

## EAST ENGLAND

# Quality Trees in the Urban Landscape Conference

Run jointly with the East Anglian Tree and Landscape Officers' Group, ICF's East England Regional Group Conference, held on 13 November in Cambridge, looked at establishing and retaining quality trees in the urban landscape.

Conference Chair Russell Horsey, ICF's Development Director, opened by highlighting experience in other countries to show that the issues of concern were quite widespread and not unique to the UK. While the UK is well advanced in promoting green infrastructure, arboriculturists need to work at engaging effectively with professionals in other disciplines, such as those in the highway authorities and utility providers.

Focusing on urban tree planning, Dean Bowie (GreenBlue Urban) noted a commonplace gap between scheme designs and specifications (perceptions) and what was actually attainable on site (realities). Keith Sacre MICFor (Barcham Trees) summarised the British Standard 8545:2014, *Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape*, as a significant step forward by providing a framework for specifying site specific requirements. Both speakers supported their conclusions with case studies.

After lunch, the focus was on protecting trees on development sites and the role of BS 5837:2012, *Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction*. Two complementary perspectives were presented. Sharon Hosegood FICFor



The conference speakers line up for a photo

(Sharon Hosegood Associates) gave that of the consultant, while Simon Case (North Norfolk District Council) presented that of the local planning authority. Both emphasised the importance of early engagement with clients before land was acquired, and with planning authorities to ensure that the required supporting information was clearly presented and communicated at all stages.

During two lively discussion sessions, which picked up the three common themes from the day: fragmentation, isolation and professionalism, the 40 delegates supported and developed many of the points the speakers made.

Two key conclusions emerged. Firstly, with scarce and reducing resources the importance of sharing experience and good practice within the arboricultural profession is crucial. Secondly, it is vital to look outside our profession and engage with developers and their professional bodies more proactively and strategically.

Concluding the conference, ICF's Membership Manager Stuart Glen highlighted obtaining Chartered Arboriculturist status, and the benefits it affords, as a valuable 'tool' in addressing the issues raised during the day.

**Mark Pritchard FICFor, Secretary**

## SOUTH WEST ENGLAND

## History in the forest

'What trees tell us about our past' was the theme of the Regional Group meeting on October 15 at Savernake Forest in Marlborough, Wiltshire.

We began with a convivial cake-and-conversation session and an introduction from our event guide, landscape historian Graham Bathe, who told us that today's Savernake is the result of layer upon layer of human history. One of its more recent layers is a designed Georgian Landscape that defines the layout of today's forest. The numerous aged beech is one of the features for which Savernake is noted. However, Graham assured us that the species does not appear in its records before the 18th century designs and, hence, is not native there.

Savernake was a Royal forest from the



Uncovering the background of Savernake Forest

1100s, available to the Crown for hunting and timber. From here timber was exported for major medieval construction projects around the country over many centuries. Despite repeated harvesting over a long period, many very old oaks remain; large

sprawling veterans, routinely 500 years old and a few reputedly more than 1,000 years. Grazing is an integral part of the forest's history and clearly many of the trees we saw had developed their wide canopies under open pastoral growth. Debate raged over whether wood pasture is an essential prerequisite to successful oak veteranisation today.

It was a great day. We drank soup (thanks to a camping stove), looked at the site of a Roman pottery – calculating the area of trees that would be coppiced to supply such an intensive industry, saw the remains of World War II military camps, and viewed some fine Forestry Commission forestry – the latest iteration of thousands of years of layered human influence on this land.

We left at dusk after thanking our guide Graham Bathe, Tim Yarnell, archaeological adviser to FC England, and Tom Blythe, the lucky man who presently holds the centuries-old moniker: 'Savernake Forester'.

**Peter Oliver MICFor, Chair**