

The Arboricultural Association

Corporate Strategic Direction

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Executive summary

The Arboricultural Association, with 2000 members, is the largest professional institution in the UK for the amenity tree¹ care professional.

We provide a home for all sectors of arboriculture; civic, commercial, utility and academic, and the home for all levels of tree care professional; craft, technical, supervisory, managerial or consultancy.

Our purpose is to promote the sustainable management of trees for the benefit of society, in areas where people live, work and play. This is achieved in a multitude of ways:

Inspiring society to understand the value of amenity trees

- providing leadership
- campaigning
- engaging the public where trees may benefit them

Influencing decision makers to value, secure, fund and promote amenity trees

- promoting the benefits trees provide
- supporting research, best practice and education to enhance the professional resource
- influencing government, its agencies and our allied professionals

Improving an understanding of trees and their environment

- our members and partners working together to provide guidance, set standards and uphold and represent the profession
- improving skills and knowledge
- identifying, advising and supporting initiatives and work relating to amenity trees

Summary objectives

- 1 Facilitating the provision of relevant and up to date information in relation to the management of trees.
- 2 To advance the study of arboriculture and raise the standards of its practice through the provision of training and workshops to all levels of the profession and to the general public.
- 3 To raise governmental and public awareness of issues relating to arboriculture.
- 4 To foster and promote an interest in trees through publications, exhibitions and the stimulation of research or experiments, and to grow society's appreciation of trees and engagement with tree professionals.

¹ *Amenity trees* are those with recreational, functional, environmental, ecological, social, health or aesthetic value as opposed to those cultivated as a timber crop

5 To be the voice of arboriculture to the public and other external organisations.

Why?

Put simply, because there is a direct link between the presence of amenity trees and human wellbeing. We have all benefitted from trees during our life but often we do not stop to give them consideration. Just some of the benefits we obtain are:

Social Improving our physiological and psychological wellbeing, behaviour, sense of place and of community. Trees shape our landscape and inspire. Parks within towns provide an oasis of green space with trees defining their character. Many trees have been the subject of our great artists.

Environmental As canopies – providing shade and shelter from sun and rain - reducing urban heat island effects, cooling the air, mitigating surface water run-off, sequestering and storing carbon and intercepting particulate pollution. Places for nature, where birds nest and forage, as stepping stones and corridors to further habitat, often the only resource of biodiversity in urban environments.

Economic Putting a value on the environmental contribution of trees is difficult but just imagine the cost of a technical solution to the many tasks performed by trees listed above. In addition the presence of trees provides an increase in value of properties. The less tangible economic benefits include such things as reduced recovery times in hospital wards where trees can be seen by patients, saving the NHS money.

Of course, none of these operate in isolation, all are interconnected, and can be summarised as trees make places better for people

“Trees for people”

The AA

The Arboricultural Association (the AA) was founded in 1964 bringing together the civic and commercial sectors to deliver a united voice for trees. Now with 2000 members the AA is the largest professional institution in the UK for the amenity tree care professional.

We are the UK home for all sectors of arboriculture, civic, commercial and academic and the home for all levels of tree care professional, craft, technical, supervisory, managerial or consultancy.

Our professional members are employed across the globe, wherever there are trees, to deliver specialist advice and operations.

The AA is regarded by many leading organisations across sectors as the focal point for best practice in arboriculture.

Our purpose is to promote the sustainable management of trees in areas where people live, work and play for the benefit of society - this is achieved in the following ways:

- Promoting the pursuit of best practice in care, consideration and creation of the tree'd environment
- Promoting trees on the agenda of people; of decision makers and policy shapers as well as those with an interest
- Promoting excellence, through the provision of training, support and the setting of standards

We set out to ensure the benefits of trees are known, understood and appreciated

We consider sustainable management of trees is foremost

We advocate, for the benefit of trees and society, using trained and competent professionals to deliver high quality management.

We do it because we care for trees. We recognise that trees are essential to human well-being and wish to ensure a legacy of amenity trees in places where people will benefit, that the trees are managed safely and to a high standard, and that there is a resource of professionals to aid society achieve that aim.

What we do and why

What we aim to do is to place trees high on the national agenda by harnessing our resource of civic, commercial and academic professionals to deliver a strong, and united, voice for arboriculture.

There are three strands to our work:

Inspiring society to understand the value of amenity trees

- providing leadership
- campaigning
- engaging the public where trees may benefit them

Influencing decision makers to value, secure, fund and promote amenity trees

- promoting the benefits trees provide
- supporting research, best practice and education to enhance the professional resource
- influencing government, its agencies and our allied professionals

Improving an understanding of trees and their environment

- our members and partners working together to provide guidance, set standards and uphold and represent the profession
- improving skills and knowledge
- identifying, advising and supporting initiatives and work relating to amenity trees

Why we do it is because the last decade has seen a vast increase in awareness of the benefit trees provide. Trees are often the most prevalent form of vegetation in the built environment and are therefore key to providing ecosystem services.

That same decade has seen rapid increase in the occurrence of novel pests and diseases within our tree population and concern has peaked with a disease of ash trees threatening our rural habitats and a disease of London planes impacting our urban core.

Those threats to trees can be directly linked to a threat to human wellbeing through loss of benefits. Some of those benefits are set out under the key ecosystem service areas in the table shown overleaf:

Supporting
Using energy from the sun to make chemical compounds and the cycling of water are key supporting services. These are fundamental roles of ecosystems and their components.
As a woody plant, trees use the sun's energy to create wood that is then used for timber. The roots of trees extract moisture from the ground, with surplus leaving as water vapour to the sky. Trees even support house prices ² .
Regulating
Human life is dependent on vital aspects of ecosystem services such as climate, hydrological cycles, air quality and hazard mitigation. These are strongly linked to other services.
We are all familiar with the regulating services provided by trees such as their positive contribution to air quality, ³ their shade and shelter ⁴ , cooling temperatures, and intercepting rainfall, ⁵ amongst others.
Provisioning
These are the goods derived from ecosystems and their components.
With trees, some of these goods are obvious, such as wood, but others, for instance food, such as chestnuts, hazelnuts and mulberries are not always associated directly with their host.
Cultural
Those services derived from human interaction, with each other, and with nature. This has connections with outdoor recreation, learning, association, and spirituality.
There are dedicated festivals to celebrate trees ⁶ . In the City of London there are dinners to celebrate Mulberry fruits. Certain tree species are iconic, such as the English Oak and the London Plane. Think of the historic connotations of some of our ancient trees like The Major Oak of Sherwood Forest and The Royal Oak of Charles II. Other symbolic cultural traditions include the Green Man, and tying a yellow ribbon around an old Oak tree.

In July 2012 The Independent Panel on Forestry published its final report that recognises the importance of amenity trees and advises that:

“Investment in professional arboricultural advice and expertise will be required”

We, the Arboricultural Association, provide the professionals to deliver that advice and expertise and it is our duty to ensure those that require it have access to it. A sustainable resource of trees requires our sustainable resource of professionals.

² Anderson, L.M., and Cordell, H.K. (1988) ‘Influence of Trees on Residential Property Values in Athens, Georgia (U.S.A.): A Survey based on Actual Sales Prices’ *Landscape and Urban Planning*, vol. 15, pp153-164, see <http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/trends/pdf/ufathens.pdf>

³ Forest Research *Improving air quality* evidence note, see [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/urqp_evidence_note_006_Improving_air_quality.pdf/\\$file/urqp_evidence_note_006_Improving_air_quality.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/urqp_evidence_note_006_Improving_air_quality.pdf/$file/urqp_evidence_note_006_Improving_air_quality.pdf)

⁴ Pandit R., and Laband DL (2010) ‘Energy savings from tree shade’ *Ecological Economics*, no.69, pp1324 – 1329, see http://www.auburn.edu/academic/forestry_wildlife/forest_policy_ctr/laband/energy-savings-ecol-econ.pdf

⁵ Xiao Q., McPherson EG., Simpson JR., and Ustin SL (1998) ‘Rainfall interception by Sacramento’s urban forest’ *Journal of Arboriculture*, vol.24 no.4, pp235-244, see http://www.itreetools.org/streets/resources/Rainfall_interception_by_Sacramentos_UF_Xiao.pdf

⁶ For example see <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/westonbirt-treefest>

Vision and values

The AA's vision is that by 2018:

We will convert current concern about the welfare of our nation's amenity trees in to a passion to ensure trees are demanded amongst our built environment to such an extent that “urban greening” becomes a priority in urban planning.

We will grow our resource and service offering to ensure that highly skilled professionals are within easy reach of those within all parts of the UK and that professional service is valued in the maintenance of our natural capital, the trees.

The AA's Values

Inspiration. We will be at the cutting edge of tree knowledge, set the agenda for trees in the built environment and show leadership on how best to care for and manage amenity trees.

Integrity. We will provide a pool of expertise, with access to information and knowledge, monitored to ensure standards are upheld. We will measure our performance, evaluate how we work, where we need to improve and how we may achieve that.

Independence. As a self-funding group of professionals we retain an independent voice. Free to influence decision makers and challenge actions and policy that falls short.

Impact. We will achieve visible and tangible achievements in the sector that are noticed by our peers, the public and government.

We firmly believe that amenity trees are of such importance that our organisation should be dedicated to ensuring they are planted, pruned, managed and replaced to the highest standards possible.

The context and challenges for our work

The past decade has seen rapid change in policy in the face of a dramatic turn down in fiscal fortune. That has placed enormous pressure on our tree population as the conflict between built environment and space for trees has increased.

Trees are a fundamental component of green infrastructure within the urban, peri-urban and rural landscape. They are the major component of vegetation providing the full range of supporting, provisioning, regulating and cultural ecosystem services.

We are currently adapting to the change in planning system now led by the National Planning Policy Framework. A need for more housing is seeing development of brownfield and greenfield sites many of which contain trees. As professionals we can guide those developments to ensure that trees are retained and protected in places where benefits to human wellbeing can be enjoyed.

Development design can be informed by the arboriculturist, as part of a team, to ensure trees are successfully integrated with built-form.

Standards of tree work and advice vary enormously across the country. We, as a body of professionals are committed to improve the standards, both within our membership and within the wider arboricultural community, for the benefit of our natural capital and for those that benefit from trees.

In these constrained financial times organisations lack the funds and resources to deliver effective tree management and we seek to pool knowledge, skills and resources to deliver solutions to tree issues that can be delivered at local, regional and national levels, timely and cost effectively.

Investment in tree cover has been wanting in recent times. We are able to provide a resource of professionals and guidance to deliver fitting schemes of new tree planting and tree replacement to ensure a sustainable resource of tree cover for the benefit of future generations.

We recognise our work is constrained by many factors and we will seek ways to overcome those constraints to aid the delivery of a world leading amenity tree stock within the UK.

One of those constraints is the fragmentation of our profession. The profession is represented and supported by a number of sister charities and professional bodies. We at the AA recognise the challenges such fragmentation creates and will do our utmost to consolidate the views and opinions of its many skilled professionals to deliver a united voice through whatever organisation is best placed to take the lead. We, the AA, are a part of the solution, not the whole solution.

What we currently do

The Arboricultural Association is home to members in the following categories:

- Student
- Ordinary
- Associate
- Technical
- Professional
- Fellow

We also provide the only two UK wide schemes of assessed, competent and quality assured professionals:

- **The Approved Contractor Scheme** of 200 measured and certified companies offering tree surgery, tree maintenance and tree planting.
- **The Registered Consultant Scheme** of 50 individual professionals providing technical advice, tree management, pathology and design advice

Backed up by a series of committees under the Board of Trustees:

- Professional Committee – setting standards for the profession, administering the two assessed schemes, offering a complaints service, and appointing Fellows
- Media and Communications Committee – using traditional and modern forms of communication to inform members and the public, developing and monitor the Associations range of publications, producing technical guidance and overseeing the national conference
- Education and Training – identifying training needs, developing courses tailored to member development and administering the assessed route to Professional membership.

Our message is communicated effectively through a variety of media:

- The Arboricultural Journal – a platform for scientific papers accessible online, across the world, through Taylor and Francis
- The Arb Magazine – containing a blend of news, information and scientific reporting
- Technical documents – a suite of publications offering technical guidance on subjects as varied as the identification of decay fungi, bats in trees, and terms and

conditions for tree consultants

- www.trees.org.uk – providing information about the association and its work, industry news, links to other organisations, online directory of Approved Contractors and Registered Consultants, online shopping for publications
- Electronic media – dedicated Facebook and Twitter sites. YouTube for educational videos and dedicated Linked-in groups.
- Conference – an annual amenity conference attracting top speakers, within our industry and beyond, offering education and networking to all in the profession
- The ArbShow – a platform for the industry to see, trial and buy equipment and machinery. To meet and explore opportunities, including education and training, with other industry professionals. The chance to compete with peers.

Our objectives

To achieve the Association's aims we see five key areas of development:

1 Facilitating the provision of relevant and up to date information in relation to the management of trees.

The management of trees occurs across the many varied, and interacting, gradients; from urban to rural; from native to exotic; young to old; conducive to hostile; planted to ancient.

That management must take account of many varied considerations within the social, economic and environmental spectrums and in the face of many threats to trees, new and old, including pest and disease.

We see benefits to members from increased and prompt awareness of arboricultural issues to aid them inform society.

2 To advance the study of arboriculture and raise the standards of its practice through the provision of training and workshops to all levels of the profession and to the general public.

We see benefits to members of their elevated level of knowledge and from the awareness of the general public of the importance of trees and why they require professional advice.

3 To raise governmental and public awareness of issues relating to arboriculture.

We see benefits to members through shaping policy and guidance in their specialist field and ensuring arboriculture is integrated with other disciplines

4 To foster and promote an interest in trees through publications, exhibitions and the stimulation of research or experiments, and to increase public appreciation of trees and engagement with tree professionals.

We see benefits to members through accessibility to latest information and increasing access to the science of arboriculture reinforcing their professional standing.

5 To be the voice of arboriculture to the public and other external organisations.

In an industry with a range of specialisations and interest groups we will work with our individual members and branch representation to deliver key messages, statements and positions.

We see the benefit to members through the association acting on their behalf to communicate the importance of arboriculture and it's professionals to enable informed choices.

Setting priorities

As a small charitable organisation the AA has limited resources to deliver the many worthy aspects of arboriculture. The AA's strategic direction is to focus our energies and expertise into a set number of themes in any one year.

Stemming from the AA's vision and values, and to support its objectives, to build on our achievements in the last 49 years, we have set the following priorities:

1. Maximise existing and new revenue streams to fund the aims and objectives.

Changes to the charging environment require us to seek alternative revenue streams to fund the increasing demands of a membership organisation. The gift economy enables us to reach a wider audience but the costs will need to be met. Allied to increased revenue will be cost efficiency throughout the organisation, analysing process and securing change where needed.

2. Developing effective communication

External communication across a wide spectrum of audiences is essential to ensure our voice is heard and that the profile of our profession is respected and required.

Internal communication will ensure the members are aware of the work the AA does on their behalf through the committees, sub-groups, branches and our small, but effective, staff resource at HQ.

3. Membership growth

To provide a stronger voice, to ensure professionals are in reach of all members of society and fund objectives of the Association we will seek growth in all classes of membership.

We will identify the needs of our members and potential members and put in place the measures to meet those needs.

4. Training provision

Through ongoing training needs analysis, the provision of training and information to increase awareness of arboricultural issues with the general public and elevate the skill base of our professionals.

5. Careers in arboriculture

We will analyse the career path in arboriculture, identify career development steps and put in place the aid and assistance to career progression.

Specifically, we will identify ways and means to allow individuals to pursue a chosen career in arboriculture.

We will work with initiatives such as the Register of Tree Work Operatives to ensure there is a structured framework for career development and recognition of skills and experience.

6. Publications

We will review all our extant publications and identify the need for new publications to be delivered across a wide range of formats across the spectrum of printed to print-on-demand.

We will put in place mechanisms to react quickly to circumstances to deliver timely and pertinent information. Currently there is a need for information about novel pest and disease threats.

Generous donations of library content will be catalogued and ways sought to make available secure access to this valuable and respected resource.

7. Promotion and growth of our pre-eminent schemes of contractors and consultants

Our register of contractors and of consultants offers a measured and assessed resource of professionals to consumers. They are recognised as the best schemes of professionals available to the consumers enabling them to meet their requirements and bring them reassurance.

There will be two strands to our work in this resolve:

- a) the promotion of the schemes to those that may wish to join thereby increasing the resource available to all around the country
- b) the promotion of the value of the two schemes to consumers through identification of markets, direct marketing and reference in journalistic pieces.

8. Raising the AA's profile

Embedded within all these priorities is the aim to increase the profile of the Association.

We will develop a liaison strategy to ensure we are communicating with the right audience.

We will work closely with our partner organisations to form a united voice for arboriculture where required.

How we will judge our success

We will set ourselves nine key performance indicators that will act as a proxy measure of our success.

On an annual basis, in the last quarter of each calendar year, we will put in place a Business Plan identifying actions for the year in support of the achievement of our overall aims and objectives. Performance will be measured against this plan.

Our Strategic Direction will be monitored annually and reviewed, in the last quarter of each calendar year, to ensure it adapts to changing circumstances.

By 2018 we will:

1. Grow membership to 3000 in the UK and overseas
2. Lift the number of companies on the Approved Contractor Scheme to 500
3. Double the number of Registered Consultants to 100
4. Be known to 80% of arboricultural professionals and 50% of allied professionals
5. Have an established presence in the professional journals of all our allied professionals
6. Provide a full suite of training for our professionals based on the skills analysis
7. Work with third parties to deliver a united voice for arboriculture and the sector
8. Have demonstrable input to the educational and research needs for our profession and have in place dedicated bursaries for research.
9. Deliver effective regional representation throughout the UK with a suite of meetings and training events co-ordinated and assisted by HQ.
10. To achieve a margin of 5% on turnover

Our people and partners

Headquarters	A team of highly competent and motivated staff at Head Quarters with the required skills and expertise to support the Association meet its operational needs and strategic direction. Systems and processes are in place which enables the Association to operate in a highly cost effective and efficient manner.
Committees and Working Groups	Volunteers working to agreed remits aligned to our strategic direction for the benefit of arboriculture and our members.
Partners	Our professionals work alongside professionals from other disciplines, delivering solutions to our clients, to the public and to our partners. We recognise the skills and attributes of our partners and seek to work alongside them, not replicating their work, but forming reciprocal relationships with the people best qualified and positioned to improve the understanding, desire and commitment to amenity trees. We work with partners in all sectors