



EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL Tree Forum

Notes of the Tree Forum meeting held Tuesday 27th February 2024 at 2pm via Microsoft Teams

Present

Councillor Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council (Chair)
Councillor Tim Dumper	TD	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Mike Rosser	MR	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Maddy Chapman Council	MC	Exmouth Town Council and East Devon District
Zoey Cooper	ZC	Exmouth Town Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
Jan Gannaway	JG	Exmouth Wildlife Group
Heath Nickels	HN	Exmouth Wildlife Group
Jonathan Fisher	JF	National Trust
Rob Skinner	RS	National Trust
Jodie Davis	JD	Forestry Commission
Kate Ponting	KP	Clinton Devon Estates
Simon Pardoe	SP	Tree Warden
Paul Fealey	PF	East Devon District Council
Alistair Jeans	AJ	East Devon District Council
Nathan Dunster	ND	East Devon District Council

Apologies

Rosie Walker	RW	Woodland Trust
Therese Goodwin	TG	East Devon District Council

Notes

- Welcome and apologies:** Councillor OD welcomed members to the meeting and apologies were noted.
- Appointment of Chair:** Councillor OD was appointed as Chair.
- Ongoing Chair:** it was agreed that in the future ZC will chair the Tree Forum. The Terms of Reference will be adapted and presented to Full Council in April.
- Aims of the Tree Forum:** Councillor OD outlined the aims of the Tree Forum which are:
 - to ensure that all Exmouth tree activity is recognised, understood and shared with the wider Exmouth community to reduce duplication of effort and encourage collaboration and best practice
 - to bring together stakeholders to access free and low-cost trees
 - to maximise our impact on maintaining, protecting and planting trees
- Introductions:** There was an introduction and short overview per person that included their role, plans/strategy for 2024 and what they require to be successful in 2024.

Some of the key issues, requests and actions that came out of the introductions were:

- A request from Councillor Mike Rosser (MR) for a Tree Vision and Planting Strategy for Exmouth to help reduce our carbon emissions and improve biodiversity. And a request from MR to contact EDDC's Landscape Architect (Chris Hariades) to lead on this.
 - **Action:** ZC to email Chris Hariades with this request.
- An overview of the very recent Tiny Forest project in Carter Avenue, from Councillor OD. With huge thanks to Paul Fealey (PF) and Louise Baker from East Devon District Council for their resources, knowledge and support. There is a strong desire to see more of these Tiny Forests in Exmouth.
- An interest from Councillor Tim Dumper (TD) in understanding EDDC's imminent Tree Strategy as this could shape a framework for Exmouth. And might provide a response to (or some accountability for) developers ripping out hedgerows on some of our new estates. Alistair Jeans (AJ) said they were waiting on the final Tree Strategy from DCC, and so the EDDC one should be ready to view in the next month. There is not a specific strategy, however, per town in East Devon. And the strategy will be woodland-focused.
- Jody Davis (JD) from the Forestry Commission explained they were keen to support with knowledge, expertise and access to grants.
- A request from Councillor Maddy Chapman (MC) to understand better when and why the Forestry Commission overrules a decision by the district's Tree Officers to fell trees. AJ explained that a ruling from the Forestry Commission tops a TPO and EDDC (AJ) won't put in an objection.
 - Action: ZC to put MC in touch with Jodie Davis (JD) at the Forestry Commission, who will route the query to the right team.
- Alistair Jeans (Arboricultural Team Manager, Countryside, EDDC) explained his role as more about protecting the landscape as opposed to actively encouraging planting, especially of urban trees.
- Jan Gannaway (Exmouth Wildlife Group) with Heath Nickels (HN), explained their role was initially about protection and conservation of nature and wildlife in an urban landscape, but is moving towards more planting and planning with a community tree 'nursery' at the allotments.
- Kate Ponting's role (Clinton Devon Estates) is leading on community engagement. John Wilding is the Head of Forestry and managing 'climate smart forestry' at scale.
- Nathan Dunster (ND) is a Tree Officer with EDDC's Street Scene team (as opposed to AL who is in EDDC's Countryside Team) and works with Paul Fealey (PF).
- PF (Street Scene) doesn't have a team, but looks after 208 parks, gardens and green spaces including football pitches and cemeteries. He has many and varied responsibilities including running wildlife improvement areas, liaising with schools, local organisations and community groups, explaining biodiversity net gain and carbon capture, mitigating climate change, working with the Tree Wardens etc etc. EDDC planted more than 2000 trees last year and has (this year) already planted 800! Paul Fealey works with Simon Pardoe, one of Exmouth's Tree Wardens, regarding what to plant and where.
- One of Simon Pardoe's roles is to create a general awareness and appreciation for



our Exmouth trees. He set up the Exmouth Tree Project FB page five years ago, created the Phear Park Tree Trail and hopes to create one for Manor Gardens, potentially online guides as well.

- Jonathan Fisher is the General Manager of South & East Devon National Trust properties. Rob Skinner is the lead Ranger for the National Trust in East Devon and shared plans for more tree planting on the 'Fruit Route' community resource and at Lower Halsdon (including hedgerows). There are further opportunities for tree planting at: Prattshayes, A La Ronde, Lower Halsdon Farm and Orcombe Point. RS pointed out the value of our grasslands as well for biodiversity and carbon capture.
- ZC said that although ETC doesn't own any land, we can make an impact through education/engagement with the public and recommendations on what trees (for example) to plant in their gardens and how to look after them. We can also recommend hedges over fences etc.

In the remaining half hour of the meeting, the outstanding agenda items were condensed into a discussion around next steps and purpose of this Tree Forum.

- It was agreed that transparency and communication between the stakeholders are key – and can be established via this Tree Forum.
- It was agreed that the value of this Tree Forum would be in understanding what is being planted (or planned for planting) in Exmouth – and that this could be made visible on a map.
- It was agreed that protecting our existing trees was crucial – it was suggested that this could be made easier by locating our TPOd trees on a map.
- It was agreed that learning how to maintain our trees (newly planted or otherwise) is important.

The proposal to create a (tree) map

- It was agreed that:
 - in layering the map first with who owns what land, we could start to understand roles and responsibilities within the Tree Forum members. And identify gaps in planting/protecting and maintaining our trees and hedgerows.
 - We could reference this map in our Forum meetings, and work towards *avoiding* trees being planted and subsequently not cared for or planting them in the 'wrong place' or the trees being mown down by mistake.
 - Auditing all the trees in Exmouth and plotting them on a map, however, would be a mammoth task and not the best use of anyone's time.
 - There is a canopy cover map already available – we could add this as a second layer of the map? We could start with some of EDDC's e-maps or ETC's Pear Mapping technology. HN agreed to work with ZC on the first iteration of a map.
 - Understanding what is under the ground is also important when planting trees – we can do this by asking PF (to avoid planting in areas where trees won't grow) who can do underground service checks (if it's EDDC land). This

information could ultimately form another map layer.

Next steps

- We agreed to keep the conversation going by:
 - Writing up and circulating notes (ZC)
 - Following up on the actions (ZC)
 - Setting a time and date for the next meeting (ZC)
 - Reaching out to EDDC's Landscape Architect (ZC)
 - Creating an online group (Teams?) for people to stay in touch and upload updates/funding information/requests etc (ZC)

The meeting ended at 16.10