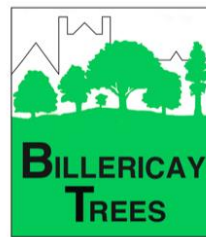


## Billericay Tree Warden's Bi-monthly News-sheet for September 2021



Conserving Our Tree Heritage  
In association with Billericay Town Council

Our latest News-sheet is now available to view on the Billericay Town Council's website and back issues are listed under the header "The Town". There are also tree related Fact Sheets included to advise residents.

The mature trees in our gardens, parklands and countryside and those that line our streets are our town's 'green lung' exchanging air pollution for oxygen.

### The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC):-



To celebrate Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 – 70 Years our Monarch – Individuals are invited to plant a tree in their garden – Schools to plant a free Woodland Trust native tree and hedge pack in their school grounds and landowners to plant a copse or woodland. The recommended planting windows are from October 2021 to March 2022 inclusive. For detailed information please refer to <https://queensgreencanopy.org/>

The campaign will see communities, charities, schools, scout groups, councils and landowners planting trees across the four nations to create a lasting legacy in honour of "The Queen's leadership of the Nation" that will enhance our environment and

the landscape, for generations to come. The campaign will encourage the planting of healthy native trees that will thrive in their environments. **The Patron of the QGC is His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.**

The global Covid-19 pandemic has been a challenging time which has profoundly changed the lives of all British citizens and generated a much greater public awareness of the need for green space. The Queen's Green Canopy initiative will encourage people to come together with the common purpose of "greening" their local and national environments. Everyone is encouraged to take part in creating this special gift to Her Majesty by planting and celebrating, trees at home, and within their community, through their local Government or County programmes.

We have articles relevant to the **QGC** initiative in the Billericay District Residents' Association Newsletter and in the Town Crier.

### **QGC - Reaching Out**

There are a goodly number of schools in our town ranging from Toddler Groups through to Primary Schools. Some of which may have land set-aside for tree planting and eco-projects that would suit the **QGC** project. One major school in particular has shown great interest in the scheme and we are in dialogue with their school governors as to where to site the trees and the logistics involved. Other schools are invited to contact [billericaytreewardens@gmail.com](mailto:billericaytreewardens@gmail.com) should they wish to be involved. The Woodland Trust's free native tree packs come in a variety of sizes and plant species mix that will suit a particular site whether small or large. More than one tree pack can be ordered. For schools, this is a good opportunity to introduce the need to actively improve the environment and a practical way to achieve it.

The **Billericay Tree Wardens** believe, as many others do, that carbon capturing, wildlife-homing, rain-making trees will contribute to keeping our planet and climate in balance.

### **Tree Planting Update:-**

Apart from the BTW helping to provide trees to be planted and arranging planting events for our members and other loyal volunteers, the finding of land to plant on with the logistics and permissions to plant, has been largely down to our BTW member and ecologist Nathan. Nathan works in association with the Essex Wildlife Trust, the Basildon Borough Council's Countryside & Parks department and with Barleylands. These associations are ongoing and future planting projects are in the pipeline. In addition we have worked alongside the Norsey Wood Society who are providing many sapling trees to be planted along a c.700metre (0.43 of a mile) section of the Outwood Common Road as part of a long-standing EWT project. Our volunteers are to complete the planting this coming autumn.

And we also have on board Neil, CAB adviser, birder and naturalist, who has spent many years organizing local biodiversity projects via EWT's Living Landscape 34 initiative including organizing wildflower planting projects on roadside verges. And has a variety of environmental contacts that the BTW can call upon for advice. Additional to this is the Woodland Trust's generous scheme of providing large numbers of native tree and hedge "whips" gratis for community and wildlife projects that have made much of this possible. As has been reported before, sourcing trees to plant is not the issue but finding the right land to plant them has been the challenge.

#### **In association with the County and Local Authority:-**

##### **All native "whips" unless otherwise stated**

Extension to the Wickford Memorial Park 3500 trees planted – Co-designed by the Basildon Borough Council (BBC) & Nathan – Planted by contractors.

Crays Hill Forest of Life – Small apple orchard with "standards" plus 2100 tree "whips" – Jointly designed by Nathan & the BBC and planted by contractors.

Noak Hill Road 2000 trees planted - Planted by the Essex County Council (ECC) and on behalf of the Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT). Planted by contractors.

#### **Independent projects Nathan Led:-**

Barleylands 1500 planted - Mainly EWT.

Cowbridge Wood 600 planted - EWT.

Southend Road 300 planted - EWT.

Mountnessing Road 300 planted - EWT.

Mountnessing Farm 200 planted - EWT.

Sun Corner 150 planted – EWT.

530 rescued HS2 railway refugee oaks – 3ft high "whips" – BTW.

Lake Meadows 7 elm "standards" – Funded by the Lions Club of Billericay – An 8<sup>th</sup> elm that died is to be replaced and funded by the LCB.

South Green 2 maple "standards" - BTW and funded by the South Green Parish Council.

Festival Gardens 2 Pilgrim 400 Bramley Apple "standards" – BTW + BTC - (Vandalized and taken into care!) They are now scheduled to be replanted in the grounds of Great Burstead Church.

#### **Planting project to be completed this autumn:-**

Outwood Common Road 150 EWT + 420 NW + 600 further saplings that are held at the Norsey Wood nursery.

**Total Number of native trees planted = 11232 with a further 1170 intended for planting this November.** A majority of the independent planting projects had their plants, stakes and tree guards supplied gratis by the Woodland Trust. It will be many years before these trees and hedges reach a stage where they are significantly exchanging air pollution for oxygen. However their benefit to the landscape and wildlife will kick-in long before that. Thus the protection of our existing mature trees to deliver these "*natural services*" is seen as more important than ever.

#### **Planting dates – Volunteers welcome!**

A 700 metre (0.43 of a mile!) tree and two deep hedge planting project along the Outwood Common Road adjacent to Norsey Wood – The "whips" are already in the NW tree nursery – So they will need lifting out of the NW tree nursery on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> November and planting out on the roadside on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November. The time and place to meet to follow nearer the event.

#### **Seed Collection dates – The Norsey Wood Tree Nursery**

Nathan to lead a seed collection event for the Norsey Wood Tree Nursery project:-

On Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September at Norsey Wood and on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> September at Mill Meadows. It is planned to plant the seeds in the NW Tree Nursery on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> October. Please bring along as many suitable pots as possible - We aim for c.450 seeds o/a. The time and place to meet to follow nearer the event.

### **Local Plan News**

The Plan has moved on since our last News-sheet report. The Billericay Action Group (BAG) is not without its irony! It reminds us of the historical fact - "*This week marks the 740<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Billericay in 1281 as part of the peasants' revolt*". Linking us to the fact that many of us view the Council's Local Plan has disproportionately focused on the town. This is seen in the light that the Planning Inspector has asked the BBC to make some significant changes to the Local Plan taking into account the core items and to hold another public consultation. So it is now felt that there is an opportunity with the recent change in Council administration for there to be a rethink of the major issues affecting our town – The threat of Green Belt infringement, the number of new build houses proposed (including affordable) and satisfying the infrastructure conundrum. And it remains to be seen how the government's "Planning for the Future" and "The England Trees Action Plan" White Papers will shape any developments should they go ahead.

### **The Local Plan and the trees on the nine main proposed development sites**

One of BTW's main concerns has been if and when Billericay's Local Plan developments receive the "green light", would there be an unbridled mature tree loss on those sites? And mindful of the fact that when land is finally owned by the Developer and before a Planning Application is viewed by the Council, the Developer would be in his legal right to fell non-TPO trees.

*So our concern is legitimate. We do not want to lose our heritage oak trees that have been with us for over a couple of centuries or more. The Queen's Park estate managed successfully to work many of them into their street plans – Let that set the precedent.*

We have received information from the BBC's Principle Planning Officer with regards this issue.

Planning Application drawings would be expected to indicate ALL trees on the site whether the subject of a TPO or not. An independent tree survey is usually required for new developments. Thus the Planning Officers would be aware of the arboreal situation of that particular site.

Where considered appropriate, a Landscaping Condition can be attached to a Planning Consent requiring the retention and protection of existing trees and hedgerows during the development work and any additional replacement planting required. Thus how a development fits visually into the landscape, its topography and its trees, forms a dominant part of that aspect, and can be considered from the outset.

Where trees are subject of a TPO designation, or are considered to be of significant amenity value, Planners would normally consult the Council's Arboriculturist for advice on potential harm to preserved trees during the construction process and whether any trees ought to be protected by a TPO.

As mentioned initially, what seems to be lacking (in our view) is that there is no legislation that prevents a Developer from felling trees (other than those with a TPO) once he has gained possession of the land and prior to submitting his PA. It would seem that potential tree loss is at the scruples of the individual Developer. Better for a development site with many trees to be given a group TPO to be followed by discussions between the Council Planners and the Developer to agree which trees should stay and which can be removed. And the site's architect should feature strongly in that discussion as his site plans would reflect such decisions.

With the design of new residential estates now under the spotlight, the environmental wisdom is recognized for designing in tree-lined streets plus a suite of beneficial ecological enhancements for nature and societal reasons. But these are mainly recommendations and, as yet, not enshrined in law.

### **Unintentional Topiary!**

There are two Sweet Chestnut trees in the Waitrose car park that have a Disney World look about them! They both underwent tree surgery work in late 2020. Not all tree species lend themselves to such a strict pruning regime but qualified and experienced tree surgeons will know what each tree species will require - tolerate.

The Sweet Chestnut is a tree species that can withstand what seems to be severe tree surgery only to regenerate vigorously. When in a woodland setting they can be periodically coppiced to provide useful timber material whilst collectively providing a vibrant wildlife habitat. Initially the trees were shorn of their leaves but the regeneration process has added a certain unintentional topiary aspect!

Effectively, our mature trees in town and countryside are a mini-nature reserve playing host to birds, bats and insects; most of which go unnoticed by us humans!



### **Planning Application Checks**

**Bridleway – Lampern Crescent – West Ward (North)** - After a long-running dispute with a twice over change in ownership of the thin strips of land either side of the bridleway, the small woodland adjacent the Queen’s Park Avenue is to stay and has been professionally made H&S safe by tree surgeons. A gap-site Developer wanted the trees felled to build a dwelling and another Developer applied to build a dwelling adjacent to it. The BBC refused both Planning Applications for various technical reasons. The woodland, standalone trees and vegetation that line the bridleway for c.210 metres provide a green aspect for the residents and is also good for bird and insect life. The difficulty with this particular case was that the sliver of land either side of the bridleway (the responsibility of the BBC) still belonged to Taylor Wimpey, the original company that built the estate. The strips of land went to auction twice! There are several alleyways / bridleways in the town that present a similar problem with regards tree and maintenance issues. We know of one where several residents have formed a social / community group and undertake regular gardening and rubbish collection events with both wildlife and visual aesthetics in mind.

The **Chapel Street** development site adjacent to the United Reformed Church in the town’s Conservation Area has had its Planning Application (PA) refused. Several medium sized trees were felled illegally but no official action was taken. It’s not unusual for a further Planning Application to be lodged by a gap-site Developer in these circumstances that tones down the scale of the original PA. If so, the BTW will request that a tree planting exercise should complement the “Street Scene” requirement and replace those trees that have been lost. There is a badger sett nearby that will need to be protected should construction go ahead.

Several other PA’s have been “Commented” upon where we have detected that future construction work (extensions to houses etc.,) may compromise a tree(s) unnecessarily.

### **Tree Protection Orders**

We only apply for a TPO on a mature and healthy tree when we consider that it is under a “perceived threat” or that it is a classic specimen of its kind. And these are mainly native trees. However our Local Authority is also interested in protecting rare and healthy ornamental specimens that have been introduced from other parts of the world. These add to our tree heritage and carry on the traditions of the early plant collectors with their Victorian mindset. Our national arboretums reflect this attitude. The legal process of designating a TPO is extremely expensive for a Local Authority involving Tree Officer time and a lengthy legal process. We have recently been informed that 11 trees that we applied for protection have been granted TPO status.

### **Facebook Matters**

Our newly appointed social media assistant researches and answers various tree related questions and prepares popular tree related issues and items with their artwork for posting. The Queen's Green Canopy initiative has already been featured.

## **NOTABLE TREES IN OUR TOWN**



### **Notable trees**

Left – Along the Tye Common Road. A male Monkey Puzzle or Chile Pine. Found on the sides of volcanoes along the Andes in South America. It's Chile's national tree but stands of them are subject to logging. It has the hardest wood of any conifer. The female Monkey Puzzle has visibly large spherical cones. The tree in front is a Robinia but also known as a Black Locust or False Acacia and is a native to the USA. Along with the London Plane, it is highly efficient at extracting air pollution to such an extent that the trunk's bark turns black. Thus it is a classic tree species to line city streets.

Right – Is a classic mature and vigorous oak tree on farmland immediately to the southwest of Billericay (adjacent to Scrub Rise) that forms area H17d of the Local Plan. Note how the tree has balanced itself away from the lean.

**We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to various BBC and BTC Councillors who support our goals along with those local experts with specialist tree knowledge that have advised the BTW in various technical matters.**

**A thank you must go to the Billericay Town Council for providing the BTW with advice, a meeting room at the BTC's Chantry Centre, moral support and indemnity insurance whilst out in the field**

**The BTW's next committee meeting will be on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> September at 6pm  
Unless otherwise stated, we are to opt for a Zoom meeting**



**Prepared by the Billericay Tree Wardens [Editor JHS – 04/09/2021]**

Contact = [billericaytreewardens@gmail.com](mailto:billericaytreewardens@gmail.com)

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