

Edinburgh i-Tree Eco project (2011)



Background

The pilot project for i-Tree Eco in Scotland took place in Edinburgh; conducted in 2011 by Forest Research. The main driving policy at the time was the Woods In and Around Towns (WIAT) scheme which aimed to increase the quantity and quality of woodlands in urban areas with a focus on social and recreational benefits (FC Scotland, 2015). The aim of the survey was to raise awareness of the value of urban forests with a Scotland-based case study.

Outputs

Forest Research produced a full technical report, detailing methods, findings and recommendations (Hutchings et al., 2012). The report was extended and updated by Forest Research in 2017, with a re-analysis of data using a newer version of i-Tree Eco allowing more ecosystem services to be assessed. A two page summary providing background information, key findings and recommendations was produced. The experience of undertaking an i-Tree Eco project and its results was presented to other Scottish councils by the City of Edinburgh Council[†].

Impacts

- **Guiding new local policy:**
 - Directly influenced Edinburgh's Trees in the City policy (2014) and helped guide the Council's policy on climate change mitigation[†]. The Edinburgh specific findings helped generate greater impact through specific policies
 - *"That was really the first time we had overarching tree and woodland policies for Edinburgh. It would have been hard to do that without i-Tree."*[†]
- **Provided quantitative baseline information & improved understanding:**
 - Provided new information on tree canopy levels and allowed comparisons which could not be made before[†].
 - Provided quantitative data which helped understanding and recognition of urban forest value in other council teams which don't normally deal with qualitative data, e.g. road engineers[†].
 - Improved understanding within the greenspace team of issues around collecting data, and presenting it to others such as to policy-makers[†].

- **Positive example of valuation of natural assets:**
 - Praised as a case study by the Scottish Natural Capital Forum (2014).
- **Used to justify programmes and actions for trees:**
 - Change in approach to justifying investment in trees for their value, rather than to avoid risk[†].
 - *"So every time we have to write a business case or put forward an argument to whichever manager or group we always reference information out of the i-Tree eco report."*[†]
- **Improved awareness and collaboration within Edinburgh City Council:**
 - Raised awareness of the Edinburgh Forestry and Natural Heritage team and their work[†].
 - Increased collaboration between tree and climate change teams[†].
 - Interest from planning policy-makers in how to incorporate into open space strategies[†].
- **Used as evidence to advise public on tree selection:**
 - Helping to change public perception of what trees to plant e.g. species diversity over a native only approach[†].
- **Evidence base spurred tree planting initiatives:**
 - The TreeTime Edinburgh initiative utilised i-Tree Eco results to demonstrate value and need for tree planting in Edinburgh. The initiative has planted trees in numerous locations across Edinburgh through corporate sponsorship and donations (TreeTime Edinburgh, 2017).

References

- City of Edinburgh Council. (2014). Trees in the City: Trees and Woodlands Action Plan - January 2014. City of Edinburgh Council. Edinburgh, Scotland.
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- Hutchings, T., Lawrence, V., & Brunt, A. (2012). Estimating the Value of Estimating the Ecosystem Services Value of Edinburgh's Trees. *Forest Research Technical Report*, 1–45.
- Scottish Forum on Natural Capital. (2014). Edinburgh sets natural capital example. Scottish Forum on Natural Capital. Accessed online at: <http://naturalcapitalscotland.com/article/edinburgh-sets-natural-capital-example/>
- TreeTime Edinburgh. (2017). Website available at: <http://www.tree-time.com/>