

Case study: Abbeydale Street Trees

Interview with Joe Shute, June 2022

Name of project or group

Abbeydale Street Trees

Introduction

“Abbeydale Street Trees are working with the local community to transform Abbeydale Road into a green corridor with greater biodiversity and less air pollution. There are two primary schools along the road, churches, mosques, a really busy community, but nothing for people to enjoy the street. And we wanted to make a difference and try to change that somehow.” - *Abbeydale Street Trees website*

What actions did you or your group want to take and why? (The inspiration and motivation)

Sheffield's Abbeydale Road is home to two primary schools, fantastic independent shops and businesses – but not a single street tree. We are a campaign group wanting to change that and plant street trees to combat the poor air quality which makes Abbeydale Road one of the city's air pollution hotspots - Abbeydale Street Trees website

“The reason we wanted to put the trees along Abbeydale Road is there wasn't a single street tree here to begin with. And it's the sort of place where you have lots of people sitting outside, lots of young families.” - Joe Shute



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What resources or support did you need/use?

“We’ve done it as part of a big community fundraising campaign. The community here, businesses. Residents raised seven and a half thousand pounds. That was match funded by a national charity called Trees for Cities.

The deal is that we look after the trees for the first three years and then ownership switches to the council after that. Because it’s a pilot project there’s been a lot of difficulty in getting to this point and to finish this process. Actually the easy bit was raising the money and getting the community engagement. The difficult bit was bashing heads between the Council and Amey and ourselves to make this happen.”

How did you empower or involve others?

The local community was invited to events e.g. parklet opening and tree planting .

“We’ve had some people from Kelham Island getting in touch, seeing if they could do something similar there. We hope to inspire a lot more of that as well. Anyone reading this, or any group thinking of doing the same in Sheffield is now is becoming an easier thing to do. And it’s just a case of getting people together and getting people to agree to an idea for how their communities could be.”

How did it make you feel?

“By putting street trees and creating a focal point for the community and something for everyone to enjoy; it feels fantastic to see them in the ground.”



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What changes have there been as a result of your actions?

Twenty nine new trees have been planted since April 2022 and Abbeydale Street Trees have opened a Parklet in the neighbourhood.

“One of the original aims for our project was to inspire change across the city. We set this up because we wanted to create a green corridor along Abbeydale Road and we’ve really started to put some of the things in place to achieve that. Now we’ve got the twenty nine street trees in place, we’ve got our parklet and we’ve also done private planting on primary schools, churches, businesses along here too, to get a real sense of a corridor running down the street. There’s a Tesco supermarket up the road where a landowner has agreed for us to plant street trees on his grounds and also hedgerow as well.”

From Parklet Story in the Sheffield Star: “The parklet, a small area of planters and seating (occupying two parking spaces on Avenue Road), was funded by the city council’s Economic Recovery Fund (Abbeydale Street Trees volunteer) Luke said: “The plan is that it will be there for three years. It was constructed by Strip the Willow, a local joinery business. They’ll be maintaining it.” He explained that the parklet could be left in place longer if it becomes popular or it can be moved on.”



Have you had any memorable nature encounters while doing this?

“Seeing the trees in the ground is fantastic. What we really hope from this project is that communities across Sheffield can see what we’ve done here and think, I’d like to see trees on my high street as well and use the same process that we’ve done to be able to create real change across the city.”



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What's next?

“What we want to do next and focus on next is inspiring others and other bits of the city to do this themselves. To show that it’s possible, you just need to get people together, get in touch with external organisations and crucially not give up as well. And hopefully make a real difference across Sheffield.”

Get in touch

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