

TREES & WOODLANDS

“The first period of vegetation, and the banks are clothes with pale blue violets to an extent I have never seen equalled and with primroses a few days later some of the copses were brilliantly enlivened by wood anemones and white Stellaria. Again subsequently, large areas were brilliantly blue with bluebells.” Charles Darwin.

Woodlands are an important element in the natural environment of the Borough. They provide opportunities for recreation, are a valued component of the landscape, an essential habitat for wildlife, provide employment, contribute to the supply of timber and are an effective means of absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Much woodland is identified as being ‘ancient woodland’ (that which has been in existence since at least 1600); they are described as ‘semi-natural’ because the woodlands have received past management. They represent the most important woodland habitats for wildlife, sometimes containing species of national rarity. The majority of woods are comprised of broad-leaved species, although some coniferous plantations exist. The Great Storm of 1987 had a widespread impact on trees and woodlands throughout the Borough; it also brought many benefits, including a profusion of deadwood habitat. Public attention has rarely been directed towards trees and woodlands as much as it has since then.

Ancient trees are important as part of our cultural and historical landscape and are valuable for a wide variety of wildlife. A tree may be considered to be ancient when it is in the last third of its life. An ancient tree can also continue for many years in a moribund or dead state, serving as the host to a number of rare organisms. They are important for many organisms that inhabit dead wood, such as beetles, spiders and other invertebrates. Small mammals, bats and birds often use the holes and slits in trunks and boughs for nesting and roosting. These trees are also important for: lichens, where air is reasonably clear; climbing plants, such as ivy and honeysuckle; fungi, which themselves may host a number of associated invertebrates including beetles and flies. The greatest threat to the future of ancient trees is misunderstanding, resulting in the cutting down of ‘non-perfect’ trees.

VISION: To sympathetically manage all ancient semi-natural woodlands, over one quarter of London’s total, and to care for species important to Bromley, including wood anemone, dormouse and fungi. We want to promote people’s love of woodlands. Markers of time and place, ancient trees must be conserved for our next generation.

AIMS:

- To protect woodlands and trees which are of landscape, wildlife and historic interest.
- To encourage the conservation and sympathetic management of the Borough’s woodlands, and where possible increase their sustainable economic use.
- To encourage the planting of trees and the establishment of new woodlands in appropriate locations.
- To promote a greater interest and enjoyment of woodlands by the public.
- Promote the value of ancient trees.
- Build up knowledge about the Borough’s ancient trees and their associated species.
- Encourage the retention and protection of ancient trees and their woody debris.
- Create a resource of ancient trees for the future.

Factors affecting the habitat:

- (a) Fragmentation of woodland, leaving isolated remnants.
- (b) Inappropriate management.
- (c) Loss of woodland to development or conversion of wood and scrub to other land uses.
- (d) Replacement with non-native trees.
- (e) Invasion of non-native species (eg. rhododendron, sycamore, Norway maple).

- (f) Illegal picking of fungi and flora.
- (g) Effects of climate change.
- (h) Tree diseases.
- (i) Grazing and browsing damage (eg. squirrels) including encroachment of livestock.
- (j) Dumping, vandalism and arson.
- (k) Planting in the wrong place (eg. unsuitable soil conditions, detracting from nature conservation value).
- (l) Desire for more trees and new woodland planting.
- (m) Loss of deadwood through felling and 'tidying-up'.
- (n) Lack of money, resources and desire to manage woodlands.
- (o) Sympathetic recreational opportunities.
- (p) Pollution from traffic, industry, agricultural chemicals affecting ground flora and epiphytes.
- (q) Removal of ancient trees as unsightly or dangerous.
- (r) Concreting around and covering lower parts of trunks can kill trees.
- (s) Cutting roots when work is undertaken close to the tree
- (t) Loss of individual trees through development
- (u) Neglect and inappropriate management of individual trees, including ancient
- (v) Lack of future-generation ancient trees due to grazing, cutting and intensive landscaping
- (w) Removing deadwood which naturally collects around ancient trees.

Flagship species:

Negative indicators:

Retrievables: