**District Dispatch**

Earlier this year, I updated you on some of the many successful initiatives that have been delivered as part of our ‘Tree Chichester District’ scheme. This week, I’m really pleased to be able to tell you that a groundbreaking research report has just been published, revealing the findings from two of our very successful community tree planting schemes.

We all know that planting new trees offers a huge range of benefits, from boosting biodiversity to enhancing wellbeing, but it’s important to choose the right approach to ensure the trees we plant can grow and thrive. To help test and assess the success of different tree planting methods, we have been involved in a range of planting initiatives, as part of a wider ‘Trees Outside Woodland’ programme. This programme is led by Defra, The Tree Council and Natural England, in collaboration with five local authorities, including our own.

As part of this work, you may remember that a few years ago, we ran two schemes in which we offered residents, community groups, schools, parish councils, charities, businesses, landowners and farmers, the opportunity to apply for trees and accessories that they would receive for free in the first year or at a subsidised cost in the second year. These schemes were incredibly well received, seeing thousands of trees planted in communities across the district.

We’ve been monitoring and comparing the health and development of the trees planted through both of these schemes, and the findings have now been published in a new report. Interestingly, the results have shown that asking recipients to pay a small contribution towards the cost of the trees they planted significantly improved tree survival rates, when compared to offering trees for free. This indicates that the subsidised approach to community tree planting projects could offer a more cost-effective and successful way of boosting the number of trees that will go on to grow and thrive in local communities.

The results and recommendations will provide useful information that will help organisations — from local authorities to community groups — shape similar tree planting schemes for the future.

Anyone that is interested in reading the full report, can find this on the Tree Council’s website — [**https://treecouncil.org.uk/science-and-research/shared-outcomes-fund/subsidised-tree-scheme/**](https://treecouncil.org.uk/science-and-research/shared-outcomes-fund/subsidised-tree-scheme/). You can also head to YouTube for a special behind-the-scenes film about the project: [**www.youtube.com/watch?v=YePgqowgxDw&feature=youtu.be**](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YePgqowgxDw&feature=youtu.be). The trees will continue to be monitored until September, and the report updated with further findings.

Since launching in 2021, the ‘Tree Chichester District’ scheme has seen over 64,000 trees planted across the district through 215 individual projects. The schemes that we have either supported or directly delivered have created new opportunities for local people who are keen to do their bit to help tackle the effects of climate change in our area, or who want to enhance our local landscapes and increase their community’s connection with nature. The popularity of these initiatives really shows how much people care about planting trees in our area.

If you’re interested in carrying out a tree planting project in your area, you can contact our Tree Project Officer for advice, by emailing: **treescheme@chichester.gov.uk**. More information about the Tree Chichester District scheme can be found here: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/treescheme**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/treescheme).

I also wanted to remind you that we’re currently running a consultation to ask for your views on some exciting plans to improve our play areas in Chichester! Last summer, we spoke to the children, parents, and carers who use the play areas to gather their feedback and ideas, and we have used this to help shape the designs. To view the final proposals and to let us know what you think of these improvements, please take part in our quick survey at: [**https://letstalk.chichester.gov.uk/playareas/participate**](https://letstalk.chichester.gov.uk/playareas/participate)before 31 March. If you need a paper copy, please email: **letstalk@chichester.gov.uk**

Best Wishes

Cllr Jonathan Brown

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environmental Strategy at Chichester District Council

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