

Newly planted trees just need to be watered

Newly-planted trees in Edinburgh could be at risk of dying it is feared as the council has “no dedicated resources” to ensure they are being watered.

The City of Edinburgh Council currently aims to plant 25,000 new trees each year in a bid to become a ‘Million Tree City’ by the end of the decade.

The target was surpassed in the five months to March this year with 25,230 plantings. However in the same period 898 removals were recorded.

And there is growing concern about a lack of resources being allocated to maintain the trees, as community groups and residents take on the responsibility of ensuring they don’t wither and die.

The council has confirmed there are “no dedicated resources” for tree watering despite having over £400,000 to spend on the initiative over the next year.

It added “some watering” is carried out by staff during normal working hours and overtime is used “where resources are available.”



Hal Osler Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Lib Dem councillor Hal Osler said: "In my own area in Stockbridge if you look along the river by the arboretum and the Water of Leith, some trees went in there a few years ago and they all died because they were inappropriate trees and they were never watered.

"New trees have gone in there, which are now being looked after by individuals."

Community councillors for Leith Links have also taken matters into their own hands with some "emergency watering action" at the weekend.

In a social media post, they criticised the council for "planting trees, then just leaving them to die."

Cllr Osler said 'please water me' signs attached to new trees are not enough and argued more should be done to notify residents their help is needed.

"In fairness to residents, they don't know that they might

have to look after those trees – the least we can do is ask them,” she said.

She has asked officials to compile a report looking at the council’s existing watering programme and how voluntary organisations can be mobilised as part of efforts to keep the city’s trees healthy.

The Inverleith councillor added: “Trees are living things and it’s not enough to just put things in.

“I know the tree officers very well indeed and I know that they do an extremely good job. It isn’t about a lack of ability to do something, it is purely down to making sure we’ve got enough resources.

“There are many things which are depressing in life but watching a newly-planted tree die within the first year of being planted is very, very upsetting. It’s also extremely expensive.

“If we’re going to plant trees, then we need to look after them. If we’re not going to look after them, they’re not going to survive so they’re not going to count so it’s a waste of resource.

“With a lot of these trees they could survive easily for 30 or 40 years but if we don’t water them properly in the first year or two they won’t survive at all.”

A council spokesperson said: “Watering can be included as part of a contract arrangement for certain new areas of planting and we are currently looking at resources to improve watering of street trees planted as part of Edinburgh Million Tree City.

“City of Edinburgh Council and parks/forestry staff are of course concerned with and committed to the upkeep of all our parks and green space sites including tree stock. As we are

currently experiencing almost drought conditions we are aware that our tree stock is being affected as a result of these weather conditions.

“There is no policy or process to use volunteers, however, it is something that is being looked at as part of Edinburgh Million Tree City and Thriving Greenspaces projects. Labels are attached to new trees to encourage local people to water the trees. We encourage all residents and businesses to look after young trees nearby.

“We are working on plans to improve watering and tree aftercare, especially for standard trees planted in parks and streets.”

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

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