

MDA No.: 1722

Title: London's Trees in a Changing Climate

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Environment Committee meeting on 14 May 2025, the Committee resolved that:

Authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with the party Group Lead Members, to agree any output from the discussion.

- 1.2 Following consultation with party Group Lead Members, the Chair agreed the Committee's letter regarding London's trees in a changing climate, as attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. Decision

- 2.1 **That the Chair, in consultation with the party Group Lead Members, agrees the Committee's letter regarding London's trees in a changing climate, as attached at Appendix 1.**

Assembly Member

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Printed Name: Léonie Cooper AM, Chair of the Environment Committee

Date: 13 June 2025

3. Decision by an Assembly Member under Delegated Authority

Background and proposed next steps:

- 3.1 The terms of reference for this investigation were agreed by the former Chair, in consultation with relevant party Lead Group Members and Deputy Chairs, on 6 May 2025 under the standing authority granted to Chairs of Committees and Sub-Committees. Officers confirm that the letter and its recommendations fall within these terms of reference.
- 3.2 The exercise of delegated authority approving the letter regarding London's trees in a changing climate will be formally noted at the Environment Committee's next appropriate meeting.

Confirmation that appropriate delegated authority exists for this decision:

Signature (Committee Services): *Sal Fazal*

Printed Name: Saleha Fazal

Date: 13 June 2025

Financial Implications: NOT REQUIRED

Note: Finance comments and signature are required only where there are financial implications arising or the potential for financial implications.

Signature (Finance): Not Required

Printed Name:

Date:

Legal Implications:

The Chair of Environment Committee has the power to make the decision set out in this report.

Signature (Legal): *Rory McKenna*

Printed Name: Rory McKenna, Monitoring Officer

Date: 16 June 2025

Email: rory.mckenna@london.gov.uk

Supporting Detail / List of Consultees:

- Zack Polanski AM;
- Thomas Turrell AM; and
- Gareth Roberts AM.

4. Public Access to Information

- 4.1 Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the FoIA, or the EIR and will be made available on the GLA Website, usually within one working day of approval.
- 4.2 If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.
- 4.3 **Note:** this form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If yes, until what date:

Part 2 – Sensitive Information:

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA or EIR should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

Lead Officer / Author

Signature: *Richard*

Printed Name: Richard Clarke

Job Title: Senior Policy Adviser

Date: 13 June 2025

Countersigned by Executive Director:

Signature: *Helen Ewen*

Printed Name: Helen Ewen, Executive Director of Assembly Secretariat

Date: 13 June 2025

LONDON ASSEMBLY

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Léonie Cooper AM
Chair of the Environment Committee

Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
(Sent by email)
Dear Steve,

18 June 2025

Review of tree protections in the Town and Country Planning Act

As you will know, mature and ancient trees play a vital role in maintaining local ecosystems, offering irreplaceable habitats, and supporting biodiversity. Yet, many of these trees remain vulnerable.

The recent felling of a 500-year-old oak tree on the edge of Whitewebbs Park, Enfield, underscored to the London Assembly Environment Committee this vulnerability. Despite being listed on the Woodland Trust's ancient tree inventory, it appears to have been needlessly felled.¹ The tree was considered by ecologists to be 'priceless', providing habitat for up to 2,300 species of local wildlife.² The incident followed the high-profile 'mindless destruction' of the Sycamore Gap tree in Northumberland, and the public outcry over both cases highlights the importance that trees play in people's lives.³

In London, the Mayor has set targets to increase canopy cover by ten per cent by 2050.⁴ Achieving the target will not only require the planting of new trees, but also ensuring that existing trees are sufficiently protected.

In our recent meeting, we heard action is needed to strengthen the safeguards for London's mature and ancient trees. Craig Ruddick, Committee Member of the London Tree Officers Association, told us that the existing framework for tree protection does not adequately reflect the full range of

¹ BBC News, [Ancient oak tree cut down by Toby Carvery](#), 15 April 2025

² Martina Girvan LinkedIn, [How Do We Better Protect Important Trees?](#), 22 April 2025

³ BBC News, [Sycamore Gap pair guilty of chopping down tree in Northumberland](#), 9 May 2025

⁴ London Assembly Research Unit, [Tree Canopy Cover in London](#), 21 May 2025

benefits that trees provide. And that a review of the existing legislation to explore ways to enhance protections was much needed.⁵ We agree. I am therefore writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the London Assembly Environment Committee to ask you to:

1. Carry out a review of legislative protections for tree protection in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990;
2. Explore how to give additional protections for mature trees. This should include broadening the criteria for a tree to be eligible for a Tree Preservation Order, taking into consideration the habitat it provides to local wildlife, and canopy cover and contribution to urban cooling; and
3. Bring forward legislation to strengthen protection for existing veteran and ancient trees by automatically designating all trees over 100 years old with a Tree Preservation Order.

Given the vital importance of managing and protecting London's tree stock, I hope you will agree.

The Committee would welcome a response to this letter by 30 July 2025. Please send your response by email to the Committee's Clerk, Sal Fazal (Saleha.Fazal@london.gov.uk).

Yours,



Léonie Cooper AM
Chair of the Environment Committee

⁵ London Assembly Environment Committee, [14 May 2025 Meeting Draft Transcript](#), May 2025, p.12-13