

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

DOWNS COMMITTEE

22 November 2010

Report of: Director of Neighbourhoods

Title: Replacement Tree Planting on the Downs

Ward: N/A

Officer Presenting Report: Russell Horsey, Senior Arboricultural Officer

Contact Telephone Number: (0117) 9223172

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That the committee agree the principle to replace trees within the existing avenues as and when trees die or become dangerous and need to be removed.**
- 2. That a plan is consulted on which looks to agree the future tree planting species composition for the Downs avenues.**
- 3. That a range of tree species in keeping with the character of the Downs are adopted for future avenue plantings to diversify the current species mix of trees.**
- 4. That the public are offered the opportunity to sponsor new trees through TreeBristol.**

Summary

Over the years trees have died or become dangerous resulting in gaps appearing in the existing avenues of trees along the Downs. This report puts forward an outline scheme to be consulted on with the wider public on a future replacement policy.

The significant issues in the report are:

- The existing species mix is predominantly horse-chestnut and lime. By having only a few species in the existing avenues raises issues of future tree security. At the current time a number of different diseases are attacking horse-chestnuts in the UK and this has the potential to result in the loss of significant numbers of trees on the Downs in the future.
- It is possible to replant with a number of different species of trees without effecting the character and form of the existing avenues.
- Consultation with the public on this proposed scheme will be necessary.

Policy

1. Bristol City has set out aspirations to increase its canopy cover to 30% (www.bristol.gov.uk/treepolicies).

Consultation

2. Internal:

Landscape Design, City and Development
The Downs Rangers Team, Parks and Estates
Helen Hall, Nature Conservation Officer

3. External:

It is proposed to carry out public consultation on this scheme over the remainder of the financial year.

Context

4. The Downs is known for its tree avenues and these form and help define the character of a large part of the Downs. Over the years as trees have been lost they have not been replaced which has resulted in gaps appearing in the existing avenues.
5. The significant increase of international trade has resulted in the importation of pests and diseases which the UK's tree stock are unable to fight off, or where there are no native predators. This has seen the loss of tree species which have been important to the character of the UK's countryside (elm), and currently horse-chestnut trees are under attack, a species which make up a large proportion of the Downs avenue tree stock.

Proposal

6. That the future replanting of the Downs tree avenues, looks to diversify the number of species present within the existing established avenue structure on the Downs. Species will need to be agreed which do not change the character of the existing tree avenues, and also which will not cause future problems for the gorge - through invasive seeding. Where possible species will be chosen to benefit wildlife e.g. Oak.

Other Options Considered

7. Not to replant, however over time this would result in a significant loss of amenity to the Downs and a significant change in character of the area.

Risk Assessment

8. By moving to a mix of different tree species, it is felt that when future pests and diseases are found in the UK that this will decrease the risk of losing large portions of future avenues, were a monoculture of trees left.

Equalities Impact Assessment

9. *“Not applicable”*

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal:

“No legal advice sought”

Legal advice given by: **

Financial:

TreeBristol has now been running for 4 years and provides a way for the public to help with community tree planting events as well as allowing the opportunity for people to sponsor trees around the city. Due to the high profile nature of the Downs, any agreed future plan would be advertised through TreeBristol and the Arboricultural team would expect a high take up of sponsorship for future tree re-planting.

(a) Revenue

(b) Capital

Land

Personnel

Appendices:

Plans of Downs showing Avenues and suggested species attached.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None

APPENDIX A



