

Wider application

Although the Tree Warden Scheme is extensive, many local authority areas have still to take up the initiative. In the UK, trees in towns deserve to be better protected. Enhancing the work of professional staff with a team of dedicated and well-trained local volunteer Tree Wardens is one well-proven way of improving the prospects for the urban forest at local neighbourhood level. If you wish to set up a Tree Warden network, please contact The Tree Council.

Further information

This leaflet is one of a series produced by the National Urban Forestry Unit. NUFU is a charitable trust and it provides a national focus for the exchange of information and good practice in urban forestry. If you would like further information on other case studies, or if you have examples of good practice to share, please contact:

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Agate E (Ed) (2000)

Tree Planting and Aftercare: A Practical Handbook BTCV, Doncaster

The following publications are available directly from The Tree Council (details above):

- *The Tree Warden Action Pack* - a handbook for practical action available for Tree Wardens through their local network
- *Tree Warden News* - published three times a year

See also the Tree Warden section of the Tree Council's website at www.treecouncil.org.uk

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Urban Forestry in Practice

Neighbourhood tree champions

CASE STUDY 37

Neighbourhood tree champions

Introduction

Trees in towns benefit from constant care and attention, but many local authorities find it difficult to provide sufficient resources for a comprehensive support service. There are successful volunteer schemes around the world, where the energy and enthusiasm of local people is used to complement professional tree protection services. The Tree Council's Tree Warden Scheme (the UK's tree champion initiative) already operates in more than 120 local authority areas.

Specific example

Project name and location

THE TREE COUNCIL'S TREE WARDEN SCHEME operating in over 120 local authority areas across the UK and covering a third of the country

Project partners

- BTCV
- Forestry Commission
- National Grid
- The Tree Council
- Tree Advice Trust
- Wildlife Trusts
- 124 local authorities

Project description

The Tree Warden Scheme was launched by the national charity The Tree Council in 1990 and it has been developing it ever since. The scheme recruits and trains enthusiasts of varied backgrounds to form an effective volunteer network of local people with a concern for trees. It is sponsored by National Grid.

There are already over 120 local networks of Tree Wardens in the UK, most of which are co-ordinated by county, district or borough councils. The co-ordinators are usually professional tree or woodland officers, and their role is to organise and encourage Tree Wardens, to provide opportunities for training and to act as a focal point for the network of Tree Wardens in their area. The time commitment from tree warden co-ordinators varies greatly, from as little as 10 days per annum to as much as 75% of a full time post. This depends upon the priority that the scheme is given locally.

The Tree Warden's key roles at local level

Surveys

Tree Wardens work closely with their local community to carry out surveys of their local trees.



Advice

Tree Wardens can offer advice on which species to plant, how to deal with a damaged tree and how to obtain grant aid for planting. They also provide access to advice from others.

Tree protection

Tree Wardens inform the local council of threats to trees and so help to ensure compliance with Tree Preservation Orders and planning consents. They can also monitor the threat of vandalism to newly planted trees and signs of disease in older specimens.

Measuring the girth of a local veteran tree is one effective way to inspire newly recruited Tree Wardens

The national network

Regional conferences and publications

The Tree Council holds annual regional conferences for voluntary Tree Wardens. In addition, Tree Wardens keep in touch through a number of publications. *Tree Warden News* is produced every four months and is distributed to every Tree Warden and other interested parties, whilst *Tree News*, The Tree Council's magazine, is available from newsagents or directly from The Tree Council.

Lessons in tree identification are a key feature of the Tree Warden training process



Tree Warden action pack

When Tree Wardens join the scheme, they are given an action pack which gives examples of work that can be done and other organisations that may be interested in getting involved.

Results

Over 7 500 volunteers are now involved with this scheme and there are wide-ranging benefits for those local authorities which run a Tree Warden network:

- Strengthening support for local authority tree works with the public and with local politicians
- Improving understanding of trees (e.g. ivy does not kill trees, hollow trees are not "unhealthy", street trees have shallow, vulnerable roots)
- Meeting *Local Agenda 21* commitments to engage the community and work with schools in managing the local environment
- Demonstrating a commitment by the local authority to enabling community participation and decision making
- Encouraging better information flow between the community and the authority
- Providing informed and enthusiastic voluntary labour for local tree conservation (average time commitment per Tree Warden over 200 hours a year)
- Offering local residents life-long learning opportunities
- Enhancing existing working practices, thus helping to demonstrate best value, (e.g. improving the auditing of free tree schemes, improving survival rates of young trees through appropriate maintenance)
- Generating extra financial resources: Tree Wardens are sometimes able to raise funds and support in kind which would not otherwise be available to the local authority
- Saving money. Constant care of trees can reduce the long term cost of maintenance and this will generate savings for the local authority