

Report to: Chichester City Council - Community Affairs
for its Meeting on Monday 2nd December 2024

From: Paula Chatfield, Chair of Chichester Tree Wardens

Date: 24th November 2024

Since we last reported (22nd August 2024), Chichester Tree Wardens' volunteer activities to promote trees and encourage protection of and planting trees include:

- Attending the screening of "Heart of an Oak" at Chichester Cinema at New Park on Monday Evening, 9th September, to offer information and the chance to chat after the screening as part of our **public outreach** efforts. The screening was part of the cinema's Greener Screen programme, devised with Transition Town Chichester. Several people approached us on the evening to ask how to get involved with supporting trees and Tree Wardens locally and **we are delighted to announce the appointment of Clare Hogan as a volunteer Chichester Tree Warden** with effect from 11th October 2024. Clare succeeds Geoff King as our volunteer in the Whyke north area.
- We received notice from West Sussex County Council that it no longer has the original design file for the **Chichester City Centre Tree Trail**, so our intended update cannot be delivered. (We will write separately about the small grant you gave us for this purpose that can no longer deliver what was intended.) The usefulness of such a Tree Trail remains and we have decided to aim for a new souvenir-style, including photographs, to be published in 2026 (allowing photos to be taken throughout the year). The route needs to be adapted, so **do let us know if you have a favourite tree you'd like us to try to include**. (I'm hoping we can work out how to include the magnolia in Little London car park and the Golden Rain tree that lights up CDC's New Park car park.)
- On Saturday 21st September, I attended a training session at Hatchlands Park, near Guildford to learn about **Acute Oak Decline** and participate in a research project aimed at understanding if/how volunteers could be equipped to identify reliably and report symptoms to improve national understanding and research into the condition, which can lead to oak trees dying within 3-12 years of diagnosis. **If you spot a local oak tree with black "bleeding" between plates of bark**, or happen to notice small D-shaped holes in bark (you'd need to be looking closely), **please let me know** – I will certainly be looking at trees in another new way after the training.
- I raised a question at CDC Cabinet on 30th September seeking reassurance that no trees in the vicinity of the **Avenue de Chartres bus interchange proposals** would be managed differently in anticipation of the proposed scheme. The preliminary artistic impressions seemed unrealistic to me, irrespective of one's thoughts on the desirability of the design shown. It was good to receive thanks for the work Chichester Tree Wardens do in the response from Cllr Moss.
- We supported Transition Town Chichester at the Weald and Downland Living Museum [Hedgerows and Harvest event](#) on the weekend of 12th & 13th October. Jenny helped on TTC's stand on the Sunday and we provided relevant promotional materials sourced from the Tree Council.
- We are taking part in the Tree Council's **Hedgerow Champion Network** pilot. As well as a series of online training, I was able to attend practical hands-on training on 18th November.
- Puzzled by the infilling with concrete of 2 **tree pits on West Street** in June, we raised a [Freedom of Information Act request](#) to West Sussex County Council, as tenant responsible for this land through its Lease from the Cathedral (this land is part of the cathedral churchyard, originally edged by a row of 16 lime trees inside iron railings). We were eventually advised that WSCC had no record of the works and discovered separately that they had been undertaken by CCC to "tidy up" the area. The original row of lime trees is believed to have been planted in 1828 ([painted by](#)

[John Constable in 1834](#)), and we find Chichester people fiercely protective of them, so much so that in summer 2022 we started to compile [webpages](#) on them in case a campaign were to be needed to save them.

- The cathedral tree pits are one of very few (possibly only) spots in the city centre suitable for big trees to grow outside parks. Our aspiration is for them to be replanted with tree species that will grow to match the scale of their Georgian neighbours and the cathedral itself and maximise the ecosystem services provided whilst being “well-behaved” in habit. With the blessing of both West Sussex County Council, as tenant of this land, and the Dean for the Cathedral as owner, we applied to the National Trust for one of its “[Trees of Hope](#)”, a sycamore grown from the Sycamore Gap tree that made international news when it was illegally felled in 2023. Whilst we were unsuccessful, we hope to continue this partnership working, including with CCC with regard to re-opening the concreted pits. With the Cathedral’s 950th anniversary celebrations coming up, and its recent Eco Church Gold award, it seems there’s never been a better time to plant a new iconic tree, Chichester’s very own Tree of Hope!
- On 4th November, I attended a public engagement exhibition and presentation by Kinsted, WSCC’s joint venture redevelopment partner for its **Tannery site in Westgate**. Its proposals are explained [here](#) and are based on stripping the entire site (buildings/walls, trees and up to 5m of soil) to remediate historic (perceived ongoing) land contamination. Due to tight response deadlines, I submitted a personal, rather than Chichester Tree Wardens’, response and will do what I can to advocate for the important amenity of existing trees in this context and to network with others, including Westgate Residents’ Association and Chichester Conservation Area Advisory Committee.
- We were pleased to learn of CCC’s feedback to West Sussex County Council’s draft landscape strategy for Chichester’s **public realm and pavements**: that any trees be planted in ground so that they have the opportunity to properly mature and grow (the original designs incorporated trees in planters). Thank you, particularly as I understand indicative costs increased substantially as a result. Sadly the illustrations used for [public engagement](#) STILL show little trees in planters and have missed off at least 2 existing trees (outside Caffè Nero and outside Lakeland). **The [chance to comment](#) closes on 29th November**.
- Our efforts supporting the Friends of Brandy Hole Copse continue, with 2 of us on the Committee, helping at Monthly Working Parties, and our website hosting the Friends’ online presence (new content includes a digital form of [The Story of Brandy Hole Copse](#), a brilliant record of local volunteers’ efforts from 2001).

Generally, our volunteers are out and about noticing trees, asking questions, reporting and responding to tree matters brought to our attention. Our time spent ebbs and flows, according to other commitments; we cannot be everywhere, so notice where we happen to be/go or get asked; and our efforts have mixed success. CDC refused to make a Tree Preservation Order for trees on the temporary site compound established on Prebendal School’s playing fields. However, it has retained the horse chestnuts alongside New Park Road, undertaking tree works for now rather than felling some. In Rew Lane, one of the TPOed redwoods saved from felling (by WSCC due to an insurance claim) has died; this is the third protected tree to die in the vicinity and rumour is of a leaking cesspit – perhaps we can encourage proper investigation. WSCC Highways’ tree officer has advised us in advance of a number of necessary street tree fellings, meaning we can forewarn local people and, as best we can, save them the shock response to it happening.

Coming Up

It’s National Tree Week (23rd December to 1st December 2024). Whilst we have nothing specific to take part in locally this year, there are 3 online talks, 27th – 29th November, and you can find all details [here](#). Jenny is also intending to give us some orchard pruning training as part of her maintenance efforts at Whyke Community Orchard.

We are also planning to participate in the [Festival Of Chichester](#) again in 2025 (14th June to 20th July) and hope to encourage others so that a new nature-themed Festival event category can emerge. Our thanks to Chichester Quakers for agreeing to sponsor us for an Explore Trees event again in 2025. The Festival opens for event entries in early December, when a new-look website/event booking process will emerge.

Many thanks for reading this far, and apologies for such a long report – there has been so much of substance happening these last few months!

If you have a favourite tree, or are curious about the trees in your patch, please let us know - the best people to be aware of any tree are those who see it regularly. We'd love to see the city's trees through your eyes, as we continue to take what opportunities we can to promote, protect and encourage planting trees as assets for our city.

With best wishes,

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