



Declining urban tree canopy cover; risk-averse arborists are part of the problem! (Madrid Conference presentation by Jeremy Barrell on 8th May 2019)

Trees deliver multiple benefits and make the built environment a better place to live and work in, but research and anecdotal evidence is showing that urban canopy cover is declining in Britain and across the developed world. Third-world approaches to urban design and built-environment management are delivering today's high density, low quality housing that will become tomorrow's slums. Green infrastructure, with trees as its main component, must be placed at the heart of modern urban design if we are to stall and reverse the current decline in urban sustainability.



The reasons why urban canopy cover is declining are complex, but obvious causes in Britain include; inadequate protection on construction sites resulting in premature tree decline and death; poorly planted replacement trees die or decline and do not survive or thrive; inadequate legal protection means that valuable trees are often lost; and, removing healthy trees to reduce municipal maintenance costs. However, there is strong evidence that arborists are also part of the problem, through condemning trees for safety reasons at the first signs of structural deterioration!



In this presentation, Jeremy will review the benefits of having trees where we live and work, and will advocate that they are environmental assets worth retaining for as long as possible. He will explore why urban trees are being lost at an alarming rate, with a focus on British tree risk management and how arborists can help reverse canopy cover decline. In particular, he will look at the management of older trees as they become more structurally unstable and describe what practical measures arborists can take to reduce the risks of harm arising from tree failures. Urban tree management challenges are similar around the world and this presentation will be of interest to anyone with responsibility for tree safety.

Jeremy Barrell is the Managing Director of Barrell Tree Consultancy (www.barrelltreecare.co.uk), one of Britain's leading planning and legal tree management practices.