



Oxfordshire's Tree Guardians - Maximising Community Ownership and Value

Who are TAPS



- ▶ TAPS is an inhouse team set up in November 2023
- ▶ The project aims to plant 4400 highway trees all over Oxfordshire over 4 years
- ▶ We have already planted over 1630 trees on the public highway
- ▶ Our services include community driven planting projects as well as strategic planting organised by us.
- ▶ Aftercare is a key part of our work ensuring high survival rates for the trees - 94%

Growing future “favourite” Trees in our Streets

- ▶ Thriving - Helping the trees through their first difficult years on the streets.
- ▶ Mature - Ensuring the trees are set up to succeed as street trees for decades to come.
- ▶ Belonging - To the people/community
- ▶ Belonging - To the place/environment



Thriving

- ▶ TAPS provide 3 years of aftercare - including watering, formative pruning, topping up of mulch and responding to ad hoc issues e.g. loose ties
- ▶ This helps the tree to survive BUT when the community gets involved it THRIVES - 94% survival rate.
- ▶ Tree guardians are key to this aspect of the project's long-term success.



Reaching maturity

- ▶ After 3 years of aftercare, the trees are adopted onto the highway management scheme - inspected every 4 years.
- ▶ Hopefully the tree has now been "adopted" by the community, and they are invested in its future.



Belonging to the community - Issues

- ▶ First year issues - a lack of communication
 - ▶ A lack of transparency regarding decision making
 - ▶ Disempowering parish councils
 - ▶ Were we being democratic?
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- ▶ Problems arising from poor communication - vandalism; distrust in the council; disempowerment



Belonging to the Community - lessons learnt

- ▶ Strategy (70%) vs submissions (30%)
- ▶ Importance of communication - letter drops
- ▶ Residents taking ownership before the tree has even been planted - impacting on site and species selection.
- ▶ Being visible on multiple site visits - an opportunity for face-to-face discussion
- ▶ Listening and not planting!



Belonging to the Environment

- ▶ By this we mean being well suited to the place
- ▶ Right tree, right place
- ▶ Again Listening to the community - “they’ve just run a gas line through there”; “there used to be a lovely elm tree here” etc.
- ▶ Not blocking light, sightlines, street lights, culverts etc.
- ▶ Communities directing priorities



PLEASE WATER ME



Tree guardians - Formal

- ▶ 123 Official tree guardians have access to Treeplotter
- ▶ 571 watering trips recorded
- ▶ Help us prioritise those trees not being watered
- ▶ Watering tags direct people on how to become tree guardians.

**Support our Tree Aftercare and
Planting Service by watering
this tree in between their visits**

Provide



Tree Guardian recruitment

- ▶ Tree tags
- ▶ Climate action website
- ▶ Word of mouth
- ▶ Being visible on site multiple times throughout the year.
- ▶ Future plans

Garden/Biodiversity

Become a Tree Guardian

Effort: ● ○ ○
Impact: ● ● ○
Cost: ○ ○ ○
Savings: ○ ○ ○



Become a tree guardian and join a network of volunteers looking after Oxfordshire's trees. Oxfordshire County Council has ambitious plans to plant thousands of new trees on public land, and you can help look after them! Young trees need regular weeding and daily watering in the spring and summer to help them establish and thrive.

Already know where a tree has been planted in your parish? Great! There's no formal signup needed so feel free to start watering. Over time there may be more opportunities for other volunteer activities, so check back for updates.

If you'd like to find your nearest community tree, get some advice, or just let the Tree

Next steps

For information, advice and supplies, email tree.planting@oxfordshire.gov.uk

A screenshot of a mobile application interface for recording tree work. The interface is overlaid on a satellite map. At the top, there are buttons for 'CLOSE' and 'VIEW PHOTOS'. Below that, the text 'TREE HISTORY' and 'WORK HISTORY' is displayed. A message states 'No work history has been reported for this trees.' with an 'ADD' button. Below this, instructions explain how to record work. A list of work types includes 'Adjusted Tree Tie', 'Mulched', 'Watered 10l', 'Watered 20l', 'Watered 30l', 'Watered 40l', 'Watered 50l', and 'Weeded'. The 'Date' field is set to '13/10/2025' with a 'CLEAR' button. A calendar for July 2025 is shown, with the 7th selected. At the bottom, there are 'Today' and 'Done' buttons.

Tree Guardians - Informal

- ▶ Please water me tags - community made
- ▶ Tying/protecting trees informal
- ▶ Bottom left - tree thriving despite drought



Final thoughts

- ▶ Creating “favourite” trees for the future
- ▶ Wanting people to be excited about street trees and adopt them as their own
- ▶ The importance of tree guardians (both formal and informal)









