

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE
22 September 2021**

Officer: Gary Farmer – Head of Operations

THE QUARRY TREE MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2021/22

Purpose of Report

To review the Quarry trees stock and agree on a maintenance regime.

Background

The Quarry has a unique early history, with the introduction of lime avenues planting through an area of common land from 1719 creating one of the earliest publicly accessible park facilities in the country. These avenues were complemented by the development of significant walkways running along the riverside edge, middle walkways and another skirting the town walls. Today we know these as Gloucester Avenue, Victoria Avenue, Salts Field including the Five Ways junction, The Grey Friars and The Dingle perimeter.

The Quarry is a Grade I Listed Park within the Shrewsbury Conservation Area; the Park attracts 1.5million visitors a year and is the most visited attraction in Shrewsbury.

Trees in the Quarry

As shown above threes have been a focal point of the Quarry for centuries.

In 1946 Percy Thrower the recently appointed Parks Superintendent commenced a planned programme of replanting. Due to the close spacing of the trees the avenues had grown too tall and many where felled by hand were found to be hollow. The replacement planting programme took six years and on Percy's insistence the trees were given additional spacing to encourage the natural form of the limes.

The last major Arboricultural work on all the trees was completed in 2002 which was part of the Heritage Lottery Grant of £1.5 million to refurbish the park with the total spend of £2.3 million. A small percentage was spent on the tree stock.

Currently our Quarry tree stock is made up of 380 lime trees along the avenues and 74 mixed tree species in the Dingle.

It is universally established that trees have huge environmental value in terms of their sequestration of carbon, reducing the level of oxidents in the area, reduce the impact of flooding and in terms of the Quarry help to stabilise the river banks. Trees also bring huge mental and physical well-being benefits.

A few years ago Tree Officers valued the Quarry Trees using the international I-Trees software. The software places a financial value of trees taking into account many of the social and environmental benefits as listed above. The value of the 380 Lime Trees was established at around £10million. As this was done a few years ago and climate emergency is more pressing, this value is likely to have increased and our new TreePlotter software will allow us to keep on track with value.

All of the trees in the Quarry are assessed under our Tree Management Plan (copy of which is on our website) and inspection and maintenance work is assessed given the level of use of the park.

Since 2009 the Town Council has implemented an annual programme in The Quarry identifying those trees requiring priority maintenance. They are annually inspected, and maintenance work is completed by the Council's in-house team and also specialist local contractors throughout the year.

Lime trees are particularly high maintenance with an annual flush of epicormic basal growth and mature trees also suffer from branch die back which requires a lot of the trees to be dead wooded on an annual basis.

Of late we have seen trees affected by the seismic changes in the seasons. Trees do become stressed by the changes in the seasons and this year alone we have seen what appeared 3 trees health trees fall due to stress.

Work Required

Work is needed over and above our routine annual inspection to ensure the continued lifespan of these trees, many of which are over 75 years old.

Proposed work includes:

- A planning application being submitted for the removal of 4 lime trees together with planting of suitable replacement - This year's annual inspection has identified 4 lime trees in serious decline, which are positioned in heavy footfall and high-risk target areas; these have been flagged by the Tree Officers as in need of removal
- A planning application for a wholesale removal of all deadwood greater than 2" in diameter, crown reduction, crown lifting and removal of epicormics growth
- Invitation to tender for a programme of works which is likely to take 4-6 weeks; this shall include:
 - To remove all deadwood from all of the lime trees in The Quarry.
 - To crown raise all the Avenue planted trees to provide adequate clearance to approximately 6 metres.
 - To remove all basal and epicormic growth to 5.5 metres or to the start of the trees crown.
 - To crown reduce branches of selected trees over high target and footfall areas.

- A programme of replacement of any removed trees for new in accordance with the Council's Tree Management Plan

Whilst we do have arborists on the payroll it is felt that specialist arborists are required for a number of reasons:

- The identified public risk of the area due to high footfall;
- The length of time the work will take given the size of the tree stock across the whole of the council estate
- The need for specialist kit which maybe over the capacity of staff

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the report be noted;
- (ii) That the Council recognises the importance of maintaining a healthy tree stock across the town and supports the proactive management and maintenance of the Council extensive tree stock;
- (iii) That all necessary permissions are sought for the felling and pruning of trees in the Quarry;
- (iv) That a formal invitation to tender is advertised and the Finance & General Purpose Committee be notified of the outcome of tendering in due course;
- (v) The committee will be updated with a progress report.