throughout the county medium sized elm trees are still dying from elm disease. These are the latest victims of a disease which has killed millions of trees in Somerset and probably many hundreds in every parish and town. No-one has been counting!

As ash dieback disease also becomes more prevalent over the next few years we are likely to see many more dead trees appearing. Ash is the most common species over much of England and this area is no exception. While the elms that die are relatively small trees, there are many large ash which will be susceptible and the loss of these will be visually a very significant loss to the City.

Recommendations for actions to address continuing tree loss and promote tree planting

- 1) When applications are made to fell trees and agreement is given, WCC will, whenever possible, request that a suitable replacement tree, or trees, are planted, either on or near the felled tree or on an alternative site to be agreed with the owner.

Recommendation: For every tree felled at least one replacement be planted.

- 2) WCC will seek an agreement with MDC (as Planning Authority) that a replanting condition will be included in all consents which are granted in the City.

Recommendation: An agreement will be sought with the Mendip District Council in respect of replacement planting.

- 3) WCC will take an active interest in ensuring that all trees, shrubs and hedges which are planted on development sites (as a condition of planning consent) are actually planted and that they survive. Where trees are lost the developer has an obligation to replace any losses for a period of 5 years. While this is sometimes monitored by district officers they are not always aware of the local situation and WCC is in a good position to monitor losses and notify the district that enforcement action be taken where necessary.

Recommendation: The Council Officers will notify the District Council about non compliance with planting conditions on development sites.

- 4) Where trees in the City are removed or are planned to be removed without requiring any consent, WCC will take the initiative and encourage owners to plant replacements on or near the site of the removed tree. This policy will be publicised locally so that Parishioners know that this is an issue about which WCC are concerned and are less likely to be surprised if they are approached after a tree is removed.

Recommendation: The Council will encourage tree replacement where no statutory obligation applies and will publicise this policy widely.

- 5) In some cases, occupants of new houses may not welcome the trees or shrubs in their gardens which are a planning condition and remove them. WCC will perform a monitoring role and keep MDC informed, where possible negotiating a more suitable location for unwanted trees by agreement with all parties.

Recommendation: The Council/Volunteer Tree Wardens will monitor trees adjacent to new houses which are part of a planning condition, WCC Officers will inform MDC of removals, and negotiate replanting.

- 6) All trees on land owned by the WCC.
Recommendation: An independent annual survey of all trees will be commissioned. All maintenance and recommendations identified will be carried out by a suitably qualified arboricultural professional. In the event of any felling required a replacement tree or trees of a Native Species will be planted in a suitable nearby location.
- 7) WCC will take an active role in finding suitable sites for planting new trees and have an annual tree and shrub planting programme. The relatively low cost of this will be met from a variety of sources including the Parish precept or S106 funds. Unlike high tiers of Local Government, their precept is not presently capped. As tree planting is a relatively low cost activity and WCC are close to the 'grass roots' of local affairs, they are well placed to take tree planting initiatives. Local volunteers may be prepared to help plant the trees. In some locations shrubs may be preferable to trees.
Recommendation: The Council will identify opportunities for tree planting in the City, help with funding packages for tree planting, and involve the community as volunteers where possible.
- 8) If ready identification of sites for tree planting proves difficult a thorough local survey will be conducted to identify suitable planting sites. Notices will be placed in local publications asking the public to offer up or identify sites which could then be explored to check their suitability. A parish map will then be produced showing suitable sites. Some sites may be more suitable for new shrubs rather than trees, in locations under overhead wires for example.
Recommendation: The Council will, in the event of failing to identify sites for tree planting, commission a survey of the City, publicise the search, and produce a map of potential sites.
- 9) WCC will consider the appointment of volunteer Tree Wardens – who might or might not be a member of WCC.
Recommendation: The Council will appoint volunteer Tree Wardens to inform the Council about all tree related matters and on any potential tree planting projects.
- 10) Consultation on a draft tree policy will ideally have been carried out by putting the draft policy on the City council website and inviting people to comment through an agreed feedback mechanism. Notice will be given of the City Council meeting at which adopting the policy will be proposed.
Recommendation: The Council will publicise its draft Tree Policy, allow for feedback, and publicise the meeting at which the Policy will be proposed.

11) Statement of Intent:

Recommendation: WCC will use its best endeavours to promote, publicise and support the planting of trees and woodlands and the maintenance of existing trees and woodlands in the City.