

HBC Climate & Environment Strategy Meeting

Terry Smith – Havant Borough Tree Wardens

We have a number of concerns.

Anyone who has read our December newsletter will be aware of the trees and hedges planted recently by various local nature conservation groups and Hampshire County Council. Sadly, the trees planted cannot keep pace with the mature trees lost.

Some people have an awareness of the benefits of trees although too many still see them as pretty to look at, but not really important and easily replaced. It is widely known that trees remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store carbon. Other environmental services provided by trees, such as shade, cooling and helping to prevent flooding and are rarely, if ever, mentioned. Trees can also increase property values because tree-lined areas become more desirable to live in.

Trees should not be considered in isolation; they are part of an ecosystem and provide homes for a variety of species. Those species may not be able to find another home if the trees are cut down. If all the trees in an area are felled, where will the wildlife live while the few small trees planted as replacements grow – and will they be adequate replacements?

Green spaces have become fragmented and, as more are built on, connectivity is being lost, meaning animals can no longer safely move between areas. There are no protected hedgerows in Havant Borough.

Developers often want to completely remove trees and hedgerows and start with a clear site, instead of leaving good specimens of mature trees as features. Trees are felled prior to development applications – developers can then say there are no trees on the site that will be affected by the development. An example is the eight mature oaks felled at Campdown, next to South Downs College, where there is now an application for a housing development.

Allowing houses to be built close to mature trees can mean the roots are damaged and there is pressure from home owners to remove branches or fell the tree.

There is a trend of new owners cutting down trees when houses are sold.

Mature oaks are felled simply because the householder does not want to rake up leaves – as in Scratchface Lane.

Trees planted as part of new housing developments are usually small and no substitute for trees cut down. Trees are not always planted as required by planning conditions – as at Poppy Way, Denvilles.

Hedgerows are sometimes grubbed out even when planning conditions require them to be retained – as at Saxon Corner, Emsworth.

When trees are planted they are not necessarily looked after and can die – as at The Oysters development on Hayling Island. A large number of the 1,000 trees planted at the proposed reservoir site in Havant Thicket have died and there are numerous other examples throughout the Borough.

Havant Borough Council does not appear to be planting any trees, and trees planted in previous years are not always looked after, as the recent survey of Emsworth Recreation Ground shows. Most activity appears to be related to applications for work on TPO trees and safety.

A Tree Protection Order can only be placed on a tree if:

- ◆ It has visual amenity – it can be seen from a public place and enhances the scene.
- ◆ It is a good example of its type.
- ◆ It is under threat of removal.

It is often not known that a tree is under threat until it is cut down.

Actions Required

- ◆ Havant Borough Council needs to have a tree and woodland strategy.
- ◆ We need to protect the trees we have.
- ◆ Enforcement is generally good when problems are notified, but needs to be more proactive. Where TPO trees are legally felled, replacement planting needs to be enforced. Where TPO trees are felled **illegally**, the perpetrators must be prosecuted and heavily fined. Too often this is just seen as a business expense.
- ◆ Havant Borough has a low tree canopy cover. Havant Borough Council needs to set a target to increase tree cover to, say 25% in a reasonable timescale (no more than 10 years, preferably 5 years). A denser canopy cover on new developments would help.
- ◆ Housing developments need to increase biodiversity instead of destroying it.
- ◆ Existing connectivity of green spaces needs to be retained and improved to create green corridors for wildlife. For example, by planting dense connecting hedgerows and hedgerow trees.