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TREE CONSULTANCY

Barrell on ... bringing the trees to the people

*Horticulture Week Opinion*

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## ***Barrell on ... bringing the trees to the people***



MP Huw Irranca-Davies, recently launched the Delivery Plan for the Government's flagship tree policy for the next 50 years of *England's trees, woods and forests*. Prepared by the Forestry Commission (FC), Natural England and more than 100 organisations, it promises that "there will be a revival of trees in our streets."

Of course, the principle has to be applauded. The research evidence that trees provide significant benefits, including human well-being, temperature buffering and storm-water run-off reduction, makes it hard to overstate their importance in adapting our cities to climate change. The launch is also timely, with widespread concern that our urban canopy cover is being eroded through the loss of big trees and ineffective planting. Investment in reversing the current trend of urban deforestation is justified.

The idea of an all-encompassing strategy for tree management throughout the UK is bold, sensible and attractive, but will only succeed if urban trees are afforded proper weight in the delivery process. In the past, there has been a massive imbalance between the funding of the forestry and urban tree sectors, with the FC receiving an annual budget of millions and urban trees all but ignored. This historical influence permeates the Delivery Plan, which focuses on forests at the expense of urban trees. Such a disproportionate emphasis is not in the best interests of the majority of the public, who happen to live in urban areas!

This Delivery Plan embraces a 'day-trip-to-the-zoo' approach to delivering tree benefits, focusing on taking people to the trees, rather than the other way round. Bringing the trees to the people is a much more attractive proposition because it puts trees right where those benefits are most needed, on our streets and in our gardens. The Government's problem is that a 'revival of trees in our streets' requires funding, and the only money this Delivery Plan pledges is from the Forestry pot. Forestry spending its money on Arboriculture; is that really going to happen?

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