

Committee Report: Tree Survey Data Report

Date: Sept 5th, 2024

To: Leisure & Recreation Committee

From: Andrew Briggs – Ops Manager

Subject: Results of Tree Survey

Council Priority: To protect and improve our environment and Strengthen Communities.

1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the "CSNPC Tree Planting Proposals – Survey of Residents," which gathered public opinion on tree planting in key areas within the parish. The initiative aligns with Swindon Borough Council's broader environmental goals, particularly its efforts to improve air quality and mitigate climate change, as outlined in the Council's **Net Zero Emissions Action Plan**. The survey results, based on responses from 10 residents, offer insights into community support for tree planting and recommendations for action.

2. Detail

Survey Results:

1. **Perception of Trees and Their Benefits:** Those residents who responded overwhelmingly recognise the benefits of trees. The responses highlight a unanimous agreement (100%) on several points:
 - Trees help fight climate change, improve well-being, provide wildlife habitats, and enhance the visual appeal of the area.
 - Trees provide privacy or screen undesirable views. However, a small minority raised concerns about potential negative aspects, with 10% agreeing that trees can be messy (leaves, branches) and a further 10% noting concerns about safety hazards, including trees providing hidden spaces for illegal activities.
2. **Usage of Open Spaces:** Half of the respondents indicated regular use of the parish's open spaces, including St Marks Park, Pembroke Gardens, and other local green areas for activities such as walking, dog walking, and relaxation. These spaces are valued by residents for their shade and the sense of well-being they provide.
3. **Maintenance of Trees:** Responses were split regarding tree maintenance, with 50% of participants feeling the trees are well-maintained, while the other half expressed concerns. This feedback indicates a need for better tree care or communication regarding ongoing maintenance efforts.

4. **Support for the Tree Planting Programme:** Support for tree planting at specific locations was as follows:

- **St Marks Park:** 80%
- **Tovey Road / The Venny:** 70%
- **Pembroke Gardens:** 80%
- **Iffley Road / Cobden Green:** 70%

Several reasons were cited for supporting the initiative, including the role of trees in combating climate change, providing shade, improving local biodiversity, and enhancing well-being.

Some residents expressed concerns regarding tree placement, specifically in areas like Pembroke Gardens, where trees have been associated with illegal activities.

5. **Additional Tree Planting Sites:** 60% of respondents suggested additional sites for tree planting. Locations such as Pinehurst, Cricklade Road, Ferndale Road, and Beauchamp Close were recommended. Residents highlighted the need for more shade and the role trees could play in improving air quality and addressing urban heat.
6. **Volunteer Support for Tree Care:** Encouragingly, 60% of respondents indicated a willingness to volunteer their time to care for newly planted trees. This support could be pivotal in ensuring the long-term success of the tree planting programme.
7. **Swindon's Air Quality Priorities and Tree Planting:** Swindon Borough Council's Net Zero Emissions Action Plan highlights the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality. Trees play a critical role in absorbing pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and fine particulate matter, which are prevalent in high-traffic urban areas. By expanding tree planting in key areas, CSNPC can contribute to Swindon's air quality improvement goals, particularly in areas where residents have identified high pollution and limited shade.

Furthermore, Swindon's rapid population growth and urban development have the potential to increase traffic and air pollution. Planting trees will help mitigate these effects by filtering pollutants, providing shade, and reducing the urban heat island effect, which are key strategies outlined in the Council's air quality improvement initiatives



Adult Resident AQ
information session.p

3. Recommendation:

1. **Proceed with the Proposed Tree Planting Programme:** The survey results show strong community support for tree planting across St Marks, Tovey Road / The Venny, Pembroke Gardens, and Iffley Road / Cobden Green.
2. **Expand the Programme to Suggested Additional Locations:** Consider additional tree planting in areas such as Pinehurst, Cricklade Road, and Ferndale Road, which experience high vehicle emissions. These locations would benefit greatly from increased tree coverage to combat air pollution and provide residents with much-needed shade.
3. **Enhance Tree Maintenance and Security:** Address concerns about tree maintenance by increasing transparency around current efforts and possibly introducing more regular maintenance schedules. Additionally, work with to enhance lighting and security in areas like Pembroke Gardens to mitigate concerns about illegal activities.
4. **Leverage Volunteer Support:** With a significant portion of the community willing to volunteer for tree care, establish a structured volunteer programme. This initiative can help ensure the newly planted trees thrive while fostering community engagement.