



## Trees, Planning and Development in Scotland

### Introduction and summary for the seminar held on 19 May 2023 Pathfoot Building, University of Stirling

#### INTRODUCTION

Good-morning everyone my name is Fiona Melville and I am your chair for today. Welcome to the first **Trees, Planning and Development** seminar in Scotland hosted by the **Trees and Design Action Group** or TDAG for short. Unfortunately, my co-host and TDAG Convenor, Sue James cannot be with us. However, one of our TDAG Trustees, Jeremy Barrell joins us today, and will be presenting later this morning.

At registration you should each have received a "Goodie Bag" which includes four TDAG **First Steps Guides** and the highly illustrative and practical **Manual for managing trees on development sites**. You may also have noticed two large poster boards one of which displays our programme schedule for today, and the other identifies the huge support from no less than twenty-five supporting partners, from across the design, planning and development professions including the Scottish Tree Officer Group, along with our lead partners ICF, AA, CSGN and GAT.

However, this seminar would not be possible without the generous support from our headline sponsors **Greenfix, Polypipe, KBIUK and McLaren's Nurseries**. Please do visit their stands in the Crush Hall during breaks and spend some time learning about their innovative and tree friendly products! We also have a few partner knowledge desks which I would encourage you to visit too.

But first, some important housekeeping - please ensure your mobile phones are switched off. In the event of a fire, please follow the green exit signs to the nearest assembly point outside of the building. Luckily, there is no fire drill scheduled today! Refreshment breaks will be back in the main Crush Hall and Lunch will be in the Pathfoot Dining Hall, a short walk from here, which is also accessible avoiding the stairs - please follow the venue event signs.

Finally, we do have a tight schedule to follow so I would appreciate after refreshment and lunch breaks you do make your way back here in plenty time to start the next session. You will have received the full programme as part of your joining instructions which includes our speaker and Session Chair bios, and again given our tight schedule we do not propose reading these out to you.

So now I would like to introduce the day:

**We are** in the midst of a twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. The State of Nature Report found that: **"...There has been no let-up in the net loss of nature in the UK"**. In addition, the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Declaration on post 2020 global biodiversity stated **"deep concerns about the significant implications that the loss of biodiversity and climate change has on our livelihood and communities"**. The Declaration was a call to action to the world's governments at all levels and at national level, to our cities and local authorities.

Someone once said, "Now is our time", well now is our time. We have revised policy and legislation to underpin the way we harness and manage opportunities for trees and biodiversity within the planning and development context.

**The National** Planning Framework 4 provides for a reversal of biodiversity loss, strengthened nature connectivity, and the protection of hedgerows, woodlands and trees including ancient and veteran. Unlike the previous NPF3, the six framework policy outcomes now form a statutory duty under the Planning Scotland Act (2019) one of these outcomes is to **"secure positive effects for biodiversity"**.

Planning now has a defined statutory purpose under the Act, **“to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest”** and we will try to navigate these aspects of policy and legislation today.

**However**, ambition as represented by the NPF4 and the Planning Scotland Act coupled with the need for healthy placemaking and climate resilience may not always translate into successful delivery on the ground.

**As a** practitioner, I have found at times my expertise is engaged after the build design has been approved, or where approval has been granted a few years earlier and the clock is ticking to get it over the line, particularly where the project is identified as being in the **“public interest....”** Outcomes result in individual trees, native woodland, established hedgerows and their associated habitats **and connectivity** to the wider environment being removed and replaced with sometimes unimaginative restricted species palettes, and more often than not, poorly executed planting schemes.

Multifunctional landscapes formed a session in the recent Institute of Chartered Foresters National Conference where the wider benefits of blurring the boundaries between farms and forests were considered using a more holistic approach to land management and that **integrated landscapes** can provide positive outcomes for biodiversity, carbon sequestration, communities, recreation and tourism in the context of future resilience. These integrated landscapes include the urban and peri urban environments and we should always be looking at opportunities to make connections to these wider landscapes.

Today, we need to ask ourselves, **how can we close that gap** between ambition and delivery, **who are the key players** in this process who can drive the urban forest agenda forward, and **how can we as a collective overcome** the barriers that do exist and threaten the protection and expansion of our urban forests, forests which have potential for even greater multiple social, economic and environmental benefits.

**This seminar** really is a Call to Arms, to all of us who have the potential to impact trees, woodlands, hedgerows, indeed all biodiversity, during the planning, design and development stages. The fact we have such a fantastic cross sector attendance today clearly demonstrates to me, the interest in this topic and the obvious desire for collaboration.

We have a terrific line up of inspiring speakers for you today and I would encourage you to make the most of our scheduled Q&A sessions. Our chairs for the morning's session are Dr Caroline Brown of the Urban Institute, Heriot Watt University and John Parker Chief Executive Officer of the Arboricultural Association.

**But first, I am delighted to introduce our Opening Keynote speaker Professor Brian Evans** who is a City Planner, Landscape Architect, Designer and Urbanist. He is Professor of urbanism and landscape at The Glasgow School of Art, Director of the Glasgow Urban Laboratory, and an adviser to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Until last month, Brian was Glasgow's City Urbanist and led the Place Commission for Glasgow, an expert group of prominent practitioners in architecture, design, economics, engineering, and public health that published "People make Places". This report concluded that a shift in how Glasgow creates and manages its 'places' could deliver significant economic, environmental, social and health outcomes and help tackle the climate emergency.

## **SUMMARY**

So, where are we now, what steps do we take to move forward, to collaborate, to work together?

### **Returning to the Key Questions**

- How can we close the gap between ambition and successful delivery on the ground?
- Who are the key players?
- What are the barriers and how can they be overcome?

We must interpret policy and legislation in the spirit it is intended. Planners must ensure they ask for and receive all the necessary information required to allow them to fully assess development proposals and their potential impact on trees and biodiversity which must be protected and enhanced as a result of development – not depleted.

Ensure the right skillsets are employed including planting design with a minimum five-year post planting establishment and maintenance plan conditioned and enforced with failures replaced.

We can use satellite imagery as a tool to help us create the opportunities to make the connections to the wider landscapes. We need to use the technical guidance and expertise to facilitate incorporation and successful retention of trees and biodiversity on development sites. **TDAG guides are invaluable to understand the different ways in which you can incorporate trees into your design.**

We are all key players, and this includes our communities on the ground, they must be part of this journey, our eyes and ears, our skilled volunteers.

None of us have all the answers or all of the knowledge all of the time, but working together we can make bigger, better outcomes for our communities and nature.

**And finally, a message from Sue James:** *The enthusiasm with which the very broad range of supporting partners stepped forward with their support and have attended this seminar is remarkable and shows that Scotland is definitely ahead of the curve in understanding that it is only if all those who could have an influence on the protection and enhancement of the urban forest exert that influence that change will happen.*

*Time is not on our side in responding to the climate and ecological emergency and so it is a united commitment to this critical common cause that can make a significant difference. So, the next step is moving consistently to apply what we have discussed into practice and demonstrate our united commitment to this critical common cause.*



Lecture Hall, Pathfoot Building, University of Stirling, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023