

Tawe i-Tree Eco project (2014)



Background

The Tawe catchment i-Tree Eco project assessed urban areas of three local authorities in South Wales: City & County of Swansea (CCS), Powys County and Neath-Port Talbot County Borough. The project was funded by NRW where the i-Tree Eco survey would be one of ten pilot projects to gather evidence and identify opportunities to improve sustainable management of resources, as examples to deliver the Welsh Government's Environment Bill.

Outputs

A full length technical report and two page summary was produced by Forest Research and Treeconomics (Doick et al., 2016). NRW produced a single page infographic on the results. Project results were disseminated locally and more widely within Wales through workshops, presentations and webinars[†].

Impacts

Influenced policy:

- Monetary values and robust scientific figures for ecosystem services helped to make case for trees to policy-makers[†].
- Workshops of projects with wide ranging council departments supported initiation of collaborations where i-Tree Eco findings have been used in preparation of Swansea's Green Infrastructure Strategy[†].
- Findings included in evidence pack for new Public Service Boards[†].
- Used as evidence towards improving natural environment and wellbeing in Swansea Wellbeing Assessment[†].
- In a review of the use of Tree Preservation Orders, the results demonstrated importance and need for effective tree protection (CCS, 2016a).
- Referred to in Swansea's Local Development Plan Topic Paper on Green Infrastructure: an exemplar of ecosystem service valuation (CCS, 2016b).

Provided information base for further work:

- The value of air pollution removal in Tawe, as well as in Wrexham and Bridgend, were used by the Wildlife Trusts Wales in a consultation about air quality and noise management in Wales (Wildlife Trusts Wales, 2016).
- Along with Bridgend's report, was used by a community housing association to incorporate it into a Social Impact Methodology (Wythenshawe, 2016).

Improved understanding:

- Identified threats to urban forest, including the high numbers of trees on public land at risk of being sold off, few mature trees in population and the need for more diverse species assemblage[†].
- Helped to identify which species might be appropriate in different planting scenarios[†].
- Identified a threat to the urban forest from future development as many trees were found on undeveloped sites[†].

Facilitated coordinated planning by different groups:

- Workshop and presentation helped convey information, bringing different groups together and stimulating collaboration on new policies[†].
 - *"In terms of planning, particularly we've seen the i-Tree be really useful for unlocking conversations."*[†]
- Project summaries were sent out to developers to make them aware of these issues and benefits, and incorporate them early in development planning[†].
- Key headline figures which are locally specific have been the most important in engaging other groups and organisations[†].

Provided evidence to make a better argument for trees:

- Added confidence and weight to existing tree values and arguing the case for trees against negatives, such as maintenance costs[†].
 - *"we're using i-Tree left right and centre in terms of saying we've got the evidence here that tells us... this is what we need."*[†]
 - *"It's about being able to actually have the evidence to corroborate those multiple benefits that we all like to say trees have... Having the actual evidence is really, really useful."*[†]

References:

CCS. (2016a). Letter from the Tree Preservation Scrutiny Working Group to the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Regeneration. Tree Preservation Scrutiny Working Group. City & County of Swansea. Swansea, Wales.

CCS. (2016b). Green Infrastructure. Local Development Plan Topic Paper. City & County of Swansea. Swansea, Wales.

Doick, K. Albertini, A., Handley, P., Lawrence, V., Rogers, K., Rumble, H. (2016). Valuing Urban Trees in the Tawe Catchment. Technical Report. Forest Research. 99 pp.

Wythenshawe. (2016). Social Impact Methodology. Wythenshawe Community Housing Group. Manchester, England. 50 pp.

Wildlife Trusts Wales. (2016). Wildlife Trusts Wales response to: Local air quality and noise management in Wales. Wildlife Trusts Wales. Cardiff, Wales. 13 pp.