

Environment and Sustainability Policy Committee 26 September 2024



Public Forum Questions

Public forum questions have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

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| 1. Freya Cunningham (<i>Attending</i>) | Plant-based diet and Bristol City Council |
| 2. Cllr Christine Townsend (<i>Attending</i>) | Keeping Bristol Cool Framework |
| 3. Cllr Christine Townsend | Street Tree Planting |

Public Forum Statements have been received as listed below (full details are set out on the subsequent pages):

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| 1. James Jones | Plant-based diet and Bristol City Council |
| 2. Geoff and Myra Farmer | Recycling collections |
| 3. Ian Froggatt, Woodland Trust | Bristol Tree Strategy |
| 4. Mark CD Ashdown, Bristol Tree Forum | Bristol Tree Strategy |
| 5. Savita Willmott, Natural History Consortium | Bristol Tree Strategy |
| 6. Alex Stone, Forest of Avon Trust | Bristol Tree Strategy |

Please note: The views and information contained within these public statements are those of the individuals concerned and not of the Council.



PUBLIC FORUM QUESTIONS

1. QUESTION FROM FREYA CUNNINGHAM

As councils across the country have made positive steps to promote plant-based eating as a response to the climate and ecological crises, Bristol City Council has failed to keep step. With the Green Party now in administration – a party that acknowledges the importance of plant-based eating at its own conferences and events – this is particularly galling.

Despite years of requests from members of the public to see this issue pursued seriously, Bristol remains notably absent from the list of councils that have made serious steps towards supporting the transition to a plant-based food system.

My question is: what steps will the council make to ensure that this issue is not ignored? Can this committee commit to clearly identifying what catering the council does control, and recommending this catering transition to fully plant-based so that Bristol City councillors are leading by example on this important issue whenever they attend the council building?"

Response

Bristol City Council is now run by a multi-party Committee system with no overall control. All committees have a proportional number of all four parties on them to make decisions.

The council has already taken steps to support a move to more plant-based eating, the issue is not being ignored.

The Council's current approach is based on the Bristol Eating Better Award standards. <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/bristol-eating-better-award>

All Bristol Eating Better Award (BEBA) holders (bronze, silver and gold) are required to take the following core actions related to plant-based eating:

- Action 3.2 Have you reduced the amount of red and processed meat, and increased the quality of meat you use where able, in your dishes or on your menu? E.g., you add more vegetables and pulses to reduce the amount of meat and enable you to purchase better quality meat. You could add plant-based proteins, vegetables, pulses, lentils, quinoa.
- Action 9.1 Are you taking steps to incorporate more plant-based ingredients in the food you serve (to reduce the amount of meat and dairy products on your menus)?

Where we purchase catering services our Healthy and Sustainable Procurement policy has mandatory requirements for all our food and catering suppliers to:

- Offer and encourage uptake of plant-based options
- Achieve BEBA Gold within first 12 months of the contract

Additionally the policy requires that:

- Food and catering providers at BCC markets must achieve BEBA Bronze prior to the start of their contract

1. Catering providers at both events and street trading sites will be encouraged to achieve BEBA Bronze
 - Catering providers meet the requirements of at least the Soil Association Food For Life Served Here (FFLSH) silver award (if above procurement threshold)

Additional action is being taken for the Harbour Festival and the Adult Social Care Framework, if food is provided and active promotion of BEBA to food businesses across the city.

I have asked officers to review the Plant Based Council's commitments and guidance and report back to myself as Chair and Cllr King as vice-chair.

2. QUESTION FROM CLLR CHRISTINE TOWNSEND

Please can the committee update us as to any work/progress/timelines for implementing the recommendations of the 'Keeping Bristol Cool Framework' fronted by the then Cabinet Member for Climate, Ecology, Waste and Energy Cllr Kye Dudd?

Response

We have made progress with several initiatives that were set out in the Framework and used it to shape areas of existing activity, within the council's limited resources.

Goal 1: Protecting vulnerable people, the public, council employees and council services during heatwaves:

- We have commenced work developing criteria for "Cool Places" to provide shelter for citizens during heatwave events. We are part of a cohort of international cities collaborating with the Basque Centre For Climate Change to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions.
- We have supported the universities of Bristol, Reading and Freiburg in deploying a network of weather stations on lampposts. This will enhance our understanding of Bristol's urban heat island effect and could help inform our severe weather planning.

Goal 2: Future-proofing growth and city regeneration:

- The new Local Plan was submitted for adoption earlier this year and contains a dedicated policy requiring new development to be resilient to the changing climate.
- Recent regeneration frameworks, such as Frome Gateway and the City Centre Development and Delivery Plan, have used the Keep Bristol Cool Mapping Tool to inform their proposals.

Goal 3: Tackling overheating risk in people's homes

- The standard specification for new council homes includes a requirement to demonstrate that the risk of overheating has been minimised inline with best practice standards.
- We submitted a proposal to IBM's Sustainability Accelerator programme to develop an overheating risk index for all homes in the city, which was shortlisted but was unsuccessful.
- We are supporting the University of Bristol's research into people's lived experience of heatwaves.

Goal 4: Using blue green infrastructure for cooling streets and public spaces

- Bid submitted to Projects for Nature a Defra supported crowdfunding platform seeking £75k investment from corporate / business donors to invest in tree planting in BS5 where Keep Bristol Cool has identified greatest risk of urban heat stress.
- The Keep Bristol Cool Modelling Tool has been incorporated into the Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy. This identifies where tree planting would deliver greatest benefit across four 'Impact Criteria': deprivation, tree canopy, nature recovery and urban heat stress. A 'heat map' shows least to greatest benefit.
- The Bristol Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy will define how and where green infrastructure can be used to support urban heat resilience. We have secured funding from WECA for a new Council Officer whose responsibilities will include supporting the development of this strategy and the council are recruiting this role.

With our One City partners and support from the Bristol Advisory Committee on Climate Change we have been reviewing the issues of Heat and how it affects people and how it can be tackled.

More detailed actions will be incorporated into a refresh of the BCC Climate Emergency Action Plan in 2025. Much of the action contained in the current action plan is focused on carbon reduction and resilience will be stronger part of the next iteration.

3. QUESTION FROM CLLR CHRISTINE TOWNSEND

Southville residents in Exeter Road have been trying to engage the tree department to plant trees in their street. Despite the street tree design and consultation having been completed, funding identified and residents engaged we are two years on, without street trees having materialised.

The reason sighted is utility infrastructure in the roads which is challenged by residents who have seen various parts of their street dug up over the years and we are now at full circle with container planting being suggested.

Given trees in planters are now needing to be ripped out in the centre of the city as trees cannot successfully grow in planters, how can we overcome this disagreement as to where trees can be planted in our, currently tree free streets, especially in areas identified as needing such interventions as per Cllr Dudd's report sighted in Qu 1?

Response

This committee has responsibility for the Ecological Emergency Declaration commitment to expand tree canopy across the city. We're also receiving the One City Tree and Woodland strategy on the agenda for the 26th with a view to endorse it as a council. I'd like to find ways for partners to help us achieve more tree planting including in streets without trees.

We have wanted to support tree planting in Exeter Road. Unfortunately, we have identified numerous constraints and have had to advise that tree planting in either the pavement or roadway is not possible.

The main constraints are underground services. Our guideline for distance trees can be planted from underground services is below. This is to ensure that trees can be planted safely and to reduce risk to

infrastructure. I have attached a map of Exeter Road (*Appendix A*) which shows the layout of various utilities – which are extensive. To plant trees in Exeter Road would mean excavations to provide required tree pits and trees themselves being closer to services than guidelines allow. Unfortunately, the pavements are also narrow – our guideline is that pavements need to be greater than 2 metres wide to allow tree planting. There are also below ground services within the pavement.

As necessary, utility companies will excavate to repair or replace their infrastructure, this is unrelated to the guidelines referenced above as we need to account for the growth of the tree.

In that we have been unable to locate suitable in-ground planting locations we have suggested tree planters, which avoid the need for excavation and can be moved a short distance to allow repairs to services if required. We accept that tree planters are a compromise and that whilst trees in planters can grow well for a number of years, they should be considered to have a ten-year life at best and will require watering during dry periods. We offered to explore tree planters as an alternative to no trees at all.

Utility service check guidelines

Utility	Company	Advised distance	Utility material	CAT detects?	Distance from planting	Notes
High pressure gas	Wales & West Utilities	Bespoke advice	Poly with live current surround	Yes	As advised	WWU will visit and advise on specific tolerances for specific species
Medium pressure gas	Wales & West Utilities	3m	Poly	No	3m	
Low pressure gas	Wales & West Utilities	3m	Poly	No	2m	No chance of root encroachment but mindful to use shallow rooted species in case of plate lift
High voltage electric	National Grid ED	Bespoke advice	Poly surround core cable	Yes	As advised	Directly overhead with shrub species through to 6m easement for large species

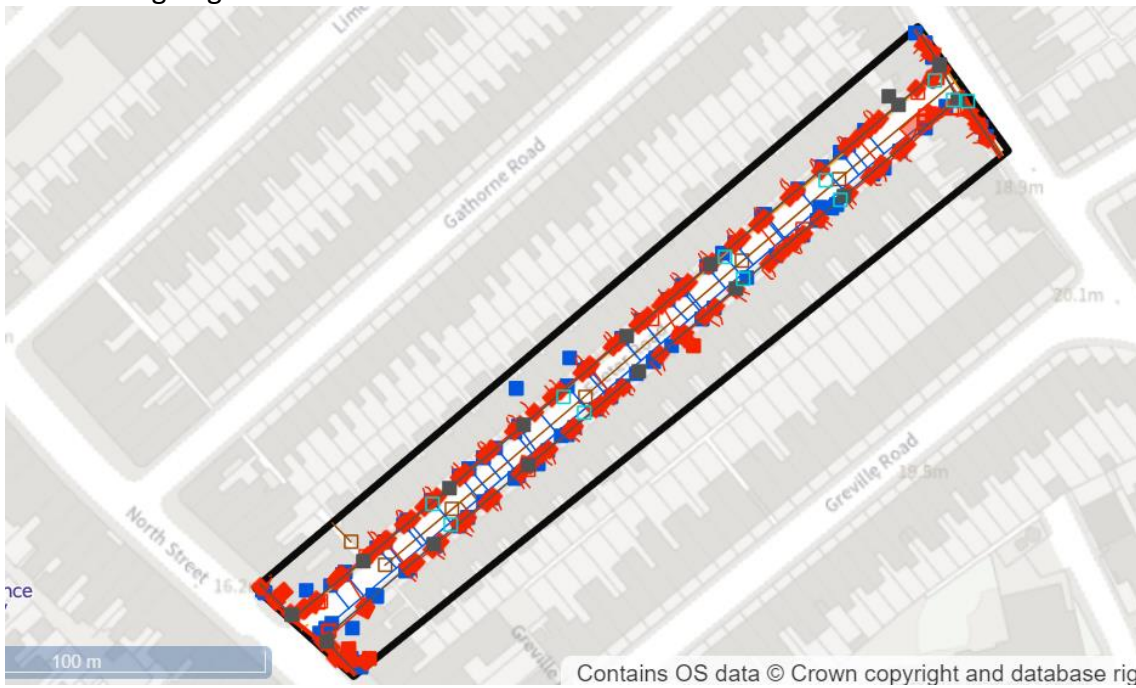
Utility	Company	Advised distance	Utility material	CAT detects?	Distance from planting	Notes
Low voltage electric	National Grid ED	3m	Poly surround core cable	Yes	2m	No chance of root encroachment but mindful to use shallow rooted species in case of plate lift
Overhead electric	National Grid ED	5m from line 2 X height of tree + 4m from pylon	Steel and aluminium	Visual check	5m overhead lines Species dependent from pylons	
Underground Telephony	BT Openreach	No limit advised	Copper / iron / steel in insulator	Yes	1.5m	No chance of root encroachment
Overhead telephony	BT Openreach	No limit advised	Copper / iron / steel in insulator	Visual check	3m	Dependent on tree species stature. 3m suggestion may need significantly greater distance for larger stature trees.
Fibre optic 1	Virgin	No limit advised	Glass fibre optic with plastic and metal sheathing	Yes	1.5m	No chance of root encroachment and flexible. Often aren't mapped accurately near to houses.
Fibre optic 2	Vodafone /	No limit advised	Glass fibre optic with plastic and metal sheathing	Yes	1.5m	No chance of root encroachment and flexible. Often aren't mapped accurately near to houses.

Utility	Company	Advised distance	Utility material	CAT detects?	Distance from planting	Notes
Fibre optic 3	BNET	No limit advised	Glass fibre optic with plastic and metal sheathing	Yes	1.5m	No chance of root encroachment and flexible. Often aren't mapped accurately near to houses.
Waste water / drains	Wessex Water / YTL	Conflicting advice. 6m given	Varies. Newer drains will be poly. Older drains can be concrete / brick / clay	No	3m	Give full 6m easement in areas where drains are likely to be Victorian or older. Closer tolerance in newer estates / new developments
Fresh water	Bristol Water	3m	Poly	No	2m	Further advice suggests 2m mandatory easement. No chance of root penetration but be aware of maintenance access to pipes.
Oil / Fuel	Exolum	On advice at site visit	Restricted info. Believed to be concrete	No	>20m	A search through Exolum will generate advice and visit info from their agents Fisher German.

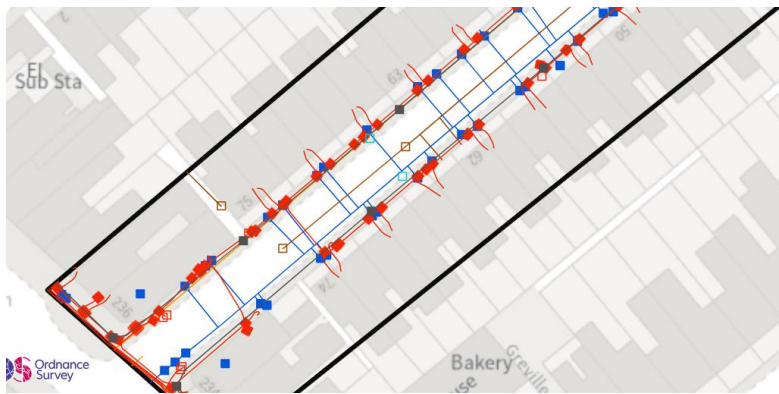
Appendix A

Exeter Road, Southville. Utility (service runs)

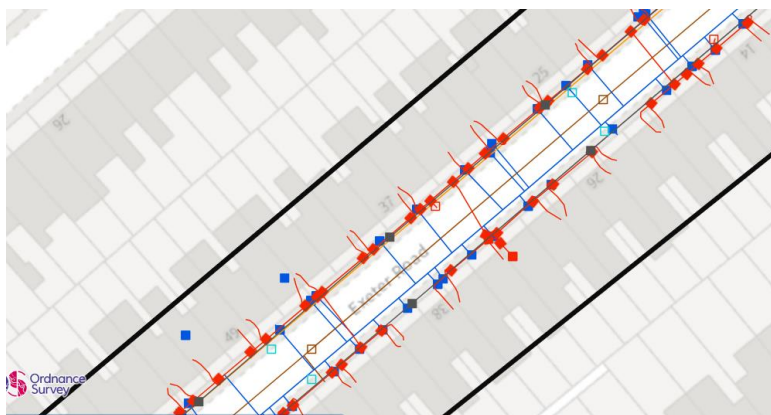
Red - electric, Blue - fresh water. Brown - waste water. Teal – gulleys. Black – tele communications / cable. Orange - gas



South West larger scale:



North East larger scale:



PUBLIC FORUM STATEMENTS

1. STATEMENT FROM JAMES JONES

The only food system that can ecologically sustain 8 billion people is one based on a plant-based diet. This is neither speculation, nor newly published information - it is a fact.

A fact that has existed even before this council declared a climate emergency in 2018, six years ago.

I read the news, I see the ecological destruction... and I see Bristol council so unwilling to make the minutest of changes to their internal catering... and I'm just standing here, thinking, this is so so hopeless... Am I living in a twilight zone? This council is in a position to implement a policy that would see a brighter future for our children, for our young friends and family, for the planet... and yet here we are... again... begging for the council to take action.

I first spoke to the council on this topic in 2020. Four years ago. What has happened in the span of four years? Well, myself and other residents have been routinely ignored, had meetings arranged with cabinet members who no-showed... been given responses that have absolutely ZERO connection to our questions.

Maybe the council will listen after the pandemic...

Maybe the council will listen after the mayor has gone...

Maybe the council will listen after the committee restructure...

Maybe the council will listen now that we have so many green councillors...

What more will it take before Bristol takes initiative and sets an example? Just this month, Nottingham council voted to implement this change. As a resident living in a green city, I am embarrassed to be standing here today... again. Please, work with us... we are asking for something that could be implemented so easily.

2. STATEMENT FROM GEOFF AND MYRA FARMER

We live on Maplestone Road, Whitchurch.

Our recycling collections are supposedly due on Wednesdays. At least 25% of the time over the past year they are never collected on the correct day.

Whilst I accept that occasionally there are shortage of crews through various reasons what I cannot accept is that all the neighbouring roads in the Bridge Farm Estate area always seem to be collected on the correct day.

It seems to me and all other 65 households in the Maplestone Road area that for some reason or other we are blacklisted.

This Wednesday and 2 weeks ago (18/09/2024 & 04/09/2024) Eastnor Road which is approximately 50 meters from our house had their recycling collected by midday on the correct day. It seems crazy to me that ours is not collected at the same time! A couple of months ago we had no recycling collection for the whole week. Not great when food waste was smelling!

I report this issue on a regular basis via the Bristol City Council website and receive an automated reply stating it will be collected within 48 hours.

This usually happens. However when the weather is windy recycling rubbish is scattered all around the surrounding area creating an eyesore.

We hope this problem can be sorted as soon as possible.

3. STATEMENT FROM IAN FROGGATT, SW REGIONAL DIRECTOR - WOODLAND TRUST

Urban trees provide vital habitats for wildlife, reduce pollution and impact of heavy rainfall, keep our towns and cities cooler, reduce stress and encourage people to spend time outdoors. Yet our Tree Equity Score shows that these benefits are not available to all.

This strategy sets a clear roadmap to increase tree cover across the city benefiting both people and wildlife as we face a changing climate.

But we need to act now!

4. STATEMENT FROM MARK CD ASHDOWN, BRISTOL TREE FORUM

The draft One City Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy

Bristol Tree Forum welcomes the progress made to develop a tree and woodland strategy for Bristol. The proposed strategy gives guidance on how to increase the extent and quality of tree cover in Bristol – essential in order to future-proof our city against the effects of increased urbanisation and climate change. If we do nothing, the liveability and sustainability of Bristol will be severely compromised. This strategy rightly recognises the many benefits of trees in the urban space, including reducing levels of pollution, regulating extreme temperatures during ever more frequent and severe heatwaves and helping to control flooding. We recognise that substantial progress has been made. However, the draft strategy still contains shortcomings that will need to be addressed. The strategy must be seen as a work in progress which will evolve as it is implemented by stakeholders including the proposed Bristol Tree Partnership Group, which we look forward to becoming a part of.

These are our concerns:

The tree canopy target: Originally, the ambition was to double tree canopy by 2046. This target has now been abandoned. The new, less ambitious target is to increase tree canopy by a mere 1.8% increase from 18.2% to 20% by 2040.

It has been argued that this target benefits from progress in tree planting made in recent years, when there was an apparent change in tree cover from 16.9% (measured in 2020) to the current 2023 percentage of 18.2%. However, these apparent increases are more likely to be the result of changes in the methodology used to establish these different baseline figures, rather than the result of previous tree planting initiatives (see our more detailed analysis annexed below).

Protecting existing trees: This needs to be a key objective of the strategy if it is to be successful. This will require serious engagement from major Council stakeholders, in particular Planning, Enforcement, Estates and Highways, as well as from external stakeholders such as National Highways, Network Rail, the NHS and other large landowners like the University of Bristol and Utilities companies. Without this engagement, those implementing the strategy will have little if any control over the loss of trees across the city. We must also engage with the Forest of Avon Trust and the Woodland Trust to develop a broader consensus via the Bristol Tree Partnership Group.

The Local Plan: The strategy needs to become part of the Local Plan so that it is integral to planning decisions involving trees.

Publicly available ward-level canopy data based on Bluesky data, used to estimate canopy cover in the city, has been promised. This will help the strategy to be effectively targeted to those wards which need to improve their canopy cover.

Annex

The calculation of baseline tree canopy

Based on our own canopy survey using i-Tree Canopy, we estimated that the canopy in 2018 was 17.9% with a 95% confidence interval of 17.3% to 18.5%.¹ On this basis, the 16.9% 2020 Bluesky value seemed low, though the new 18.2% Bluesky figure is closer to our 2018 estimate.

The new 2023 canopy figure from Bluesky of 18.2%, when compared with the 2020 figure of 16.9%, implies a 1.3% increase in just three years. This is equivalent to an increase in canopy area of 143 ha, or about 47 ha a year.² However, if the 0.43% annual rate of canopy increase to 20% is accepted, then we calculate that this would be achieved by 2029, some four years away. If this rate is extended by 15 years to 2040, then tree canopy of nearly 25% will have been achieved. This figure is the same as the proposed Stretch Target referred to at page 11 of the strategy – *‘To drive ambition, a Stretch Target has been adopted to achieve 25% tree canopy, or one quarter of the city, in time and subject to future work.’*

The strategy (at page 11) suggests that *‘this increase is due, in part, to trees planted over the past 10 years now maturing to the point that their canopy contribution can be measured.’* Taking the report of the OTPC programme for 2022-23 as a typical year,³ this shows planted woodland areas of 2.5 ha, the full canopy area at maturity. Another 1,100 street trees were planted which, using our modelling,⁴ will produce a canopy of 2.9 ha. So, in 10 years a total of 5.4 ha will be achieved from each planting season. Against this must be offset the reported loss due to tree felling of 7.5 ha of street trees, so there is a net loss of 2.1 ha per annum. This is just the Council’s net planting and does not include losses and gains from private tree planting and felling and as a result of development.⁵

With the introduction of version 2 of the Bluesky Treemap, higher accuracy has been achieved.⁶ The accuracy stated for version 1 was >90% while that for version 2 it is stated as >98%. It is not clear how to convert these figures into the error bounds of the canopy percentage figures. This means that any comparison between figures using different versions of the tool needs to be treated with caution. It is also not known how the timing of the Bluesky surveys might affect these figures. For example, surveys undertaken when trees are leafless are likely to show reduced canopy percentages.

In summary, the claimed 1.3% change over the last three years must be regarded with some scepticism and ought not to be stated as undisputed fact.

The chosen canopy target

The strategy quotes the Forestry Commission to justify the choice of a 20% target (page 11). However, the accompanying leaflet to the Forest Research UK Urban Tree Canopy Cover map⁷ advises that *‘... if a minimum standard is set locally for tree canopy cover ... there is evidence that 20% tree canopy cover (or 15% for coastal areas) is an appropriate level [our emphasis].’*⁸

The 20% target proposed in the strategy is therefore the minimum recommended. Getting the canopy target right is crucial to the credibility of the strategy. If the target is weak, it will not be a driver for change and will diminish the chances of achieving the strategy’s aims.

¹ <https://bristoltrees.space/trees/treecanopy/treecover-map.xg>.

² Bristol covers approximately 11,000 hectares.

³ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/files/documents/7072-otpc-tree-planting-report-2022-23/file>.

⁴ <https://bristoltrees.space/trees/tree-benefits/canopy-prediction.xg>.

⁵ These figures are tentative. Our further modelling of canopy changes is an ongoing project.

⁶ <https://bluesky-world.com/ntm/>.

⁷ <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/publications/the-canopy-cover-webmap-of-the-united-kingdoms-towns-and-cities/>.

⁸ <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/tree-canopy-cover-leaflet/>.

5. STATEMENT FROM SAVITA WILLMOTT, NATURAL HISTORY CONSORTIUM

The Natural History Consortium is delighted to support the publication of the Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy. We have had the opportunity to hear from residents across Bristol during our public survey, and through engagement events during Festival of Nature, to contribute to the ambition of this collaborative ambition. We look forward to supporting delivery of the strategy and engaging businesses, residents and visitors with actions to achieve it.

6. STATEMENT FROM ALEX STONE, FOREST OF AVON TRUST

Bristol is at the heart of the Forest of Avon, our local community forest. We have a wonderful proactive partnership that strives to see more people, of all ages, enjoy the benefits of trees and woodlands in Bristol. This strategy highlights the current strengths and the opportunities for the next few years to nurture and elevate the tree canopy, particularly where trees can give the most benefit. Trees are great for so many reasons - but a vast array of their benefits are directly for people – this is about improving the quality of life of residents and visitors. Let's help everyone get involved in this vision for the future...and have some fun whilst achieving it.