

Motion to Increase Canopy Cover

Proposed by Councillor Andrew Achilleos - Member Champion for Climate Change

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham recognises the far-reaching benefits provided by trees such as tackling climate change through natural carbon capture, improving air quality and people's well-being, boosting local biodiversity, and assisting with flood management.

In November last year the council, working with external partners and the community, planted the 'Forest of Thanks'. A woodland creation project which delivered 32,000 trees in Parsloes Park. Whilst providing a way to commemorate those tragically lost to the pandemic and as a testament to the sacrifices of our key workers, it was also a statement of intent in our fight against climate change.

As the largest Miyawaki forest in Europe – a method of planting native trees that significantly increases environmental gains such as biodiversity, carbon capture and water retention, the 'Forest of Thanks' is a truly awe-inspiring legacy project.

However, data provided to Friends of the Earth in December 2020 by aerial survey company Bluesky International Ltd, suggests total canopy cover in Barking and Dagenham is less than 10%. It is worth noting that this data only includes trees over a certain height which differs based on species, so our 'Forest of Thanks' is not yet accounted for. Although, this project alone will not bring us in line with the 16% average of urban canopy cover in England.

Considering this data and the importance of trees in the face of a climate and ecological crisis, this council resolves to set an ambitious target to double canopy cover within the local authority area by 2040. This will include but will not be limited to, further woodland

creation in our parks and open spaces, and an innovative approach to street tree planting.

This council also resolves to write to the Environment Secretary to request more funding for councils to increase canopy cover.