

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Questions**

**Question One**

Given that street trees have been proven to:

- Have a dramatic cooling effect in high temperatures;
- Reduce surface water run-off even when not in leaf;
- Remove pollutants from the air;
- Boost biodiversity;

And their presence has even been shown to:

- Reduce prescriptions for anti-depressants;
- Reduce crime levels;
- Reduce speeding;

Will the council build on the excellent work done so far in its tree planting programme with a specific programme to plant street trees in our towns and villages, with a measurable target in terms of numbers planted and/or coverage?

**Answer**

Raising awareness of the many benefits that trees bring to society is a key part of our work and we welcome the positive comments to that effect. Whilst we fully agree with the benefits listed here it should be noted that planting along the highway is a more difficult undertaking, for example because of buried utilities and the need to ensure traffic safety isn't effected. This is a challenge and the Council must spend additional resource to ensure that any trees planted are not a hazard to road users. Furthermore, we also have to plant larger, more mature trees along the sides of roads to withstand the additional environmental pressures of being at the roadside and exposed to traffic.

Therefore, regarding a specific programme to plant more street trees, this would require costing before any commitment could be made and such a programme does not form part of our tree planting plans.

**Question Two**

Connectivity of habitats is important for increasing diversity and ensuring the long-term viability of the flora and fauna they support. For Buckinghamshire Council to take the leadership role that it should we need a comprehensive map showing:

- Firstly, where all the Council's present and proposed tree planting sites are;
- Secondly all the planting by other land holders;
- Thirdly identifying gaps in wildlife corridors where particularly on low grade farmland natural regeneration could be encouraged which is very effective environmentally and in terms of cost.

Anecdotally I was unable to locate the Bury Farm site until seeing the map in today's update showed it was in fact an extension to Roger's Wood, not an area of planting I had seen 5km to the west alongside the A404. Will Buckinghamshire Council be implementing such a map

so we can all understand and be involved in this important work which is being done for all of our futures?

**Answer**

We are in the process of preparing a map using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) software which will show the locations of all the Council Land Tree Planting Programme sites. Once completed, this will be visible to the public. The Council do not hold data for all tree planting across the county, so would not be able to map all planting by private and third sector landowners/parties. There are no active plans to include wildlife corridors within the map under development, but we will add this as a potential feature for inclusion in future upgrades.

**Question Three**

It is good to see that Buckinghamshire Council have responded to declining tree cover in the county by road-side and larger scale tree planting. In the Princes Risborough – Thame area new planting can be found in town and on the A412 verge east of Kinsey.

As everyone is aware, we have recently had a period of high temperatures and low rain fall and there is no forecast at present for significant rain. In line with good tree planting practices, Buckinghamshire Council have included mulching and a watering system for each tree planted to help the tree cope with dry conditions. Sadly however, the trees on the Kingsey Rd are showing die back. On examination it appears that the mulch is of ineffective depth and the watering systems dry.

To thrive new planting requires mulch to a depth of 75mm and regular watering in dry periods. Can the Council confirm that it will be carrying out remedial mulching and watering immediately to all newly planted trees, including those on the Kingsey Rd, ensuring that all new trees in the County will thrive, grow, and be of benefit to people and the environment?

**Answer**

The Council are indeed committed to increasing tree cover across the County and are delighted that the effects of this can be seen and enjoyed by residents and visitors to Buckinghamshire and the Princes Risborough – Thame area. With regard to watering of street trees, these are the responsibility of Buckinghamshire Highways (formerly TfB). There has been a slight delay in the initiation of the watering programme this year as a result of the newly mobilised contractors having to prioritise the very large number of safety critical road defects reported as a result of the extreme winter weather, with crews working 7 days a week to repair the worst of the defects. Now that the recovery plan is in full swing, crews are able to attend to other routine maintenance such as the watering programme which was planned for commencement last week. Residents should begin to see the effects of this imminently.