

Sidmouth i-Tree Eco project (2014)



Background

Sidmouth is the UK's first 'civic' arboretum: it encompasses the entire town rather than a separate single site. Established in 2010, the arboretum aims to maintain and enhance the area through tree planting and protection.

The i-Tree Eco project was initiated and led by the charity Sidmouth Civic Arboretum, with support from Treeconomics in project design and training of surveyors. The survey was carried out by volunteers; local schools were also engaged in data collection[†].

The project was funded by the Sid Vale Association, Sidmouth Town Council and East Devon AONB. Engagement from tree experts to give tree talks and walks helped raise local interest and enthusiasm for the survey[†].

Outputs

Sidmouth Arboretum produced a 12 page report summarising headline results; without the technical detail and analysis present in other i-Tree Eco reports (Sidmouth Arboretum, 2014). It was published via a 'release' day comprising tree talks and events. It was also publicised in the local newspaper.

Impacts

Provided baseline statistics on urban forest:

- Information on species composition of the urban forest identified ash as the most abundant broadleaf species. This highlighted the possible impact from a loss of these trees from ash dieback[†].
- Baseline information on tree species and population useful for 'master-planning' of the urban forest and helped to begin to assess potential impacts, such as from pests and diseases[†].

Raised awareness at District Council level:

- District members and working parties were interested and engaged with the results of the project[†].
- The project helped raise interest in further i-Tree Eco work in other regions of East Devon District[†].

Secured resources for District Council's tree team:

- Project findings helped to secure an additional full-time arboricultural officer post[†].

Improved capacity for Sidmouth Arboretum to be involved in tree management:

- Raised the profile of Sidmouth Arboretum[†].
- Improved understanding of urban forest composition and value within Sidmouth Arboretum[†].
- Gave Sidmouth Arboretum greater authority to make statements on the value of trees and discuss this with both the public and council[†].

Increased awareness and engagement of local community in the management of the urban forest:

- Improved volunteer surveyors' knowledge of different tree species and their value[†].
- Plans for a Community Tree Strategy to be developed (Sidmouth Arboretum, 2014).
- Helped increase public understanding of urban forest values and threats from tree diseases[†].

Guiding new policy:

- New District Tree Strategy being drafted (2017) which will reference Sidmouth and Torbay i-Tree Eco projects[†].
- Findings used within Devon Ash Resilience Forum, along with Torbay i-Tree Eco project, to assess potential impact of ash dieback (Wolton, 2016).
- Opportunity for results to feed into the new Local Neighbourhood Plan, currently in development[†].

References

- Sidmouth Arboretum. (2014). Sidmouth Arboretum Tree Survey. Sidmouth Arboretum. Sidmouth, UK.
- Wolton, R. (2016). Devon ash dieback action plan. Report for Devon Local Nature Partnership & Devon Hedge Group.