

# i-TREE ECO: MODELLING THE LUNGS OF OUR CITIES

*Following Kenton Rogers' article on quantifying the benefits of trees to cities, Keith Sacre gets specific with the internationally recognised London i-Tree Eco Project*

## Who and what are RE:LEAF?

The RE:LEAF partnership includes The Mayor of London, The Tree Council, Trees for Cities, The London Tree Officers Association, Groundwork, The Forestry Commission, The London Orchard Project, the London Wildlife Trust, The Woodland Trust, The Conservation Foundation, The Trust for Conservation Volunteers and Natural England.

RE:LEAF is a partnership campaign led by the Mayor to protect the capital's trees and encourage individual Londoners, businesses and organisations to plant more trees. The Mayor also wants to protect London's woodlands and associated wildlife and make London a greener, more attractive city.

Follow the project at :

- [www.facebook.com/pages/London-i-Tree-Project](http://www.facebook.com/pages/London-i-Tree-Project)
- [www.twitter.com/LondoniTreeProj](http://www.twitter.com/LondoniTreeProj)

In the last article, Kenton Rogers from Treeconomics wrote about the importance of not only recognising the benefits of trees but of quantifying them using a systematic approach based on sound, peer reviewed science.

Treeconomics has been involved since the outset in several major projects across the country where i-Tree software has been used as the tool to express those benefits. I have been fortunate to work with Kenton on some of these initiatives including the one I've been asked to write about here, The London i-Tree Eco Project.

The importance of the London project cannot be underestimated in terms of its international profile and appeal. London is home to eight million people and it is one of the iconic global cities. The fact that it is conducting the largest ever urban forest survey using volunteer, citizen science has



*International experts came to offer specialist support*

not gone unnoticed, sparking interest in Europe and further afield.

The high profile nature of this project was reinforced last spring when Greg Ina and Scott Maco from The Davey Tree Expert Company and Dr David Nowak from the USDA Forestry Service agreed to come to London to offer specialist support for the project, over and above their normal extensive offering.

Dr Nowak is the lead researcher from the US Forest Service charged with developing the i-Tree tools while Davey is recognised as the leading disseminator and support service supplier for i-Tree in the world.

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The internationally recognised experts intend to be in London when some of the headline figures are announced at this year's London Tree and Woodlands Awards ceremony on 27th May.

One of the aspects of the project that fascinated the Americans was the extensive use of volunteers to collect the necessary tree data. Around 300 volunteers were trained by Treeconomics and Jim Smith of the Forestry Commission. As experience is key, each team also included a professional tree warden or tree officer.

Social media was used to great effect in recruiting the volunteers, who came from all walks of life. This social network will continue to be used for the dissemination of results and to continue to engage the volunteers, many of whom would like to be involved in further projects.



Around 300 volunteers took part in the citizen science project

Jake Tibbets, tree officer for Islington and chair of the London Tree Officers Association explained: “The volunteer resource that helped deliver the i-tree survey will be galvanised using social media into the first London wide network where volunteers, professionals and tree owners such as councils can share knowledge, experience and skills. One of the main aims will be to up-skill and enable volunteers to deliver their own events and projects such as further i-tree surveys, planting and educational events. It is hoped that through this scheme the public can start to develop more of a sense of ownership or guardianship over London’s urban forest and engage in its care and management in new ways.”

At one of the training sessions, Sir Harry Studholme chair of the Forestry

Commission turned up unannounced, not as an additional, inspirational speaker but as a volunteer. I asked him why he was there and what made him volunteer.

His reply was interesting and a ringing endorsement for the London i-Tree project. “London has an enormous and under appreciated asset in its trees. They frame its cityscape, lining its streets and beautifying its parks and gardens. Much more than this, they perform important functions such as absorbing pollution and carbon, influencing storm water runoff as well as providing shade. Of course those of us involved with trees know this, but the chance to evaluate this and communicate it to a wider audience makes the London i-Tree an incredibly exciting project.”

The London Tree and Woodland Awards on 27 May is an event of international

**What are the London Tree And Woodland Awards?**  
 The London Tree and Woodland Awards have been held since 2008 with the aims of celebrating the work of individuals, communities and professionals to protect, improve and expand the capital’s tree and woodland cover; inspiring others to manage their trees and woodlands, and raising the profile of London’s trees and woodlands and the need for management.  
 For more information see [www.forestry.gov.uk/london-awards](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/london-awards)

significance in terms of recognising and quantifying the benefits of trees. It will be a day to celebrate partnerships, endorse altruistic professional support services and one to embed the quantification of the benefits of the urban forest within the current and future political discourse at local, national and even international level.

**ABOUT KEITH SACRE**



Keith has over twenty years’ experience in local government as a nursery, parks and operations manager and is a member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters and a chartered arboriculturist. He has an MSc in arboriculture and urban forestry, a BSc in social science and a BSc in arboriculture. Keith is currently a trustee of the Arboricultural Association and the Trees and Design Action Group (TDAG).