

Arboricultural Association

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2024



Arboricultural  
ASSOCIATION

[trees.org.uk](https://trees.org.uk)



The home of tree care



Published in the UK by

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First published in November 2021.

Arboricultural Association Ltd. A company registered in England at  
The Malthouse, Stroud Green, Standish,  
Stonehouse, Gloucestershire GL10 3DL, UK.  
Company number 4070377.

The Arboricultural Association is a registered charity no. 1083845.

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The Arboricultural Association Strategic Plan 2022–2024 was produced by  
the Association’s staff team and Trustees. It was formally adopted by the  
Board of Trustees on 20 October 2021

Front cover image: Navin Sehmi.

Other images: John Parker.



# FOREWORD

## FROM THE CEO AND TRUSTEES



### WHAT IS ARBORICULTURE?

It is a question we will all have been asked over the years when trying to explain our job, our hobby and our passion. We all have our ways of describing it, this word that nobody else seems to understand. Perhaps we might respond with a technical definition, something like **“the science and practice of the cultivation, establishment and management of amenity trees for the benefit of society.”**

In simple terms, though, arboriculture can be described in two words: **tree care**. Whether we work in contracting, consultancy, management, as a tree officer, in policymaking, research, training, education, nursery production, academia or any of the diverse and exciting roles in arboriculture – we are all part of the tree care profession. Whether we are arboricultural professionals, students, volunteers or members of community groups, we are all part of the tree care community.

### AND WHAT IS THE ARBORICULTURAL ASSOCIATION?

We are a charity and a membership organisation, the professional body representing the whole spectrum of those who work in arboriculture, and the home of tree care. We seek to promote the importance of trees and arboricultural professionals to the general public, politicians and other sectors. With such a wide membership base, audience and remit, it is critical that we are clear about where we stand, and what our role is.

This Strategic Plan seeks to do just that, setting out our overarching vision and objectives and providing a high-level framework within which we will operate during this three-year cycle. It was produced as a joint effort by the Association staff team, Trustees and other representatives of the membership. Our hope is that this document gives a flavour of who we are, and where we are going.

These are exciting times for our profession, and although there are some significant challenges ahead, there are also plenty of opportunities. We hope that you will find this Strategic Plan useful and that it will inspire you to get involved in helping grow our organisation, and our profession, to the next level. Because, in the words of Dr. Seuss and the Lorax, **“unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JP', written in a cursive style.

John Parker  
CEO, Arboricultural Association

# ABOUT US

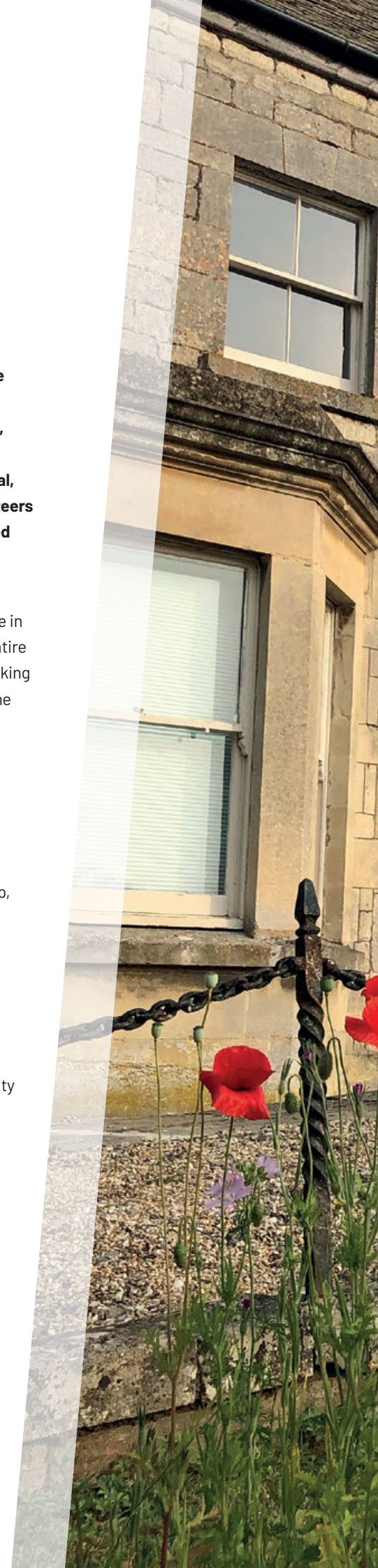
**The Arboricultural Association is the leading organisation in the UK for tree care professionals working in all areas of arboriculture, including central and local government, consultancy, contracting, management, production, policymaking, research and education. It has more than 3000 members in the UK and around the world, and is increasingly recognised as an international, as well as a national, leader in arboriculture. The Association is dependent on its members, its volunteers – including Trustees, Committee members and Branch officials – and a dedicated staff team operating out of the Malthouse in Stonehouse, Gloucestershire.**

Regarded by UK central government departments, local government and sector partners such as the Royal Horticultural Society as the focal point for best practice in tree care, the Association is unique in that its membership operates across the entire spectrum of the profession. It represents its members on numerous projects, working parties and groups, and collaborates closely with international partners such as the European Arboricultural Council, the European Forum on Urban Forestry and the International Society of Arboriculture.

The Association is a charity as well as a membership organisation, working to advance the science of arboriculture and raise awareness and knowledge of tree care globally, inspiring the general public about the importance of amenity trees and the arboricultural professionals who care for them. Much of this work is done through participation at community and public events, school membership, political engagement and, most recently, via the Tree Care Supporter initiative and public-facing content.

Membership grades are available to suit all arboricultural professionals, to whom the Association offers a wide range of services and benefits. Training courses for members at all stages of their professional career are held in a range of topics, in-person around the country and also, in many cases, online. A busy calendar of events includes the ARB Show, the Annual Amenity Conference – the main UK arboricultural conference of the year – and a packed online programme including an acclaimed webinar series enjoyed by viewers worldwide in more than 140 countries.

The Approved Contractor, Utility Approved Contractor and Registered Consultant Accreditation schemes help raise professional standards and increase awareness of arboriculture, and the Association publishes best practice guidance documents and two quarterly publications – the *ARB Magazine* and *Arboricultural Journal*. The Association has worked for the good of our members, for the profession and for wider society for more than fifty years, and will continue to do so into the future.





# THIS DOCUMENT

**The purpose of this document is to set out the Arboricultural Association's strategy for the period 2022–2024. It was produced by the Association staff team and Trustees, and reflects the direction in which we will be moving in the next three years. It relates not only to the profession of arboriculture, but to the wider tree care community – those who work as qualified arboriculturists and those who have an interest in, and a passion for, urban and amenity trees. It is a high-level strategic document which sets out the 'what' rather than the 'how'.**

The Arboricultural Association is a progressive, outward-looking and inclusive organisation and, as the leading professional body for arboriculture in the UK, we hope to inspire the whole profession to embrace the principles which we set out in these pages. UK arboriculture is respected worldwide, and the Association has a strong international focus, seeking to engage with like-minded individuals and organisations across the globe.

Through the vision, and strategic aims and objectives, outlined in this document, we hope to ensure that arboriculture continues to be regarded as a profession in its own right and as a viable career for anyone who wants to get involved – continuing to deliver for our existing membership whilst reaching out to an ever-wider audience. Our profession is full of incredible people and has limitless potential, and the Association is committed to working with all of you in order to turn this potential into reality.



# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## CHALLENGES

### ARBORICULTURE AS A PROFESSION

There is a risk that in the wider conversation about 'trees', arboriculture loses its status as a standalone profession. Whilst we should continue to work closely with related professions such as ecology, horticulture and forestry (to name but a few), it is critical for the future of our urban and amenity trees that arboriculture continues to be recognised as a profession in its own right.

### SUCCESSION

It is common to hear anecdotally that there is a succession and recruitment problem across our profession, with a need for more high-quality candidates applying for roles in arboriculture. Whilst things seem to be improving, our profession is still not representative of the society in which we work and there is much more to be done to improve equality and diversity in arboriculture.

### FUNDING AND RESOURCING

In the austerity years from 2010, tree management often suffered, particularly at a Local Authority level where tree officer numbers declined and those who retained their jobs often found themselves expected to deliver more with less. That risk has not gone away and seems likely to become worse in the coming years, the impact of which would be felt across society.

### CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The climate emergency – and associated environmental, social and economic consequences – brings many challenges for the tree care community. These include more extreme weather events, an increased risk of pests and diseases and longer-term issues around how some of our most familiar trees will cope under different conditions – a problem sometimes made worse by a mistaken attachment to 'native' species.

### PESTS AND DISEASES

An ever-increasing list of pests and diseases pose a growing risk to urban and amenity trees, and those working in arboriculture are on the front line in the battle to protect our urban forests. The problems associated with diseases such as oak processionary moth and ash dieback are well known, with others such as *Xylella* and canker stain of plane waiting in the wings.



In the next three-year strategic cycle the Association will need to face some key challenges. However, each of these challenges also presents us with an opportunity.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### ○ PUBLIC AND POLITICAL PROFILE OF TREES

The public and political profile of trees has arguably never been higher, and the appreciation of urban and amenity trees has never been greater. It is critical that we take advantage of this situation to ensure that the people who currently value trees so highly – and those in future generations – appreciate the fact that the profession of arboriculture is key to healthy urban and amenity trees for the good of society.

### ○ ARBORICULTURE IS A GREAT CAREER

By taking advantage of the profile of trees and by promoting the importance and attractiveness of arboriculture as a profession, we can work towards a situation where young people – from school age and upwards – and those looking to change their career, see arboriculture as a viable, diverse, exciting and rewarding profession for them. Arboriculture and tree care should be for everyone.

### ○ QUANTIFYING THE BENEFITS

Much work has been done to prove the environmental, social and economic benefits of urban and amenity trees. The urban forest is critical, multi-functional infrastructure which can contribute towards tackling many of the problems society faces. We must use this knowledge to promote the fact that if society really values amenity trees, then we must properly fund their care.

### ○ TREES ARE PART OF THE SOLUTION

In the face of the climate crisis, trees are often put forward as a magic bullet which will simply make the problem go away. This obviously is not the case, but urban and amenity trees are undoubtedly part of the solution, and the arboricultural profession and tree care community has the chance to offer its knowledge and skills to help mitigate some of the effects of the climate emergency.

### ○ EXPERTS IN BIOSECURITY

In many cases we know what we need to do to combat this problem; it just isn't always happening. We can work to raise awareness of biosecurity, to encourage everyone to follow the rules and to take advantage of schemes such as Plant Healthy Certification. Some pests, such as ash dieback, have entered the public consciousness and have raised awareness of the issue.



# OUR VISION

**Inspiring, supporting and promoting the tree care community for a society that better appreciates and cares for trees.**

## THE ASSOCIATION WILL:

### INSPIRE

#### INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY

Creating a culture in our organisation and the wider profession in which everyone feels welcome and accepted into the tree care community, and in which our profession better reflects the society within which we live, work and play.

#### TREE CHAMPIONS

Empowering and supporting our members, Tree Care Supporters and the wider profession to become champions of tree care excellence, inspiring their communities to appreciate and value their trees and the arboricultural profession.

#### SUCCESSION

Encouraging the next generation of arboriculturists by showing that arboriculture is a fantastic career. Working in partnership with schools and colleges to inspire young people searching for a vocation, students and those considering a career change.

#### VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

Ensuring that our volunteers – including Trustees, Committee members and Branches – and Association staff team are respected, valued and given the opportunities for development that they need, inspiring them so that they are able to inspire others.



## SUPPORT

### MEMBERSHIP

Working with our members across all grades, in the UK and internationally, to support them in their professional development and to offer them a professional home in the tree care community which delivers their needs and represents their interests.

### ACCREDITATIONS

Continuing to grow and develop the Approved Contractor, Approved Utility Contractor and Registered Consultant Schemes in order to raise standards across the profession and give assurance to the public and other tree owners when they are engaging an arboricultural professional.

### RESOURCES

Producing high-quality technical resources including technical guides, publications, arboricultural materials, the *ARB Magazine* and the *Arboricultural Journal*, available as hard copies and/or digital versions.

### TRAINING

Delivering high-quality, affordable and relevant continuous professional development across a wide range of subjects in accessible formats, whether in-person, online, live or pre-recorded content, for all levels of knowledge and experience.

## PROMOTE

### EVENTS

Holding a range of events to promote arboriculture, building and fostering a vibrant tree care community and providing the opportunity to share ideas and experiences, through in-person gatherings such as the ARB Show and Amenity Conference, and online content such as the Wednesday Webinar series.

### ENGAGEMENT

Promoting the work of our members and the arboricultural profession to the general public, our communities, politicians, policymakers and allied industries, ensuring arboriculture is represented as a key profession in its own right and collaborating with other professional organisations.

### TREE CARE SUPPORTERS

Offering the general public the opportunity to become involved in, and support, the Association's charitable objectives, promoting tree care and tree care professionals and furthering the understanding of the science and practice of arboriculture.

### WEBSITE AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Continuing to grow, strengthen and fully utilise our social media following, and engaging an ever-wider audience through redesigned websites, with **trees.org.uk** supporting the membership and **treecare.org.uk** acting as the public face of the Association.

# IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

**The Strategic Plan 2022–2024 contains the high-level vision and strategic objectives of the Association. Beneath this document is a suite of smaller, area-specific Operational Action Plans relating to individual parts of the business such as membership, accreditations, publications, advertising etc. which all feed into the overarching strategic objectives. The Operational Action Plans are produced by the Association’s staff team and Trustees, monitored and adjusted as required through ongoing evaluation and assessment.**

The implementation of the Strategic Plan will be supported through a comprehensive review of the Association’s policies and procedures, as well as the production of key documents such as a Volunteer Handbook and the review of existing documents including the Employee Handbook. The staff team and Trustees will work together to assess which policies and procedures require review, where we need new policies and procedures, and which areas we need to prioritise. This process of reviewing and updating will continue throughout the 2022–2024 strategic cycle.

The Association will continue to report its progress to the membership and beyond in the traditional ways. These will include informal updates in the *ARB Magazine*, on social media and through the website, as well as more formal reporting mechanisms such as the Annual General Meeting and the publication of accounts in the Annual Report.

**If any Association members or external stakeholders would like to learn more about progress, or have any specific enquiries about a particular aspect of the Strategic Plan, then please get in touch.**



# GET INVOLVED!

The successful delivery of this Strategic Plan will require input from many people, not just the Association's staff team and Trustees. Whether you are an experienced tree care professional, someone new to the industry, working in a related sector, a student or a member of the public or community group; whether you are based in the UK or in another country – whoever and wherever you are – there are plenty of ways to get involved.

## MEMBERSHIP

With different grades of membership to cater for arboricultural professionals and the whole tree care community and with a wide range of member-only benefits, there has never been a better time to join the Arboricultural Association. To find out more, email [members@trees.org.uk](mailto:members@trees.org.uk)

## TREE CARE SUPPORTER

Aimed at members of the public and community groups who are keen to support the Association in the delivery of its charitable objectives, Tree Care Supporter is a way to directly help urban and amenity trees, and those who work with them. To find out more, visit [www.treecare.org.uk](http://www.treecare.org.uk)

## VOLUNTEERING

The Association is dependent on our volunteers. Do you have what it takes to be a Trustee, or would you like to join a Committee or working group, or get involved in your local Branch? To find out more, email [admin@trees.org.uk](mailto:admin@trees.org.uk)

## TRAINING

The Association offers a wide range of high-quality training courses for anyone working with, or interested in, trees. Through a combination of in-person, online and pre-recorded content you can keep up to date with the latest industry developments and help with your career progression and CPD. To find out more, email [training@trees.org.uk](mailto:training@trees.org.uk)

## EVENTS

Throughout the year, the Association holds in-person and online events such as the Annual Amenity Conference, ARB Show, Student Conferences, World Fungi Day and an acclaimed free webinar series which attracts a global audience. There have never been more opportunities to learn, socialise and gain CPD. To find out more, email [events@trees.org.uk](mailto:events@trees.org.uk)

## ACCREDITATIONS

If you are working in arboriculture then why not help raise standards across the profession by applying to become an Approved Contractor, Utility Approved Contractor or Registered Consultant? To find out more, visit [www.trees.org.uk/accreditation](http://www.trees.org.uk/accreditation)

## PUBLICATIONS

The Association produces a wide range of publications including technical guides and best practice guidance documents, the *ARB Magazine* and *Arboricultural Journal*, and publications such as *Fungi and Trees: Their Complex Relationships* and *Fungi on Trees: A Photographic Reference*. To find out more, visit [www.trees.org.uk/book-shop](http://www.trees.org.uk/book-shop)

## DONATE

If you would like to contribute towards the work of the Association as a charity and help us deliver our charitable objectives then please consider donating, or fundraising through a sponsored event. To find out more, email [admin@trees.org.uk](mailto:admin@trees.org.uk)



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**Published: November 2021**

