

Our contribution to Merton Council's consultation on Tree Management Strategy for Council-Owned Trees

Friends of the Earth (FoE) is committed to tackling the climate emergency and improving the natural environment: as part of this, we would like to see UK woodland cover doubled by 2045. Merton FoE welcomes the Council's consultation on tree strategy as a constructive step at the local level so we can achieve the goal of increasing tree cover. Our comments are based on extensive discussions with the Merton Tree Wardens Group, whose help we fully acknowledge.

We believe it is essential to compile a comprehensive and up-to-date survey of all the trees on Council-owned land in Merton to replace the existing fractured system of databases.

We call on the Council to devote more resources to educating the public about the importance of caring for trees, giving priority to preserving the existing trees. In addition to using the Council's print and online media resources, Merton Greenspaces should hold advice events in parks, libraries and schools, where free whips could be given to residents who are interested in planting them in their gardens.

We believe that, wherever appropriate, tree planting should focus on whips, rather than standard-size trees. This is because whips need less watering, have a lower failure rate and cost much less to purchase.

It would be helpful if Merton Council were to have designated staff to liaise with the volunteer groups involved in tree planting. The named contacts would help volunteers with project management, publicity and transport at tree planting and associated events.

More attention needs to be paid to ensure that tarmacking around street tree pits provides sufficient space for trees be able to absorb the water they need.

The Council should insist that developers who are required to plant street trees remain afterwards responsible for the care of the new trees for ten years.

To increase biodiversity and improve the resilience of trees to disease, a minimum of three different species of trees should be planted in any street.

Submitted on 28/02/2022