

News release

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Birmingham is first UK city to develop a fully collaborative Urban Forest Master Plan

Birmingham is taking a strategic approach to its urban forest, and engaging experts and key stakeholders to help it prepare an Urban Forest Master Plan. This project is the first of its kind in the UK and follows a model widely used in the US and Canada. The Plan will help Birmingham work towards a vision for its trees that is sustainable into the future.

In the UK, the development of detailed Urban Forest Master Plans (UFMPs) has been slow. Perhaps a significant reason is the absence of a case study and resultant model.

The Birmingham project will redress this gap. A partnership between Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Tree People, working with UK consultancy Treeconomics and the Nature Based Solutions Institute, is collectively engaged in the development of a comprehensive Plan for the city.

Birmingham is the UK's second city. It has more parks than any other major city on the continent, and an estimated 1 million trees. With the longest running continuous street tree planting programme and high canopy cover, Birmingham recognises that trees are its natural lungs and are necessary for the wellbeing of the people who live and work there. Its green approach to public health has led to it being part of the global Biophilic Cities Network and it being granted Tree City of the World status, for the second year running, in 2020.

Simon Needle, Principal Arboriculturist at BCC, said, "Birmingham's treescape is a legacy of both city planning and the philanthropic work of notable residents who bequeathed land for public parks and open spaces. This history of joint working for the benefit of all is something we are continuing today with the Urban Forest Master Plan, it being a truly co-created document for the long-term protection and advancement of the urban forest".

The Plan will offer an action-based strategy, focused on what the city wants over the long term. It will establish an overall vision, with input from stakeholders from the business community right through to private householders. The Plan will provide a long-term (30+ years) framework in which various action plans can then be developed. Smaller goals will also be identified for species diversity, environmental equity, tree protection and community engagement. But perhaps most importantly, indicators will monitor progress so the city can ensure it stays on track.

Ian McDermott, Project Manager for Birmingham Tree People, added, "It is a very rare thing for a major city to undertake such strategic planning around the tree assets on both its own and private land, but for them to engage a third sector organisation such as BTP shows an underlying commitment to ensure the community is at the very heart of its urban forestry ambitions".

The significance of this collaborative Plan is that it is the first of its kind in the UK and has the potential to provide the case study and model which will encourage others to follow.

Kenton Rogers of Treeconomics is optimistic that the Plan will help protect Birmingham's urban forest: "Birmingham already has a fabulous treescape, a legacy from Victorian and Edwardian plantings, the key now is to ensure that this legacy continues long into the future."

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Treeconomics is a social enterprise which works internationally with community groups, research organisations, public bodies, municipalities and private business to complete projects which highlight the value of trees.

For further info., visit: www.treeconomics.co.uk/projects

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