Exmouth Town Council

Town Hall, St Andrews Road
Exmouth, Devon, EX8 1AW

tel: 01395 276167
email: reception@exmouth.gov.uk
www.exmouth.gov.uk

EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Notes from Tree Forum 30th September 2026

Present

Councillor Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council (Chair)
Councillor Maddy Chapman	MC	Exmouth Town Council and East Devon District Council
Councillor Louise Venables	LV	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Mike Rosser	MR	Exmouth Town Council
Zoey Cooper	ZC	Exmouth Town Council
Alistair Jeans	AJ	East Devon District Council
Nathan Dunster	ND	East Devon District Council
Carl Harrison	CH	East Devon District Council
Simon Pardoe	SP	Tree Warden
Jan Gannaway	JG	Exmouth Wildlife Group
Heath Nickells	HN	Exmouth Wildlife Group
Jodie Davis	JD	Forestry Commission

Apologies

Councillor Tim Dumper	TD	Exmouth Town Council and East Devon District Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
Lucy Buckinghamshire	LB	National Trust
Kate Ponting	KP	Clinton Devon

1. Election of Chair

- Maddy nominated Cllr Olly Davey as Chair.
- Seconded by Cllr Louise Venables.
- No further nominations received.
- Cllr Olly Davey elected unanimously.

2. Tree, Hedgerow and Wildlife Strategy Update from AD

- Progress on the Tree, Hedgerow and Wildlife Strategy has effectively stalled.
- The strategy has been significantly impacted by:
  - Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
  - Staff shortages within the Arboricultural Team.
  - Wider council cost-saving measures.
- Team capacity has reduced from four officers to two and a half.
- Recruitment efforts have been unsuccessful.
- Current work is focused on statutory duties:
  - Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)
  - Conservation Area notifications

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    - Development applications
- Some strategy elements continue, notably the Tree Champion/Warden programme.
- Plans to support the Broadclyst Tree Nursery were not progressed.
- Proposed funding for the next three years was not approved.
- This has paused ambitions to support and expand local tree nursery provision.

ZC asked whether the strategy was officially on hold. AD confirmed that implementation is effectively paused due to staffing, budget pressures and uncertainty around LGR. He noted concerns that while the strategy contained strong ambitions, future funding and delivery mechanisms were never fully resolved.

Members noted the update and the challenges facing delivery.

3. Tree Health Concerns in Brixington

MC raised concerns about:

- Trees suffering following the summer's dry conditions.
- Falling branches.
- Potential impacts of winter storms.

AD advised:

- Concerns relate primarily to trees on Fowler land.
- Landowners retain responsibility for tree safety.
- Deadwood removal does not require council consent.
- Protected trees requiring other works need TPO applications (and the landowner is aware of this)
- Residents concerned about safety should contact the landowner directly.

EDDC will not undertake individual woodland inspections on behalf of landowners.

4. New Funding Opportunity

Update from Jodie Davis (Forestry Commission)

Jodie highlighted a newly announced funding programme:

- £79 million available to support:
    - Nature recovery.
    - Climate adaptation.
    - Community and local authority projects.
- Includes opportunities relevant to:
    - Street trees.
    - Community planting schemes.

Action

Jodie Davis to send funding information to ZC for circulation with meeting notes.

5. Public Rights of Way and Tree Planting

LV reported:

- The Public Rights of Way Working Party is exploring opportunities to work with landowners on:
    - Tree planting.
    - Hedgerow creation.

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  - Surface water management.
  - Flood mitigation.
  - Biodiversity enhancement.

A request has been submitted to Devon County Council officers for further discussion.

AD noted that:

- Building relationships with landowners remains critical.
- Identifying available land is often the biggest barrier to successful planting schemes.

6. Tree Watering and Volunteer Support

Update from ND

ND outlined key challenges:

- Tree planting is often achievable.
- Long-term maintenance and watering are more difficult.
- Small teams struggle to manage aftercare across the whole district.

Members explored the potential use of the *Three Rings volunteer system.*

- Wild East Devon already uses the system.
- It may be adaptable to support:
  - Tree watering volunteers.
  - Tree Champions.
  - Community groups.

Agreed Actions

- CH, ND and AJ to discuss internally how Tree Champions could be linked into Three Rings.
- ZC to identify local groups and contacts who may wish to participate.
- CH to explore adding interested volunteers/groups to the system.

7. Tree Planting on Development Sites

Discussion focused on tree survival rates and accountability.

- Concerns regarding planting on the Dinan Way extension.
- Questions over watering and long-term management.
- Survival rates on development sites can be low.

AD advised:

- Developers generally retain responsibility for replacement planting for up to five years.
- Success rates can be poor.
- EDDC lacks resources to proactively inspect all planting schemes.
- Greater monitoring is needed to ensure:
  - Correct species are planted.
  - Planting locations are correct.
  - Trees survive beyond establishment.

Suggested Approach

- Tree Wardens and local volunteers could help identify failed planting before responsibility transfers away from developers.

8. Exmouth Community Tree Nursery

Update from JG

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Significant progress reported:

- A site has been secured at Exmouth allotments.
- The project is now operating as a standalone community group.
- Support received from the Tree Council.
- Funding of approximately £700 is available for establishment costs.
- A visit from Tree Council representatives provided practical advice and encouragement.

Nursery Team

- Jan Gannaway
- Simon Pardoe
- Heath Nickells

Current Activities

- Site preparation underway.
- Volunteers helping clear and organise the area.
- Collection of tree seeds has begun.
- Species stratification and propagation plans progressing.

Offers of Support

- ND mulch from EDDC stock.
- ZC offered support promoting the project through Town Council communications and social media.
- Climate Working Party funding may be available if additional costs arise.

Outcome

Members welcomed the project and recognised it as a highly positive development.

9. Tiny Forests Update

Update from OD

- Existing Tiny Forest sites continue to be supported.
- Volunteer "Tree Keeper" groups remain active.
- Community watering events have helped improve survival rates.

Future Site

- A potential site has been identified in Littleham.
- Utilities checks have been completed.
- Work on a further Tiny Forest has been paused temporarily while current projects and the tree nursery are prioritised.

Mike Rosser reported potential support from community groups in Littleham should the project move forward.

10. Rotary Tree Planting Project

Update from ZC:

- Rotary still needs to secure tree stock.
- Water butt arrangements are being progressed with nearby residents to support watering.

Action

- CH to send available tree funding opportunities and application links to ZC.
- ZC to share information with Rotary representatives.

11. Royal Avenue Tree Concerns

Raised by HN

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Concerns were raised regarding replacement trees planted following the flood defence works:

- Two replacement trees appear dead or in poor health.
- Original replacement obligations may have expired.

Actions

- CH to investigate the site.
- Explore whether replacement planting may still be possible.
- Follow up ownership and responsibilities.

12. Positive Feedback to EDDC Tree Team

Mike Rosser thanked EDDC's tree officers for:

- Swift responses to concerns he had raised.
- Use of TPOs to protect significant trees.
- Supporting planning decisions that protected trees from overdevelopment.

Meeting Close

The Chair thanked attendees for a constructive discussion. While acknowledging challenges around resourcing and delivery of the EDDC Tree Strategy, members welcomed several positive developments, particularly the Community Tree Nursery project, new funding opportunities, volunteering initiatives and continued local tree planting efforts.

Meeting closed at approximately 15:19