

# **Felling of Mature / Semi-Mature Street Trees –Community Reaction and Consequences**

**Gerald Dawe and Ambra Burls**

**UK-MAB Urban Forum**

**[www.ukmaburbanforum.co.uk](http://www.ukmaburbanforum.co.uk)**

**Is there a future for street trees?**

**UCL 12<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

**“Trees play an important part in regulating pollution and climate in towns and cities, but are falling foul of insurance companies and councils who are felling healthy, mature trees in their thousands.”**

**Patrick Barkham and  
Jessica Aldred. Guardian,  
3.4.08 [UK]**

# Potential findings (1): diminishing tree numbers?



**Bristol, UK**  
[www.bristolstreettrees.org](http://www.bristolstreettrees.org)



**Berwick upon Tweed / Barbara Carr**  
[www.geograph.org.uk](http://www.geograph.org.uk)

## Potential findings (2): diminution in street tree size?



*Tilia x europaea* at Kew



*Tilia* by V.B.Borjen

[apps.kew.org/trees/?page\\_id=132](https://apps.kew.org/trees/?page_id=132)

[www.panoramio.com/photo/11817597](https://www.panoramio.com/photo/11817597)

	Max. height was	Max. height new cv.s
Lime or Basswood ( <i>Tilia</i> spp.)	35 m	10-15 m
American Elm ( <i>U. americana</i> )	> 30 m	21 m

## Method: Newspaper article search

- Why? Because evidence is not available elsewhere
- Nexis ® database used. 100 case studies found, out of c. 800, between 2009 and 2010 keyword 'tree-felling'
- English language articles, mostly from UK, Australasia and Asia
- Possible problems in interpretation

# Results

- 100 case-studies identified out of c. 800 over 9 months (but: the 'tip of an iceberg')?
- c. 58% showed 'strong concern' about trees being felled
- c. 10% were in favour of felling going ahead
- c. 10% both arguments advanced
- c. 22% reaction not known

# Results:

1. Excessive numbers of mature / semi mature street trees now being felled ('sentinel species')
2. Local people increasingly unhappy
3. 'Risk / scientific' vs. emotional conflict not being addressed
4. Results in easy solution of tree-felling rather than proper tree care and maintenance
5. Public should be properly consulted about tree felling beforehand but this is rarely the case
6. Results in unaccountable control in a precious cultural resource

## Results: other findings

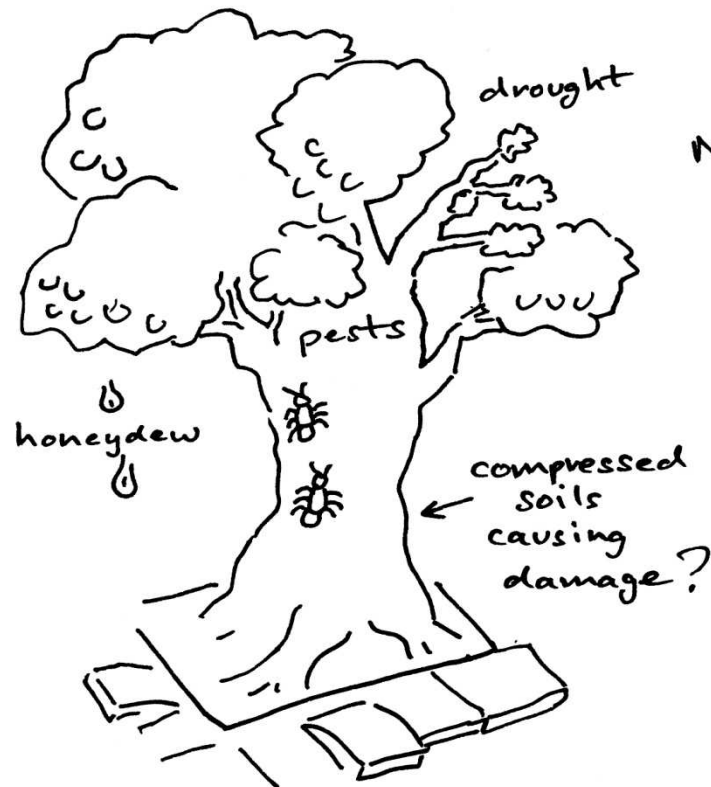
- Tree removal sometimes in excess of what had been promised
- Sometimes felling carried out in early morning or when people would not be about: annoyed people more

# Changing Views of Street Trees

	'Old' Street Tree Problems	'New' Street Tree Problems
<b>Orientation:</b>	<b>Trees At The Heart</b>	<b>Built Environment and People At The Heart</b>
<b>Known as:</b>	<b>ecocentric</b>	<b>anthropocentric</b>
<b>Description:</b>	Tree pathology and damage to trees due to built environment (e.g. stresses due to drought, soil compression) is the central orientation	Damage to built environment or to people <b>from the tree</b> is the core orientation. Concerns are around minimising impact of street trees on built structures, and to people ('health and safety') which in turn is driven largely by the insurance industry
	<b>Hence:</b>	
<b>Implications:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perception of trees as needing to be cared for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perception of trees as problem</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concentration on the tree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concentration on the built environment and on dangers to people</li> </ul>



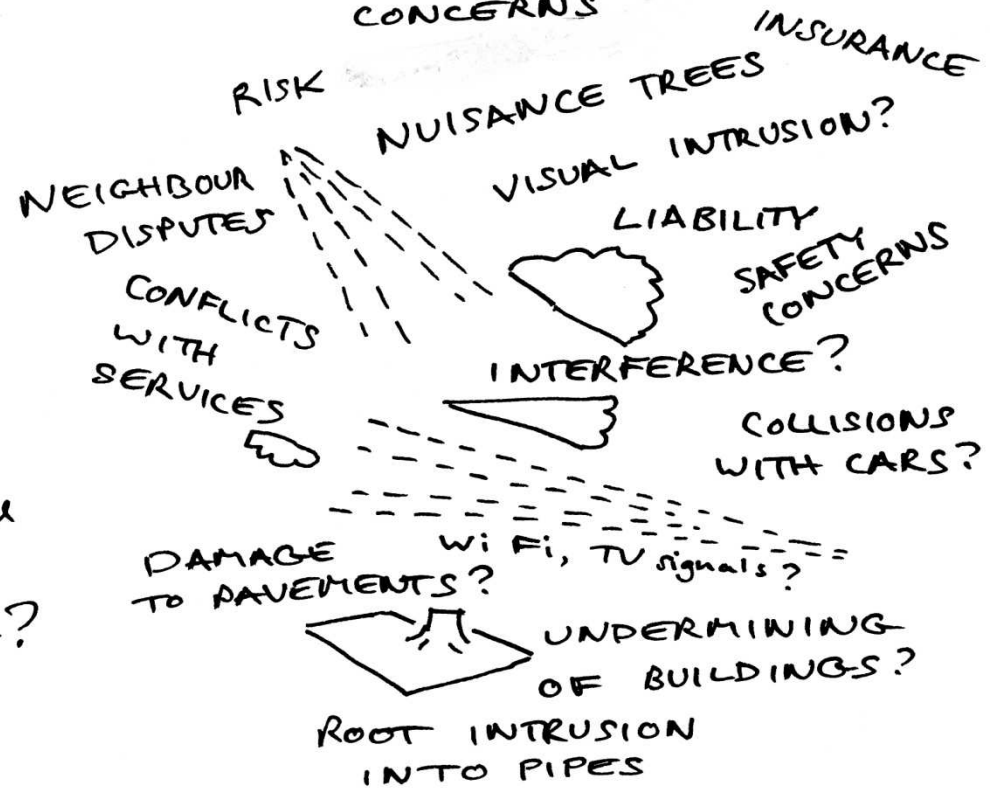
'OLD' TREE-ORIENTED  
'ECOCENTRIC' CONCERNS



CONSEQUENCES:

- TREES LARGELY PROTECTED
- EXCEPT FOR RELATIVELY RARE SANITATION FELLING

'NEW' BUILT ENVIRONMENT  
& PEOPLE 'ANTHROPOCENTRIC'  
CONCERNS



CONSEQUENCES:

- SMALLER CULTIVARS USED
- LARGER, ESTABLISHED TREES, REMOVED

# Conclusion / Discussion

- 'Risk management' of street trees may now be an order of magnitude more intensive than for that carried out for urban traffic deaths and injuries
- What can be done about community distress?
- It affects people enormously, yet it is like dealing with a faceless, unaccountable bureaucracy
- Ordinary people don't feel in control
- Far more creative and imaginative solutions need to be found for street tree management other than felling, even if costs are more

# Suggestions:

- Via community involvement with street trees far stronger political commitment to their protection may be possible, and more expensive protective measures
- e.g. pavements built around them, individual limbs supported, general enhancement of the protection of 'over-mature' even 'dying' trees, proper investigation of tree pathology, and the safeguarding of a valuable cultural resource







removal of live trees often provokes strong, visceral emotions



Embracement :

A self-directed decision to become involved in action.

A willingness to share personal experiences to enlighten others

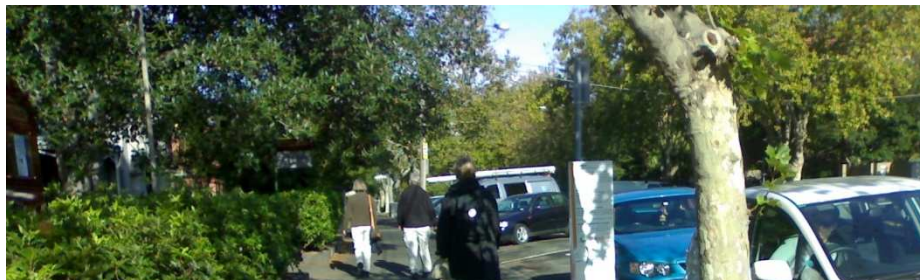
A wish to take responsibility and act as an agent of change

Q. Awareness programs to highlight the responsibilities of residents ?

Q. Grassroots multi-generational/multi-cultural involvement to 'accompany' the tree's history as heritage?

Q. Find community 'champions' who will have the relevant social ability to take the lead?

Recycled tyre rubber root mats in Melbourne







## National Tree Benefit Calculator

The National Tree Benefit Calculator was conceived and developed by [Casey Trees](#) and [Davey Tree Expert Co.](#)

***Thank you for choosing this site to calculate  
the  
economic and ecological benefits of your tree.***

**Find your climate zone to get started:**

*Enter your zip code below:*



<http://www.treebenefits.com/calculator/index.cfm>

The Tree Benefit Calculator **allows anyone to make a simple estimation of the benefits individual street-side trees provide.** This tool is based on i-Tree's street tree assessment tool called STRATUM. With inputs of location, species and tree size, users will get an understanding of the environmental and economic value trees provide on an annual basis.

The Tree Benefit Calculator is intended to be **simple and accessible.** As such, this tool should be considered **a starting point for understanding trees' value in the community, rather than a scientific accounting of precise values.**

For more detailed information on urban and community forest assessments, visit the i-Tree website.