

RESILIENCE ON THE STREETS OF LONDON

Members **Dr Kevyn Wightman** and **Margaret Steele** report on the National Study Tour 2016 where they learnt about urban tree resilience.

The resilience of people and place shaped ICF's National Study Tour, on 5-6 October, and where better to exemplify it than the UK's capital city. As its Technical Coordinator, ICF Council member Sharon Hosegood FICFor put together a first-class programme for the aptly named 'Streets of London' event, which focused on the boroughs of Southwark and Lambeth. It delivered on all fronts, from how to engage the valuable resource available in a community's residents and what can be achieved, to an insight into the complexities of trees in a major urban construction project and all the challenges that brings.

Wednesday: setting the scene

Delegates met at The Clarence Centre for Enterprise and Innovation, part of London South Bank University, for an introduction on what trees mean for a city environment, setting the scene for Thursday's visits.

Opening the Study Tour, Sharon introduced ICF President David Henderson-Howat FICFor who welcomed delegates. She then handed over to the evening's three speakers.

Peter Massini, Principal Policy and Programme Officer from the Greater London Authority, and a professional member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, described the role of trees in the wider green infrastructure. It was interesting to find that the capital is one of the greenest cities and that the London Infrastructure Plan 2050, which will help to promote the value of trees in an urban environment, is already out for consultation. It will include the promotion of electric cars

Sharon Hosegood FICFor put together a first-class programme for the aptly named 'Streets of London' event



The panel take questions on Wednesday night

to cut pollution, greening of roofs and walls, and projects such as community orchards.

Environmental writer and broadcaster Professor Chris Baines then talked movingly about the conflict between urban development and city dwellers at a time when housing is in such short supply and developers keen to build. Because trees are relatively shallow rooted developers are usually keen to remove them as they present so many problems with the siting of below-ground services. Chris was instrumental in ensuring that as many mature trees as possible would be retained in Lendlease's redevelopment of the former Heygate Estate as part of the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle area (Elephant

Park) of Southwark.

Paul Nolan OBE MICFor, Director of the Mersey Forest, spoke movingly about the value of trees in the urban environment and what had already been achieved in Merseyside and north Cheshire. Increasing tree cover will help to mitigate the effects of climate change and may even benefit the NHS by improving the health of urban dwellers and keeping them out of hospital.

Talks concluded, it was a swift move of venue to the historic Anchor Bankside on Southbank where around 20 of us enjoyed a congenial private dinner once we had negotiated its warren of wood-panelled staircases, corridors and snug bars to find our room. MS

THURSDAY: GARDENS, PARKS, ESTATES AND GRAVES

Trees and communities

The 'people' element of the Study Tour was highlighted during the morning visits. Setting off on foot early on Thursday, we headed off to meet Craig Harrison FICFor, Forestry Commission England's London Manager. Two of the previous evening's speakers, Chris Baines and Paul Nolan OBE FICFor, were able to join us and we benefited from their input during the day.

Arriving at Newington Gardens, Craig provided maps to show the distribution of London's woodlands and described how the London evidence-based study 'Making London's Woodlands Work¹' has provided a better understanding of the condition of London's urban woodlands and identified opportunities to increase the level of sustainable social, environmental and economic management. Among the common barriers to management are lack of long-term/strategic thinking, resources, public perception of tree felling and lack of recognition of the benefits that woodlands provide.

Chris Neilan MICFor, Epping Forest District Council's Principal Officer for Landscape and Trees, then talked about the achievements in the Greater London forest by engaging the community.

He described the benefits of involving people in Epping's Trees and Green Infrastructure Framework. The forest is



Peter Wright points out some of the improvements made at Salisbury Row Park

developing as not just somewhere to walk and cycle, but also somewhere to engage and teach schoolchildren about the value of the environment.

Leaving Newington Gardens, we headed to Salisbury Row Park with a short stop in the Green Flag award-winning Victory Gardens where Celia Cronin, Chair of its Friends Group, guided us along the boardwalk, pointing out its unusual 'world' plantings.

At Salisbury Row Park, Peter Wright – a



Chris Neilan talks about community involvement

local resident who helped the Friends of Park Group lobby Southwark Council and Transport for London to improve the area – showed us what had been achieved. We looked at how the challenges

have been met using clever landscaping, particularly trees and shrubs, the new play areas, teen 'hub', community seating, and traffic minimisation. Despite its location minutes from the busy Elephant and Castle, the area was calm and quiet. MS

The valuable corporate resource

Onward by coach to Ruskin Park, on Denmark Hill in Lambeth, where Trees for Cities' Urban Forest and Operations Manager Harry Thacker welcomed us. He introduced the charity's Chief Executive, David Elliot, and Olivia Dryden, its UK and International Project Coordinator. The trio described the scope of their work and the important resource provided by

community and corporate volunteers.

During our short tour of the park, and after much welcome warm refreshments, Community Engagement Coordinator Jess Massucco talked about how Trees for Cities deploys its volunteers and we watched a corporate group planting and tending trees. Gary Dobson, Team Manager at Investec, was happy to talk to us, and described the satisfaction that he and his colleagues get from helping to improve the natural greenspace that is

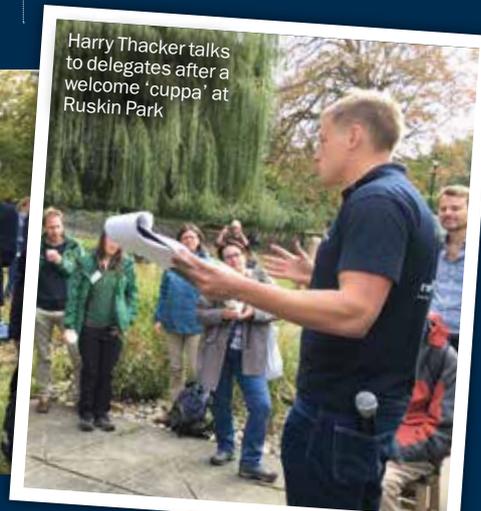
available to the local area.

The morning really brought home how a local authority, charity or other organisation can make a difference by engaging the community and giving them a sense of ownership of a project or area.

Margaret Steele, Graduate Student, Centre for Alternative Technology, University of East London.



Gary Dobson talks about why he and his colleagues volunteer



Harry Thacker talks to delegates after a welcome 'cuppa' at Ruskin Park

Say cheese! Time for a group photo on the viewing platform



Elephant Park: resilience of place

After a buffet lunch, courtesy of our hosts, Study Tour chair Sharon Hosegood FICFor, introduced Lendlease Community Communications Manager Iain Smith, Darren Pilbeam, its Landscape Manager, and Ewan Oliver, Public Realm Development Manager. They were joined by Oliver Stutter, Senior Planner Urban Forester for London Borough of Southwark Council, and Luke Fay MICFor, Senior Arboriculture Consultant at Tree Work Environmental Practice, both of whom advised on tree integration within the project.

The £2.3 billion redevelopment is transforming the former Heygate Estate into 3,000 new homes, retail space, community facilities and Central London's largest new park in 70 years. We learned how Lendlease distanced itself from the all too typical 'build it, flog it, and move away' model. To emphasise this was a quote on the meeting room wall from founder Josef Dusseldorp in 1973: "Companies must start justifying their worth to society, with greater emphasis placed on environmental and social impact rather than straight economics".

Fitting, then, that in 2013 Elephant and Castle became the third worldwide project to reach participant status in the C40 Cities Climate Positive Development Programme² for its net annual CO₂e reductions once completed.

In 2014, work began and we watched fascinating time-lapse footage showing the scale of the Heygate demolition and its subsequent redevelopment.

Later, as we walked around the development, we witnessed some of the points highlighted in the Lendlease presentations:

- Green Infrastructure (GI) is not accidental – it is planned, designed and managed and goes hand in hand with dense development. Here, it includes developing cycle lanes, bee-lines, living roofs, green spaces as well as SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) and wildlife friendly verges GI is part of holistic,

integrated development and delivers many social health and welfare benefits

- Developers and councillors must be cajoled to have a shared vision of GI and smart development

- Only the London Borough of Southwark currently has such a GI plan³;

- Ideally, a GI plan would be used and enforced so that development and growth can occur with no net loss of green functions, or at least no net loss of tree canopy cover;

- People want connectivity without traffic and congested streets and will pay for this.

Trees as an asset

We heard how the fundamental attitude change, from seeing trees as a hindrance to seeing them as an asset with as many as possible to be protected, did bring challenges, not least a lot of convincing in management meetings and at many talks with hands-on teams.

Luke identified that one such challenge was to increase the current tree CAVAT value by five per cent. There were about 400 trees present at beginning of project, of which 123 were deemed to remain. The goal was to have no net loss of canopy cover as defined in function of stem diameter.

He described how a classic professional tree survey was conducted and some of the problems it raised, including skewed roots, and the specialist tree radar equipment⁴ and software⁵ was thus employed. He also explained the additional challenges of avoiding damage to those to be retained during demolition and construction.

It was good to hear that some of the funding is replacing those removed in nearby streets and, to date, 450 trees have been planted. Also, community involvement to date has included the re-use of timber from the site. Recycled chestnut timber was used for outdoor picnic tables and reclaimed London plane wood became bespoke indoor chairs and tables for later use at a new community centre. We also saw some of the re-used Heygate timber at Cross Bones Graveyard

The development's landscape design creates an undulating park 'feel' by avoiding the use of railings or fences. By doing so, the parks move to the people; the green/living estate is integrated into the public facing space. Parks are no longer an isolated space.

As part of our walk around the development, we were given access (by lift) to a viewing platform looking out over the estate. Naturally, there had to be a team photo. KW



Design for all ages is a feature of Elephant Park

Cross Bones Graveyard

Drawing the National Study Tour to a close, John Parker, Senior Technical Specialist Arboriculture and Landscape at Transport for London (TfL), and current president of the London Tree Officer Association, took us to Cross Bones Graveyard, a visual and quiet memorial for the 'Outcast Dead'. John described how medieval prostitutes working in brothels licensed by the Bishop of Winchester couldn't be buried in consecrated church graveyards, so were buried at Cross Bones up until 1853. During the 1996 TfL excavations for the Jubilee Line extension, 148 bodies (90 per cent children) were found and at least 15,000 bodies are estimated to be buried here.

The site is owned by TfL and leased by the Open Spaces Trust. Bringing the visit into context, John praised the work of the community volunteers, who now run and maintain the site, and reiterated how reclaimed timber from the Heygate Estate is helping small projects like Cross Bones where it is used in the garden. As a 'thank you' for opening out of hours for our group, ICF President David Henderson-Howat FICFor presented a donation to the Trust.

ICF Associate Dr Kevyn Wightman, Tree Inspector for Ashford and Swale District's Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate, Highways Department, Kent County Council



John Parker gave a potted history of the Cross Bones Graveyard



David Henderson-Howat presents a donation to the Bankside Open Spaces Trust at Cross Bones Graveyard



A big thank you

ICF sincerely thanks the organisations and groups mentioned for organising ICF's visits, and Sharon Hosegood FICFor for providing such a comprehensive CPD programme.

References:

1. Making London's Woodlands Work: <http://bit.do/MLWWstudy>
2. C40 Cities Climate Positive Development Programme: <http://www.c40.org/networks/climate-positive-development-program>
3. London Borough of Southwark Green Links Framework and Open Spaces Strategy: <http://bit.do/greenlinksframework>
4. Tree Radar equipment: <http://sharonhosegoodassociates.co.uk/tree-radar/>
5. MyTrees tree management software: <http://mytrees-uk.co.uk/>

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