

PROJECT OFFICER BLOG

This month, let's talk about trees, an ever controversial subject!

We all know how important trees are for the environment, communities, our health and wellbeing and the economy. Their ability to clean the air, combat climate change, provide oxygen, reduce noise and even crime, help prevent water pollution, soil erosion and provide habitat for an array of wildlife makes trees a welcome addition to any community space. However when planted in the wrong place and not managed correctly, trees can become unruly and often unwanted by some.

There are more than 400 trees in the South Cliff Gardens all of which, through no fault of their own, need a bit of attention as they have been left to their own devices for a number of years.

One of the most magical aspects of the South Cliff Gardens for me is the fact that when you walk along the top of the Esplanade and look down you get a very special glimpse of that often hidden world of the tree top canopy and its unique ecosystem. Although this for a horticulturalist and a wildlife lover is breath-taking, I understand that in places where the trees have got out of hand this blocks the views of the sea, stunning South Bay and Scarborough Castle. These views are protected, have heritage significance and need reinstating. Last year our design consultant's team (Southern Green) carried out extensive research into the trees, looking at their health, wildlife value, age, quality, horticultural curiosity and their history. Interestingly many of the trees were planted originally by Paxton for their health and wellbeing qualities; he felt that the scent from pines would have an aromatherapy effect on the gardens' visitors. Alongside this my team asked the local community what their thoughts were on the trees and the majority of people expressed a need for the gardens to be opened up to become more welcoming. Some people would like the views reinstated and some people were passionate about keeping the tree removal to an absolute minimum.

The information gathered will inform the proposed tree works. Our aim is to remove any dead, diseased or dying trees, reduce overcrowded trees where necessary to open up the canopy a little and reduce the dark unwelcoming environment and improve tree health. We have to be careful not to remove too many trees at once as this might create wind tunnels and potentially lead to a domino effect on the other trees and of course we absolutely do not want to have any negative impact on the current wildlife living in our gardens. Reinstatement of the heritage views across the site will take place; this will involve crown reduction (lowering the height of trees) and some tree removal in places, however all trees with high wildlife and heritage value will be kept and trees that are interesting from a horticultural point of view will also be retained. It is council policy to plant a tree every time one is removed so we will plant trees that do not grow to a large height and have additional wildlife value to try to boost the local biodiversity.

This month we have been focussing on producing a tree works plan to encompass all of the above and try to get the balance right across the site, I must admit it's not an easy task. Once the tree proposals are produced we will publish them for viewing.

We are hoping to carry out initial tree works in the correct season at the end of this year before the works start on site next spring.

I hope this explains our plans for the trees a little but feel free to get in touch if you'd like any further information.