

## Wrexham i-Tree Eco project (2013)



### Background

Wrexham's i-Tree Eco survey was a partnership between Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC), Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Forest Research. It was funded by NRW and WCBC. It was the first i-Tree Eco project to take place in Wales. The project aimed to provide information on the composition and structure of Wrexham's urban forest, assess the monetary value of ecosystem services, provide recommendations for urban forest management and inform a refresh of Wrexham's Tree and Woodland Management Strategy.

### Outputs

Forest Research with Treeconomics produced a full technical report, detailing methods, findings and recommendations, as well as a two page summary report. NRW produced a one page infographic which was distributed widely to professional and community organisations. The project received widespread media uptake in Wales and in the UK forestry sector.

### Impacts

#### Guiding new local policy:

- The project helped drive the delivery of Wrexham's new Tree and Woodland Management Strategy (WCBC, 2016). Within which it helped to guide specific targets for the urban forest including an increase of canopy cover to 20% (from 17%), as well as set a focus on species diversity and preference for larger, longer lived trees.
  - *"Having this information as a basis for the strategy was really excellent – it provided the data to develop an approach. And has really informed how we'll manage the tree stock."*
- Informed Wrexham's Local Development Plan, specifically in its approach to green infrastructure<sup>†</sup>.
- Plans to use data to inform Supplementary Planning Guidance on trees and developments and also within Public Service Boards (Jaluzot & Evison, 2016).

#### Exemplar for other Local Authorities (LAs):

- Exemplar to other LAs to take up i-Tree Eco and conduct their own study<sup>†</sup>.

- NRW subsequently secured funding for Bridgend and Tawe Catchment i-Tree Eco projects.

#### Securing investment in urban forest:

- Findings legitimised retaining the tree officer post and the current budget in a climate of shrinking LA budgets (Jaluzot & Evison, 2016).

#### Raising profile of urban forestry at national level:

- Raised awareness of urban forest value and issues among Welsh forestry officials, contributing to the inclusion of urban forestry as a key theme within the Welsh National Woodland Strategy (Woodlands for Wales, 2015) and within NRW's (2014) Corporate Plan (Jaluzot & Evison, 2016).

#### Widening profile at local level:

- Facilitated improved cooperation with the planning team leading to opportunities to embed trees into planning policies and actions. For example, used to inform regeneration plans for Wrexham's town centre.
- Trees given more consideration in planning decisions:
  - *"On this occasion, issues of canopy cover were raised and taken much more seriously than perhaps they would have before, the i-Tree Eco findings were referred to in order to discuss species choice."* (quoted in Jaluzot & Evison, 2016).
- Support from Council's Head of Housing for new planting and canopy cover increases, helped by support from elected members which was elicited from the i-Tree Eco findings (Jaluzot & Evison, 2016).

### References

- Jaluzot, A. & Evison, S. (2016). i-Tree Eco Wrexham Impact Assessment 2013-2016. Resources for Change. Powys, Wales.
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- NRW. (2014). Corporate Plan 2014 – 2017. NRW, Cardiff, Wales.
- WCBC. (2016). Wrexham Tree & Woodland Strategy 2016-2026. Wrexham County Borough Council.
- Welsh Government (2015). Woodlands for Wales Action Plan (2015-2020). Welsh Government.