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Your reference:

Our reference: bl/pb

Date: 3 March 2017



**Councillor Bryan Lodge**  
**Cabinet Member for Environment**  
**Ward Councillor for Birley**

**Town Hall**  
**SHEFFIELD**  
**S1 2HH**

Liz Ballard  
Chief Executive  
Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust  
37 Stafford Road  
Sheffield  
S2 2SF

Dear Liz

### **Streets Ahead and the Independent Tree Panel**

Thank you for your letter of 9 December and our more recent meeting regarding the Streets Ahead programme and the Council's approach to street trees, and please accept my apologies for the length of time it has taken to respond. As you are aware the city is currently benefiting from substantial investment in and renewal of its highways, pavements, and street-lighting as part of the Streets Ahead programme. Part of this investment is allowing us to renew our significantly over-mature stock of roadside trees, many of which have come or are coming to the ends of their natural lives; are otherwise damaging to the road or pavement; or are causing issues for people trying to use the pavement. Removing a tree is always a last resort, and in every case we will replace every tree we remove with at least one new tree providing a legacy for future generations to enjoy.

I thought that the list of improvements to the process that you propose is an extremely constructive and helpful one, which I have considered carefully. We have recently relaunched our approach to street trees, and whilst I am absolutely clear that the investment that we are making in the city's streetscene continues to be the right thing to do, I know that our overall approach and communication with residents on this issue has not been as effective as it might be. As you know, the council has apologised for the way in which we have handled some aspects of the work.

I have incorporated some of the suggestions that you made in your letter to our refreshed approach. In particular, we have already committed to publishing the ITP's advice letters on individual streets as soon as they are available, and ensuring that we publish our response to that advice in a format that is easily accessible for the public.

Unfortunately, having considered it carefully, I do not believe that there is scope to introduce a further stage into the decision-making process on street trees. The ITP approach provides significant opportunity for community input before final decisions are made about street trees on individual roads. Introducing a further stage of dialogue once ITP advice had been received would result in further delays to the programme, and is not something that I can support. I have also looked into the idea of community-led and/or funded alternatives. Whilst this is something that we will look at on a case by case basis, our general view is that legally the Council cannot discharge the insurance liability for its highway network and tree stock onto members of the public, so we are not able to transfer responsibility for the footways, carriageways or trees themselves over to residents of individual streets. It is extremely unlikely that the terms of the PFI arrangement that we have with Amey and the Department for Transport can be changed in any significant way (without incurring significant cost) to allow for a longer core investment period as you suggest.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your work with the Green Commission and the Outdoor Economy group (and more widely) to promote Sheffield's green credentials – these are things that the city is rightly proud of and we will want to continue to promote as an authority. As part of our revised strategy on street trees, we will look to work with you and other partners to communicate a positive narrative on the green nature of the city, and I hope therefore that we can continue to discuss with you how best to do this.

I hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. Lodge', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Councillor Bryan Lodge**  
**Cabinet Member for Environment**