

Street tree wardens get to the root of local tree issues

It's been almost a year since volunteer Street Tree Wardens were recruited by Amey Streets Ahead, as part of the city's new [Sheffield Street Tree Partnership Strategy](#), and their work is already starting to make a big difference.

With over 40 Street Tree Wardens allocated across Sheffield, the budding group of volunteers are helping to maintain and care for Sheffield's street trees, whilst harnessing support from local communities.

Their role includes supporting, influencing, and engaging with both Streets Ahead and the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership, improving neighbourhoods and community landscape in the process.

And whilst many areas of the city now have their own dedicated warden, more volunteers are being encouraged to get involved to ensure every community can reap the benefits of the new roles.

Sarah Deakin is one of two Wardens covering Meersbrook and Heeley, and as a self-confessed tree-fan, she is thoroughly enjoying her new role:

"I am honoured to wake up and look at the beautiful trees outside my house and know that this is the patch that I'm the Warden for." Said Sarah. "I water the sapling that's over the road religiously and have done so for a couple of years, and it's doing beautifully. There have been a couple of trees that I have reported and there's one (a sapling) that has been 'wind battered' but I still keep an eye on it and it's doing alright.

"I could probably make it into a full-time job. I've learnt more about different species of street trees, more than I thought there was. I knew about the Sycamores and the Limes and the Oaks and the common ones, but there are Whitebeams and Hornbeams and Maple and all sorts, I had no idea!"

This summer, a final version of a new Sheffield Street Tree Strategy was launched, coinciding with partners signing a pledge to deliver on the strategy, now and into the future.

The strategy aims to ensure the city has street trees which are well-maintained and cared for; resistant to the threats of disease and climate change and proposes a collaborative and community-led approach to caring for trees growing in all local areas.

"The ability of Wardens to spot any issues with trees early and report them to Streets Ahead is what makes their volunteering so invaluable," **says Kieron King, Principal Operations Manager at Streets Ahead.**

"Try as we might, we cannot be everywhere in the city all of the time, so we really appreciate all the work the Wardens are doing to help us to keep on top of not just routine maintenance, but more critically, spotting possible disease in a tree that needs the expert evaluation of our Tree Inspectors."

One of the most common issues encountered and reported by the Street Tree Wardens is vandalism, either of newly planted trees or their support posts. Wardens can remove damaged posts if the tree is strong enough and any vandalised saplings are removed and replaced by Streets Ahead.

Despite a healthy number of keen volunteers, there remain some areas of Sheffield that would benefit from their own 'eyes on the street' when it comes to trees, and Kieron is keen for anyone who is interested to get in touch, "We have some parts of the city that really need that local knowledge so we can keep on top of any tree-related problems, so if you live in or close to Wincobank, Waterthorpe, or Woodhouse then please get in touch, we'd really like you to get on board.

“The role is not overly complicated, and you can do as much or as little as you are able to. All we ask is that you are over the age of 18 and that you are able to deliver 30 hours a year to cover the core duties of the role. Each Warden receives training and appropriate PPE provided by us at Streets Ahead.”

Susan Unwin, Street Tree Warden for Dore says:

“I have been championing our local street trees for the past five years and last year I completed a two-week photographic survey of Ash trees in the area looking for signs of Ash Die Back; the plan being to photograph the trees again next year.

“On Chatsworth Road I’ve set up a WhatsApp Group to monitor the newly planted trees and ask neighbours for help watering them in prolonged dry periods.”

Executive member for Housing, Road and Waste Management at Sheffield City Council, Councillor Paul Wood said:

“Street tree wardens are a vital asset to our communities; ensuring that Sheffield residents can play an active part in caring for our trees, both old and new.

“We’re hopeful that as more Street Tree wardens are recruited, we’ll have a devoted and proactive group of volunteers, covering all areas of the city, identifying tree related issues as and when they occur.

“Ultimately, the more we know about the condition and health of our street trees, the quicker Amey can resolve any concerns or take action, which can only be a positive going forwards. We’re excited to embark on this new way of engaging with communities, through the wardens, when managing our renowned street tree stock.”

If you’re interested in becoming a Street Tree Warden, take a look at the information on the Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust website, and if you are passionate about trees and the natural world, we’d love to hear from you.

Vacancies for Street Tree Wardens in the following areas:

- S5: Firth Park, Fir Vale, Longley, Shirecliffe, Shiregreen, Southey Green, Parson Cross & Wincobank
- S9: Attercliffe, Brightside, Darnall, Meadowhall, Tinsley, Wincobank
- S12: Birley, Gleadless, Gleadless Townend, Frecheville, Hackenthorpe, Intake & Ridgeway
- S13: Handsworth, Richmond & Woodhouse
- S14: Gleadless Valley
- S20: Beighton, Crystal Peaks, Halfway, Mosborough, Owlthorpe, Sothall, Waterthorpe & Westfield