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# Joined up thinking on urban trees

## Coed Aber, Aberystwyth showcases the multiple benefits of urban tree planting



Phase 1: Trees line the approach road into Aberystwyth

### Overview

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is working alongside the Greener Aberystwyth Group, the Aberystwyth Regeneration Board and Ceredigion County Council on a three year tree planting scheme on the main approach road into Aberystwyth, the Boulevard St. Brieuç.

### Background

The many benefits of urban tree planting are well researched and are becoming more widely understood. Countries such as the USA, where urban tree planting has been more extensive, have been recording and realising the economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits for many years. This has prompted NRW as well as community organisations to look more closely at opportunities in Wales.

#### Results

Identify outcomes that increase the wellbeing of Wales

#### Evidence

Make decisions using better information

#### Collaboration

Work with others across boundaries

#### Long term

Fix the causes rather than the symptoms

#### Connect

Focus on the economic, social and environmental benefits

#### Transparency

Measure and report on the difference you make

This is one of a series of SD stories that can be found on the Welsh Government website at <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/sustainabledevelopment/>



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The local community group Greener Aberystwyth Group had been looking at the potential for planting trees along Boulevard St Briec and Park Avenue, which between them had very few trees and vegetation lining a major road into Aberystwyth. Alongside this, in 2010 Aberystwyth was awarded £10.3 million in regeneration funding from Welsh Government, which provided resources and opportunity to identify areas for development in the town.

### Why

Proposals to identify and promote the benefits from trees and tree planting were also driven by the Welsh Government's Woodlands for Wales strategy, which aims to ensure that 'urban woodlands and trees deliver a full range of benefits, through better management of existing trees and creative planting of new trees in development projects and during the restoration of industrial land'.

Extensive research shows that trees bring a wide range of benefits both to individuals and to society as a whole. As the most important single component of green infrastructure, trees can provide economic benefits, improved health and wellbeing, increased recreational opportunities, and an enriched and balanced environment that ultimately boosts a town's image and prosperity. Trees can for instance bring business benefits by improving people's perceptions of an area, making consumers willing to pay more for goods. Trees also reduce the 'urban heat-island effect' through a combination of water evaporation, reflecting sunlight and providing shade, and increase community pride and social cohesion.

### What they did

The approach to bring the idea from concept to reality has been a joint effort. Greener

Aberystwyth Group's original idea was developed by NRW Landscape Architect Dafydd Fryer. Dafydd drew up a well thought out technical proposal and discussion document, 'Greening Aberystwyth's Approach Road', as well as a sketch scheme for a potential tree and shrub planting programme. He presented this to the key partners, promoting the benefits and providing practical development support.

**"Our group was set up to promote the development and conservation of green spaces in the Aberystwyth area. We see them as valuable amenities for the residents themselves and anyone visiting the area. This exciting development has the potential to transform the targeted area into a tree lined avenue welcoming people to the town."**

Meg Kirby, Greener Aberystwyth Group

NRW then commissioned and published an animated 'fly-through' of the Boulevard planting programme, showing what the approach road could look like with the inclusion of mature trees.

Partners worked together to secure funding of £375,000, which mostly came from the Regeneration Board, with recognition of the multiple economic and social benefits the planting will deliver.

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Planting locations and species selection were based on 'right tree, right place' considerations – making sure that there would be no damage to existing underground utilities for example, and choosing trees with at least a 20cm girth to reduce vandalism.

The design involved a mix of native and exotic species, with lines of single species where possible to reinforce the avenue feel, and a variety of strong tree shapes and foliage, including those with autumn colour and those with bee-friendly flowers. Where space allowed, large long-lived trees were chosen as these provide the most all-round benefits to urban society.

### What changed

Phase 1 (completed 2013) involved the planting of 80 'semi-mature' trees on highway land.

Phase 2 will focus on the Park & Ride area, involving the neighbouring Vale of Rheidol railway landowners. To realise a tree-lined avenue along this length of the Boulevard, the Coed Aber project is already liaising closely with Aberystwyth Town Council's new plans for the Cae Kronberg skateboard and recreation area.

At the end of Phase 3 (due to finish 2015) a tree trail interpretation will also be developed involving local schools.

The project has already brought benefits in terms of improved partnership working between voluntary groups, statutory bodies and private companies, showing how they can work together to deliver projects and secure funding.

"There are proven benefits for people to exercise and enjoy a safe, welcoming high quality local environment. From an economic perspective it can attract more visitors and tourists as well as promote investment by the business sector."

Trefor Owen,  
Executive Director for National Services, NRW

The benefits will also go beyond the obvious environmental improvements the trees will bring to deliver a better landscape and area which benefit people and businesses alike.

### What obstacles existed

It is essential that momentum is maintained in future months and years, and that partners remain committed to completion of the 3 year planting programme. Keeping strong connections and dialogue between partners will ensure the project stays on track.

Communicating the real economic, environmental and social benefits of urban woodlands and trees to stakeholders is a challenge that will help ensure key decision makers understand what the project can help deliver for Aberystwyth.

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Through a mix of compelling evidence and a strong vision, the Coed Aber project team have been able to show that trees are an essential part of urban infrastructure, and not there just to make places look nicer.

### What they learned

Moving the project from idea to reality has taken time, effort and collaboration from several different partners. The expert technical scoping study provided the essential practical detail and background information, while a visual fly-through really brought the scheme alive for partner organisations helping build support and kick start the project.

The involvement of passionate people has been paramount. Crucial ingredients were the active and knowledgeable community group, and the professional support and 'champion' role initially played by the NRW landscape architect, giving the project the necessary weight and backing to move it to the next stage.

**“Urban woodlands and trees are not a luxury – they are a necessity.”**

Dafydd Fryer,  
Urban Forestry &  
Landscape Architect, NRW

The project has shown how the ecosystems benefits delivered by urban woodlands and trees need to be highlighted and championed at a national level in Wales. NRW is now working with Wrexham CBC and Forest Research to undertake the first i-Tree Eco study of urban trees in Wales, capturing and quantifying all the ecosystem benefits provided by trees in urban areas. i-Tree therefore provides the baseline data to demonstrate value and set priorities for more effective decision-making.

### Contact and Links

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[BBC News article on the project](#)

[Greener Aberystwyth Group](#)

[Natural Resources Wales project video](#)

[Report: Green Aberystwyth's Approach Road Woodlands for Wales](#)

[i-Tree](#)

[Assessment from Torbay Pilot project](#)

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