

Strategic Planning & Highways Group
Tree Preservation Taskforce
Notes from Meeting
29 May 2025

Attendees: David Solman (chairing), Paul Gibbons, Hilary Neville, Gert Vonhoff

Excused: Stephen Mariner, Ruth McLeish, James Kirby

Not attending / check whether they are still interested: Angela Martin, Mike Hodges, Angela Goddard

Blue colour shows actions still to be taken.

This meeting's agenda is to see what practical steps we can put in place to revive the work of this group. We agreed that a focus in terms of a practical project would help generating more interest again inside and outside the society. We saw the positive impulse from our work on Larkbeare House and Gardens in 2024.

David reported on 'ECC Tree & Woodland Strategy 2023-2033':

<https://committees.exeter.gov.uk/documents/s94003/Tree%20and%20Woodland%20Strategy%202023%20-33%20Final.pdf> . In section 1.5 on 'Visions, Themes and

Objective' the document lists the following objectives:

Objective C1: develop collaborative working with organisations that have an interest in the city's trees and urban woodlands.

Objective C2: promote and enable community involvement and neighbourhood action to develop local ownership, interest and understanding.

Objective C3: actively promote appreciation and understanding of trees as a community resource, with all tree owners (residents, farmers, and businesses), to enable local initiatives to support the vitally important ecosystem that they provide.

Objective C4: develop regional collaboration, working in partnership with other local authorities, landowners and NGOs that have an interest in developing the urban forest and large-scale woodland regeneration.

Objective C5: enable cooperation, communication and enforcement to prevent damage to trees with regard to utility companies that operate within the city, and seek opportunities to plant new trees during utility upgrades.

Objective 1 is a point for us to follow up on with ECC.

David reported on work Ed Dolphin has done with the Cathedral to produce an online map of the Cathedral Green trees with QR codes providing further information to target an online audience. The QR tags are put into an OS map. This will go online soon, preview under:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1QtQUSvMVaJLWXMg-PfFn93YEqn7m0II&ll=50.72293618151304,-3.529558380480191&z=18>

Ed Dolphin would like to follow-on from this with an organisation interested in Exeter trees beyond the Cathedral estate. [Ed Dolphin to be invited to our next meeting, where we would like to discuss this further.](#)

Project 1: Tree Leaflet(s)

We agreed to produce some kind of leaflet in print about trees in Exeter, a kind of tree trail (outside the Cathedral Green). This could reach a different audience. Check Woodland Trust's work to date in mapping some of the ancient trees of Exeter:

<https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/tree-search/?v=2778314&ml=map&z=13&nwLat=50.769612468815026&nwLng=-3.721509695336913&seLat=50.675500196449846&seLng=-3.343683004663085>

We are aware the other Civic Society's sometimes produce, or work with partners to produce, tree trail leaflets - e.g. Bristol:

<https://bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Castle-Park-Trail.pdf>

Different ideas for focus of such a leaflet were discussed and attendees will follow up for the next meeting with some ideas and rudimentary suggestions. Ideas so far: 1) focus on ancient and prominent trees (not more than 20) to create a tree walk. 2) focus on what can be achieved with street trees in terms of street scene, micro climate, culture (GV and SM)

Project 2: Review of TPO Map

ECC reactivated the TPO map on their website earlier this year. Revoked TPOs (as red bullet points), e.g. Colleton Crescent and Melbourne Place area, could be the result of short-term TPOs being put into place (ECC can do this for 6 months easily), but not followed up at stage 2 of the proceedings for whatever reasons to transfer the short-term TPOs into long-term ones.

We need to look into issues to investigate and follow up with ECC. [Everybody to look into some areas and details for the next meeting.](#)

Project 3: Access to Chambers Wood (more long-term)

David's understanding is that ECC's predecessor, the mayor, bailiffs and commonalty of the City of Exeter, acquired this wood as a legacy for charitable purposes (it was devised to the City under the will of Lawrence Atwill, d.1603 (<https://rammcollections.org.uk/collections/b6d61bfc-157e-3a5a-aeaf-ad1279ef2ef7/>)). In the late C20th ECC passed the wood, with a public access designation, to the Forestry Commission to look after. They hold a lease on the rest of Whitestone Woods, but due to the nature of the rather old-style FC lease, they haven't been able to open most of the surrounding woods to public access, as yet, and Exeter's historic Chambers Wood is 'landlocked'.

This is a conundrum, because FC have a very positive approach to public access north and west of Exeter, as explained in their current mid-Devon plan:

[https://www.forestryengland.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Mid Devon Forest Plan 2018-28.pdf](https://www.forestryengland.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Mid%20Devon%20Forest%20Plan%202018-28.pdf)

Awareness and access for the public are the issues; the challenge is whether we, as a tree group, might look to help 'square the circle'?

At the next meeting we want to [start working on a letter to ECC](#), especially any new incoming Tree Officer. We want demonstrate concrete projects ECC and ECS can collaborate on. The 3 projects could become the corner stones of such an approach.

[GV will take the main points of this meeting to the Heritage Harbour Festival, Sun, 8 June, 11-4 where ECS will share the 'Friends' stall. Aim is: to generate more interest and increase active group size.](#)

Next meeting:

1. [Agree on follow-up meeting in August and advertise it in monthly bulletin.](#)

Gert Vonhoff & David Solman, 29 5 2025