Wokingham Town Verification Pilot Summary

The pilot verification of trees in Wokingham Town has now been completed and has proven to be a very successful process.

We selected 53 trees that were missing data in their records AND were the largest girth of a species or an unusual species for Wokingham Town. Three pairs of surveyors then took a third of these trees each.

Preparation work was needed before each field trip. Malcolm Inglis created a process to extract the data for a particular MRN onto a new spreadsheet form and this together with the photographs of the tree was either printed off or held on an electronic device. A map of the area with the tree position marked was also needed. The new form has spaces for tree data to be corrected, new data added or notes made.   Changes to the database entries were made using the standard correction and / or update spreadsheets and a list of trees verified has been maintained.

In all we have verified 127 trees, as it became obvious to verify those trees close to the ones allocated to us.

Outcomes and Learnings:

1. The process takes a lot of time, an average of an hour per tree. This includes preparation time, field time and then the time to process the photographs and create the correction / update spreadsheet entries.

2. You need to know about all the other trees in the database that are near the tree you are looking for, and it is efficient to then verify all the trees in an area together.

3. Photographs are critical. Finding a tree with an inaccurate grid reference and no photograph is a huge challenge.

4. The association has evolved the data collected for each tree over the 4 years of the survey. GPS and the new 'grab a grid ref' make grid references much more accurate and initially girth heights, location, access etc were not recorded. Wokingham Town has many early records and the pilot has shown that we need to enhance these to reflect the way in which we now record trees. This may not be the case in many of the other parishes and towns.

5. We have found changes that we expected, e.g. trees that have been heavily pruned or felled or died. We also had one or two trees that just could not be found and for these we have kept the tree data but commented that the tree could not be found.

6. There have been a few errors in species identification and some photographs assigned to the wrong tree, but mostly the changes are completing the missing data (e.g. location, setting or access) and refining the grid references.

7. In some areas we have also seen trees that had not been recorded in the survey, so we have added a number of new trees.

Conclusions:

We strongly recommend that all towns and parishes have photographs of all their trees as this is critical for anyone trying to locate a tree from the database data. Dating of photographs is advisable so that historical sequences can be seen (the here, going, gone sequences).

For other parishes and towns, we have a process that can be used if the co-ordinator believes they may have records that need checking for any reason.

In Wokingham town, we plan to continue to verify more trees and have agreed the following priorities:
   - **Data that can be improved** - trees that have no photographs, are missing other data like location, setting and access or have low resolution grid references
   - **Historic** - trees on the 'green routes' into the town or with historic references (old maps, local names etc)
   - **Significant** – trees with the largest girths of abundant species (oak, sweet chestnut etc) and all trees of unusual species (tulip, black mulberry etc).

We will also maintain a list of trees where someone has queried the data e.g. tree appears to be in middle of a building or the wrong side of a road and these will be added into the verification batches.

Alison Griffin – November 2010