

What is Tree Cities of the World?

Urban forests help define a sense of place and well-being where people live, work, play, and learn. The Tree Cities of the World programme is an international effort to recognize cities and towns committed to ensuring that their urban forests and trees are properly maintained, sustainably managed, and duly celebrated.

At the 2018 World Forum on Urban Forests in Mantova, Italy, world leaders issued the “Mantova Green Cities Challenge” and a call-for-action that included joining the Tree Cities of the World programme, which will connect cities around the world in a new network dedicated to sharing and adopting the most successful approaches to managing community trees and forests.

To be recognized as a Tree City, a community must meet five core standards that illustrate a commitment to caring for its trees and forest. These are

- **Standard 1 - Establish Responsibility.** The city has a written statement by city leaders delegating responsibility for the care of trees within the municipal boundary to a staff member, a city department, or a group of citizens—called a Tree Board.
- **Standard 2 - Set The Rules.** The city has in place a law or an official policy that governs the management of forests and trees. These rules describe how work must be performed—often citing best practices or industry standards for tree care and worker safety—where and when they apply, and penalties for noncompliance.
- **Standard 3 – Know What You Have.** The city has an updated inventory or assessment of the local tree resource so that an effective long-term plan for planting, care, and removal of city trees can be established.
- **Standard 4 – Allocate Resources.** The city has a dedicated annual budget for the routine implementation of the tree management plan.
- **Standard 5 – Celebrate Achievements.** The city holds an annual celebration of trees to raise awareness among residents and to acknowledge citizens and staff members who carry out the city tree programme.

See Arbor Day Foundation web page - [Link](#)

The city councillors declaring a climate change emergency is a clear sign that the city takes its responsibility towards the environment seriously.

Part of the motion made stated:

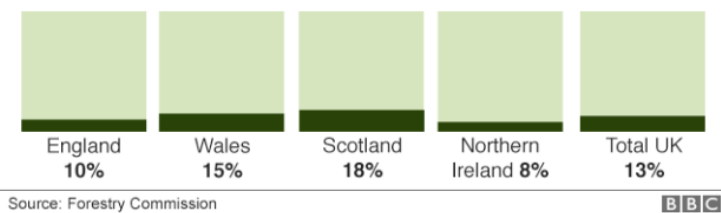
“This Council notes that

- The Climate Crisis is an existential threat that requires us to change the way we invest in, grow and sustain our cities and regions.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report published in October 2018 set out the devastating consequences for the planet if it warmed more than 1.5C – with increased extreme weather with heatwaves and floods driving mass migration and global insecurity; the catastrophic social and ecological impacts worsening for every degree of warming.
- The impact of climate change will not just be felt in far-away lands or coastal areas, the impact on Birmingham residents of increased extreme weather events, including flooding, droughts and heatwave is likely to be profound, with increasing risks to both life and property.
- Given our global footprint and the diversity of the city the climate crisis will hit at the heart of families and communities within the city.

Trees play a vital role in mitigating some of the impacts of climate change, Air cooling, pollution absorption, speeding water infiltration and slowing flood water flows to name a few. These benefits are known as ecosystem services. In addition to the ecosystem services there a host of other benefits – even if we do not realise it – being surrounded by trees and green infrastructure helps decrease stress levels, lowers blood pressure, increases educational attainment, boosts property prices and even decrease crime rates.

The UK has one of the lowest tree coverages of all European countries. Only 13% of the UK's total land area is covered in trees, compared with an average elsewhere in the EU of about 35%. In England, the figure is just 10%.

Woodland coverage by nation

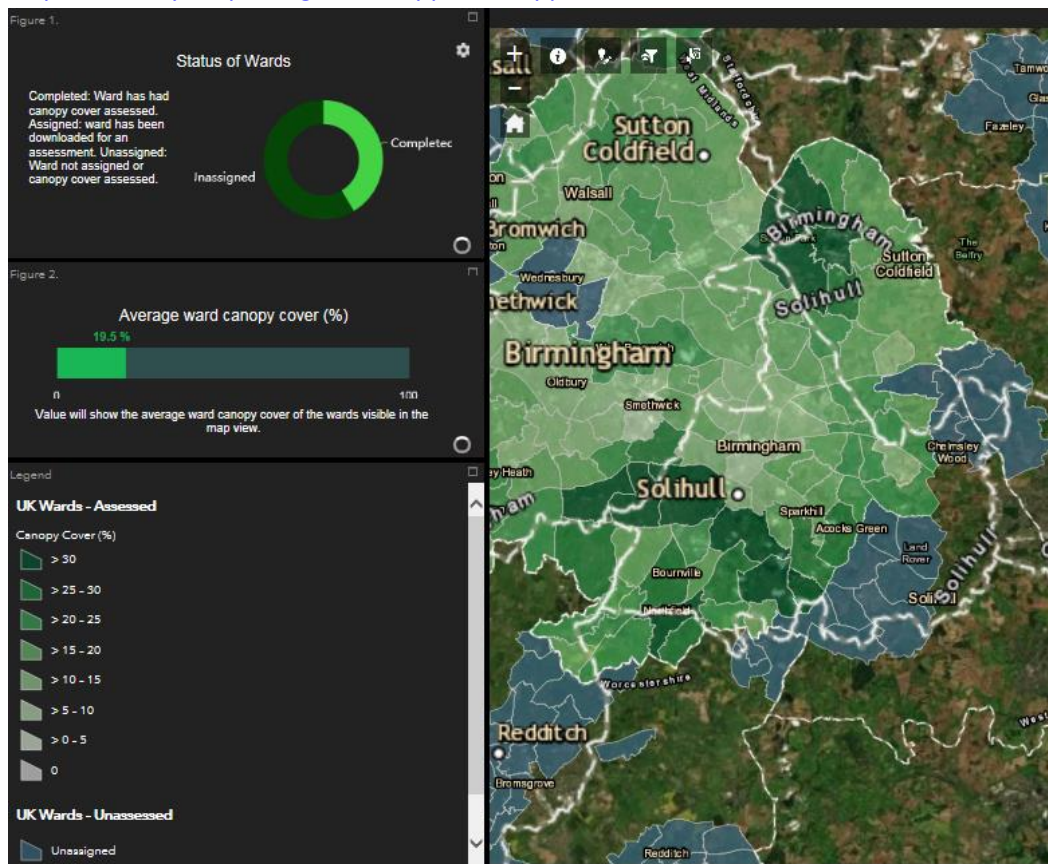


It is widely recognised that to meet the challenges of future climate trends that we need to achieve around 25 – 35% canopy coverage. However, many of the beneficial effects of increased canopy coverage are only felt when we are in close proximity to trees. With around 50% of the population living in large cities and with an estimated 70% by 2050, retaining and increasing the canopy coverage in cities is essential.

Birmingham already has a significant number of trees in public and private ownership; these are collectively called the Birmingham Forest. While we are already above the national average for tree cover – Birmingham has an average of 18.6% canopy coverage – this varies significantly across the city with some wards having in excess of 30% tree cover while others are as low as 5%. These areas of low coverage are some of the most deprived areas of the city and also have the poorest air quality.

Link to canopy coverage web page -

<http://forestry.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d8c253ab17e1412586d9774d1a09fa07>



There is a need to address this lack of tree cover through strategic planning and targeted tree planting by both the city council and by encouraging developers and householders to retain existing trees and plant new ones where space allows. The development of new guidance on urban tree management and a tree and woodland strategy for the city will set out how we can achieve this.

As a city we need to **protect** our existing trees, **promote** the benefits of trees and **enhance** our canopy coverage. Becoming a Tree City will be one of the ways we can do this.

Birmingham has Pledged to become a Tree City of the World and is likely to be amongst the first (if not first) UK City to achieve this status. This Pledge has been backed by Cllr Zaffer and Cllr O'Shea and is supported by all city council tree officers (including Amey), Birmingham Trees for Life, The Birmingham Tree People and Trees for Cities – the UK lead for Tree Cities of the World.

On Friday the 12th July the city and its partners are meeting with the President of the Arbor Day Foundation to discuss our pledge and work towards Tree City Status.

Some facts and figures:

- It is estimated that there are well over 1million trees in the city that's about one for each person living here.
- There are over 74,000 street trees in Birmingham
- There are 1398 Hectares of woodland in Birmingham's parks and open spaces.
- Across the city the tree canopies cover 48.81 Square Kilometres
- The benefit of the ecosystem services that Birmingham's trees provide is valued at £46,137,750 per annum, that's £38 of free benefits per person per year.
- Birmingham's woodlands remove approx. 7216Kg of PM2.5 (harmful particulates) per annum
- £431 Million per annum is the calculated reduction in costs to the health service from the removal of PM 2.5 by Birmingham's woodlands.