

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Epping Forest and Commons	21 05 2017
<b>Subject:</b> Ancient Tree Forum Concordat signing SEF 07/17	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Decision &amp; Action</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Dr Jeremy Dagley – Head of Conservation, Epping Forest and Dr Helen Read – Conservation Officer	

### Summary

This report sets out the background to the close relationship forged over 24 years between the Ancient Tree Forum (ATF) and the City of London (CoL). It demonstrates how both organisations have furthered the conservation of ancient trees through active management and a number of other initiatives, including training newcomers to the field. The ATF Concordat (see **Appendix 1**) sets out a vision for ancient tree conservation, with 11 key objectives to secure their future in the landscape.

The partners to the Concordat will seek to achieve this by, for example, ensuring that there is a mutually supportive network of organisations promoting the value of these trees, making clear their irreplaceability and managing the landscapes, both urban and rural, to prevent all avoidable losses. The proposed signing of the Concordat would be in full accord with the CoL's existing biodiversity policy and its approach to the conservation management of its sites over many decades. The signing of the document would help to endorse and raise the profile of the Concordat's aims and it is proposed, therefore, that a public signing of the Concordat is made an event at the forthcoming ATF Summer Conference being hosted at Epping Forest on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> July.

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### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- approve the signing by the Town Clerk, in liaison with the Chairman, of a Concordat between the Ancient Tree Forum and the City of London promoting the long-term protection of ancient trees.

## Main Report

### Background

1. The Ancient Tree Forum (ATF) is a Registered Charity (No. 1071012), that over the last twenty years has pioneered the conservation of ancient trees<sup>1</sup> in the UK and worldwide.
2. The ATF is the main UK organisation concerned solely with ancient trees and it seeks to secure the long-term future of ancient trees through advocacy for:
  - no further avoidable loss of ancient trees;
  - good management;
  - and the development of a succession of future ancient trees.
3. The ATF works with owners, tree-care professionals and supporters worldwide and works in partnership with other organisations to secure a future for ancient trees.
4. The City of London (CoL) also has an even longer track record, and a distinguished one, of pioneering the conservation of ancient trees. Its officers have also been closely involved in the founding and growth in the influence of the ATF. Attention on the conservation and restoration management of the veteran pollards, first at Burnham Beeches and then at Epping Forest, began in the 1980s. And in March 1991, before the founding of the ATF, Burnham Beeches hosted a meeting entitled 'Pollard and Veteran Tree Management'. Subsequent to this the CoL published the proceedings under the same title, providing one of the earliest available publications on the subject of veteran (or ancient) tree conservation.
5. Following a meeting hosted by the CoL at Epping Forest in 1993, the ATF was formed. The proceedings from this Epping Forest meeting plus additional papers were brought together in 1996 by Dr Helen Read, Burnham Beeches Conservation Officer, who had also edited the 1991 volume of proceedings. This successor volume entitled 'Pollard & Veteran Tree Management II' was again funded and published by the CoL.
6. This second more detailed publication was launched at a special field meeting of the ATF on 3rd July 1996, again hosted by Epping Forest. The Chairman of English Nature, The Earl of Cranbrook, in his address congratulated the CoL on its pioneering role in the management and care of veteran trees.
7. Subsequent to this the English Nature *Veteran Trees Initiative* was started and ran for five years. The CoL was a formal partner organisation in this project and had a place on its steering group along with The National Trust, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and others. It culminated in another

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<sup>1</sup> In this document, the term 'ancient trees' refers to ancient and other veteran trees

in-depth publication, authored by Dr Helen Read, and this time published in 2000 by English Nature.

8. Since 2000, the both the ATF's work and that of the CoL, have gone from strength to strength. The ATF has produced a further detailed technical guide on veteran tree management which is the key national (and increasingly international) reference work. The ATF was awarded EU funds, along with other partners, for the *VETree* project and hosted many international and national training workshops for arborists and foresters. CoL Open Spaces sites have been key training sites for these courses. It also runs highly successful annual conferences attracting many newcomers to the subject each year.
9. The CoL Open Spaces Department has also hosted many workshops (see *VETree* in paragraph 8 above for example) and training events dedicated to ancient tree management over the last 15 years and continues its annual conservation programmes for ancient trees across all Open Spaces Dept. sites, especially Epping Forest, Burnham Beeches National Nature Reserve and Ashted Common. A highlight of this work has been the major 5-year project, part funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which involved the crown restoration management of 1,050 ancient beech and oak pollards at Epping Forest and involved the training of 15 apprentice arborists (*Epping Forest Keystone Tree Strategy*).

## Current Position

10. Over the last few years the ATF has developed partnerships to promote conservation plans and better training for ancient and veteran tree management. In June 2015, as part of this approach the ATF launched its Concordat, which it is encouraging other organisations to sign so that there is an explicit and publicly shared approach taken to ancient trees in the UK. The Concordat, attached as **Appendix 1** of this report, sets out a Vision and 11 key aims which it asks other organisations to support and try to achieve together. Concordat signatories include a number of national organisations such as The National Trust and Historic England.
11. The Concordat outlines commitments required from partner organisations and governments to safeguard the precious resource of veteran and ancient trees and to ensure future generations of trees can reach the ancient stages of growth.
12. Among the 11 key aims of the Concordat is the objective to ensure training in veteran tree management – which the CoL's sites continue to fulfil by hosting demonstration days, such as the recent Institute of Chartered Foresters' visit and a forthcoming Royal Forestry Society visit. Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches are also regular destinations for tree-care professionals seeking to view our work and share ideas.
13. The Concordat also seeks to ensure that up-to-date inventories of the ancient trees are maintained. The Veteran Tree Register at Epping Forest, with over 23,000 veteran pollards already mapped, is an outstanding example of the CoL's commitment and contribution to such a comprehensive inventory.

14. The Concordat promotes continuing research and monitoring and this is integral to the work of CoL officers at Burnham Beeches, Ashted Common and Epping Forest with further publications on ancient tree management to be forthcoming over the next few years.
15. Given the close working relationship between both organisations over more than two decades now, and our shared, pioneering approaches to ancient tree conservation, recognised in the CoL's site management plans, it is fitting that the CoL should be one of the first organisations to sign the Concordat.
16. It also seems fitting that, 24 years on from the Epping Forest meeting on veteran tree management and the subsequent founding of the ATF, the Concordat should be signed at the forthcoming ATF summer conference being hosted at Epping Forest on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14th July.

## Proposals

17. It is proposed that the signing of the ATF Concordat should take place this summer at the ATF conference being hosted by Epping Forest. This event provides a showcase for the three decades of conservation pollarding work at Epping Forest and its recent *Keystone Trees* programme carried out as part of the HLF-funded *Branching Out* Project.
18. Therefore, it is recommended that your Committee approves the signing of the Concordat between the Ancient Tree Forum and the City of London by the Town Clerk's representative, in liaison with the Chairman.

## Implications

19. **Corporate & Strategic Implications:** the options and proposals in this report meet the *City Together* Strategy by contributing to "*a world class City that promotes and enhances our environment*". In relation to the Open Spaces Department's Business Plan Improvement Objectives this report fulfills the objective to "*promote sustainability, biodiversity and heritage*".

## Conclusion

20. The two organisations, the ATF and CoL, between them have set new benchmarks in the management and safeguarding of ancient trees over the last 24 years. They have also raised the profile of these keystones of biodiversity both nationally and, increasingly, internationally. The ATF's Concordat, first drawn up in June 2015, sets down the principles and key aims for ancient tree conservation and seeks to establish a mutually supportive network of organisations that can further these objectives. It is recommended that the CoL becomes one of the first organisations to sign the Concordat, which then should encourage others to make the same public commitments to ancient tree protection.

## **Appendices**

- **Appendix 1** – Ancient Tree Forum Concordat (June 2015 template).

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