

THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Subject:	Planting Trees in Disused Treepits
Date of meeting:	7 March 2023
Report by:	Director of Regeneration (Tristan Samuels)
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by

- 1.1. This paper has been requested by the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment.

2. Purpose of report

- 2.1. To inform Cabinet on a further opportunity to continue to green the city in line with the strategy agreed.
- 2.2. To note the work with Colas to identify a number of disused tree pits in the city and outline the work currently underway to provide for replanting.
- 2.3. To note that this is one piece of a wider strategy to support greening of the city which supports our wider objectives around responding to climate change and brings wider benefits such as enhanced biodiversity and improved air quality.

3. Information Requested

Background

- 3.1. The council is tackling the climate emergency head on through various means, not least of which promoting greening and biodiversity across the city. There are some very good examples already such as the new "green walls" that form part of the coastal defence on the east side of the island, the 100 trees that have just been planted on Farlington roundabout, the new rain garden that has just been built outside Lidl in Fratton (hopefully one of many to come) and wildflower planting across the city in various locations across the city.

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- 3.2. In 2020, the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and the Environment released the Greening Portsmouth Strategy 2020 in which it noted that the local authority are ambitiously seeking to increase the amount of greenery in the city, including the number of trees in the city. The strategy set some areas where this could be actioned including:-
- 3.2.1. Ensuring that as many as possible of the 50,000 new trees on Horsea Island Country Park reach maturity (allowing for planned management as the trees grow).
 - 3.2.2. Adding 360 extra trees per year for the next 25 years in public open spaces, and 720 trees per year in private land, including gardens.
 - 3.2.3. Adding 120 extra street trees per year for the next 25 years.
- 3.3. In line with the strategy, one of the ways in which we can help create a greener city is through the planting of trees; not just in parks but on streets too. This is not always easy in urban and built-up areas especially where the streets are narrow. However, PCC has been working closely with Colas over recent months to find locations where we can plant trees, and this includes disused tree pits that dotted around the city.
- 3.4. There are many good reasons why there are no longer trees in these tree pits but with the objective of "greening the grey" we are now looking to establish which of those pits can be used once again to home newly planted trees.
- 3.5. Not all will be suitable, but Colas are carrying out investigative work, after which we will engage further with members of the public and be planting again; at the right time of year of course.
- 3.6. There are of course further added benefits and we expect some of these opportunities to support the absorption of surface water run-off and are working with Southern Water to assess areas where this is required and by removing the hard areas potentially will create space for other planting and biodiversity.

Work Done to Date

- 3.7. Colas have identified the locations where trees were previously planted on the highway network and this is summarised in Appendix A ("Highway Trees Validation Report").
- 3.8. By way of a brief summary, in addition to the 8,000 or so trees on the highway, there are an additional 354 locations where there once was a tree. These locations

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include empty tree pits in pavements and on grass verges. The breakdown of these are as follows:

Status	Number
Empty Tree Pit	40
Empty Tree Pit in Grass Verge	9
Filled Pit	86
Stump	32
Grass Verge Area *	187
Grand Total	354

(* based on historical tree inventories)

Moving Forward

- 3.9. Colas and PCC officers are currently identifying, quantifying and assessing the suitability of vacant tree pits (and similar locations) with a view to replanting.
- 3.10. Just because a tree was once removed, it does not mean that a new tree can't be put back in its place. However, there may be good reason why the trees were removed and not replanted. This may be due to impact on the highways, root barriers and impact on property and utilities.
- 3.11. Consideration will be given to these factors but also to the suitability of replanting including adaptation due to climate change, tree species, watering regimen, husbanding and shade.
- 3.12. Cost and maintenance will be factors for consideration too.
- 3.13. Further, and as an alternative to trees, there may be other greening opportunities such as wild flowering and sustainable drainage such as rain gardens.

What Happens Next

- 3.14. The above investigatory work is ongoing and a paper with proposals for replanting will be brought to cabinet after May 2023.

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Signed by Tristan Samuels, Director of Regeneration

Appendices:

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Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Highway Trees Validation Report	Appendix A
Greening Portsmouth Strategy 2020	