



Sheffield is great!! – a city region to be proud of

<http://ianswalkonthewildside.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.ukeconet.org/>



URBAN TREE DESTRUCTION
– the need for action now

***The Politics and Economics
of
Urban Street Trees***

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**But we should never take environmental quality for granted
or even leave it to the professionals.....**



A PREAMBLE OF POLITICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SHAMBLES AT A NATIONAL LEVEL.....

George Osborne – environmentalists are a sort of Taliban.....

In the age of the Big Society – environmental protection is needless Red Tape.

The emasculation of local authority & other public services.....





The fat cats.....and their pound of flesh

Policies, strategies, commitments & promises.....

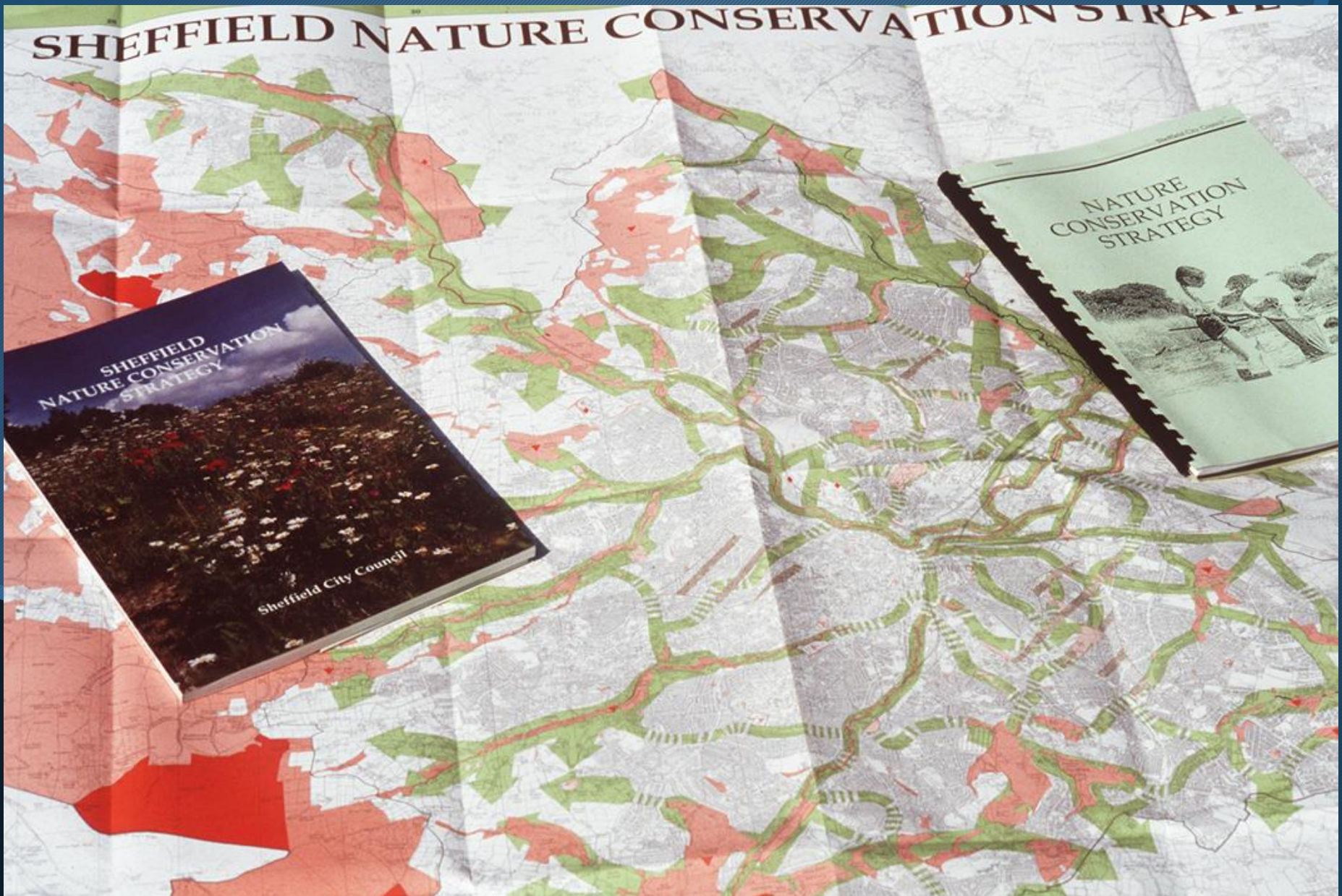
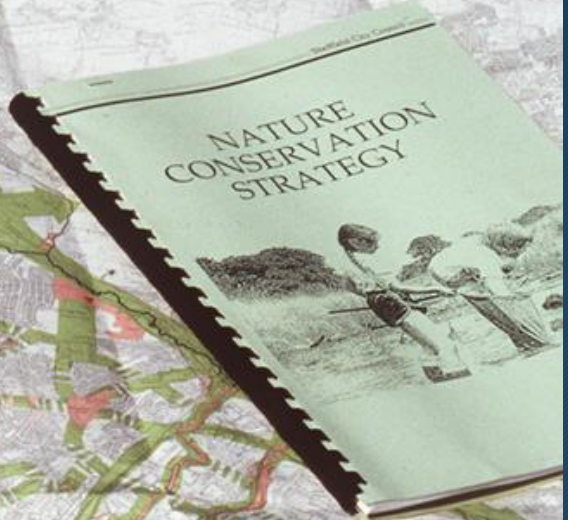
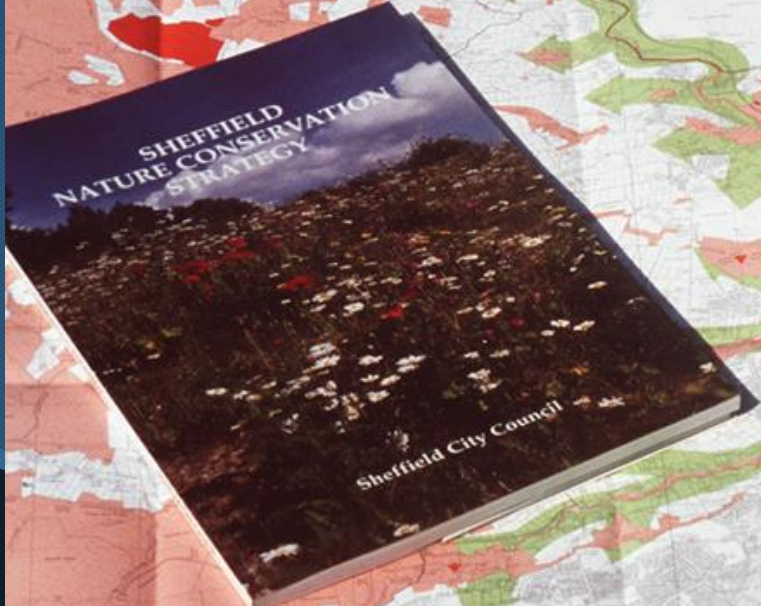
Nature Conservation Strategy,
Countryside Management
Strategy,
Access to Countryside Strategy,
Woodland & Tree Strategies &
Policies,
Biodiversity Action Plans.



Background and current situation.....beyond the local

But how we respond is a local issue.....

SHEFFIELD NATURE CONSERVATION STRATEGY



Sheffield – a city of trees and woods.....



Sheffield's WOODLAND HERITAGE

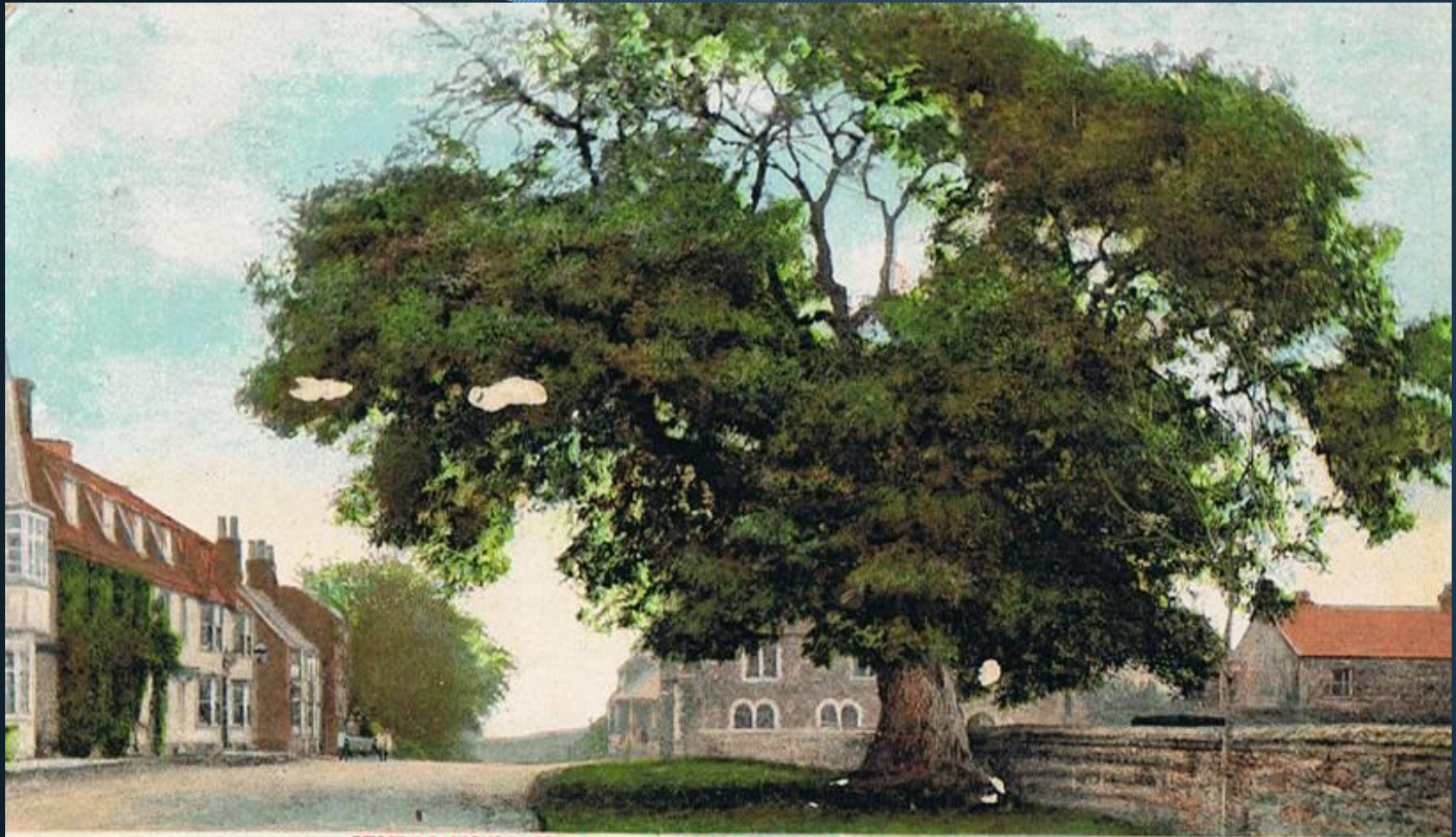
Fourth Edition

Mel Jones

Illustrated by Bob Warburton



Street trees????



WESLEY'S TREE, WINCHELSEA, SUSSEX.

Under this tree the great John Wesley delivered his last outdoor sermon.

"I stood under a large tree and called to most of the inhabitants of the town "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, Repent and Believe the Gospel."

Extract from Wesley's Diary, Oct. 7th, 1790.

Great Value

- ❖ Absolutely clear that street trees and particularly urban street trees have great value.
- ❖ Much of the value is beyond price

Victorian heritage



What do trees & woods give US.....

- ❖ Landscape & sense of place
- ❖ History, heritage & local distinctiveness
- ❖ Biodiversity & ecology
- ❖ Clean air
- ❖ Mitigation of flood risk
- ❖ Mitigation of summer high temperatures – up to 4-5 degrees reduction
- ❖ Good health
- ❖ Property values
- ❖ Free recreation

The benefits of urban street trees

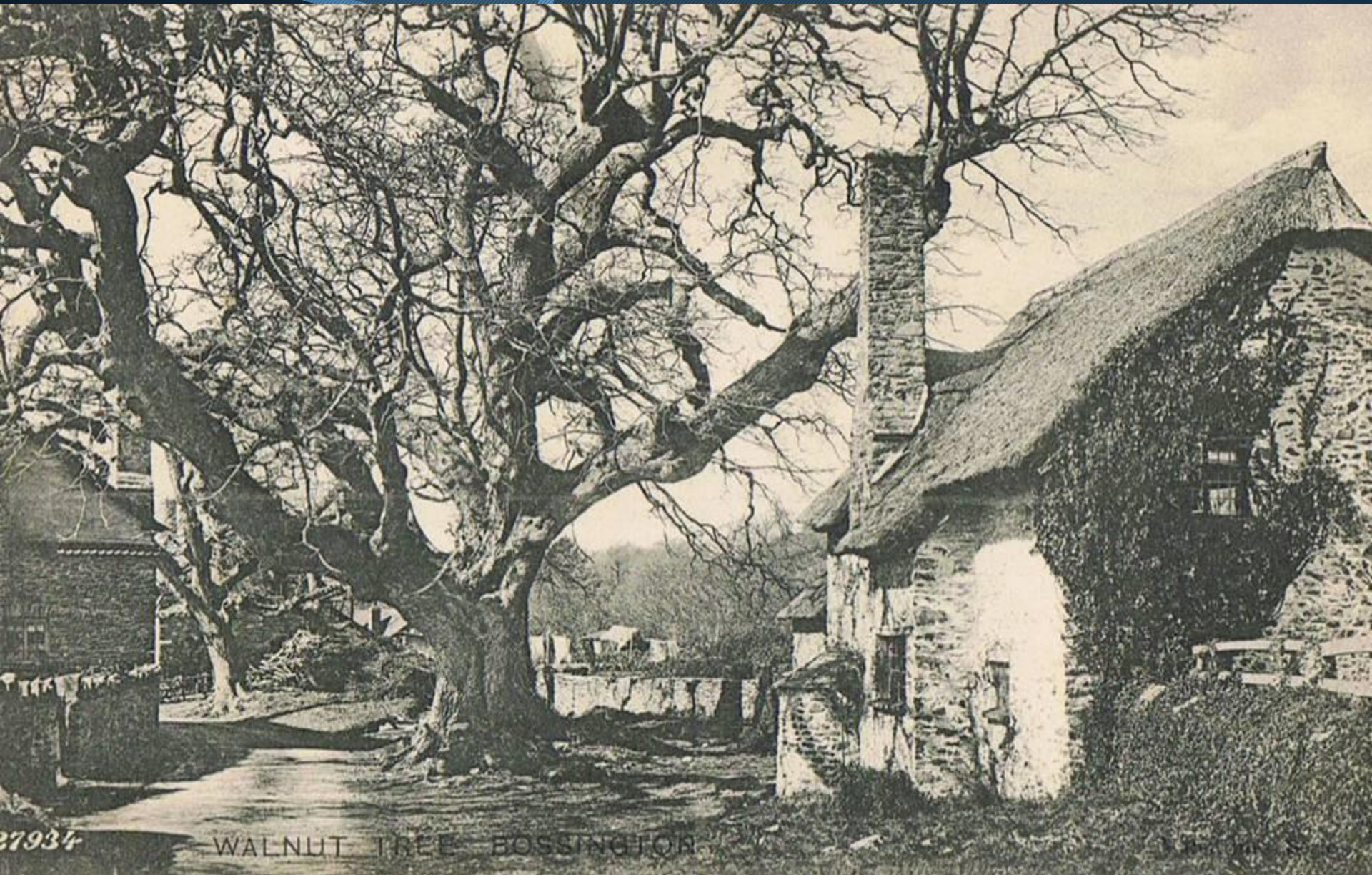


Trees in urban areas have particular '*worth*', and as a part of the urban forest, urban street trees are especially important.

Some of the benefits associated with urban street trees include:

- A green & high quality environment
- Noise reduction
- Visual enhancement
- Moderation of extreme weather and '*climate-proofing*' of urban areas
- Reduction in costs or expected costs of air-conditioning *etc*
- Moderation of precipitation runoff and flood-risk through interception at canopy level and root-pits acting as '*soakaways*' to take surface runoff into groundwater
- Removal of particulate pollution
- Enhanced house values & 'desire to live' in a locale
- Enhanced urban ecology, biodiversity, habitat continuity & connectivity
- History, heritage & connectivity with the past

Heritage Trees become urbanised



27934

WALNUT TREE BOSSINGTON

Where you are & when you are

- ❖ Local distinctiveness & cultural identity
- ❖ Urban seasonality
- ❖ Community & individual health – physical, mental & spiritual
- ❖ Associated with major financial saving for the health and other services



There is a downside too.....

- The trees which deliver the most significant benefits are the biggest and most long-lived.
- Whilst nice rows of small Almonds or Cherries enhance visual amenity they do little else
- Old forest trees, often despised by planners and managers which help climate-proofing and flood attenuation.
- It is these trees in urban environments which require most care and greatest expenditure.
- They also carry the greatest risk if failure occurs.
- With gradual damage such as uplift of pavements *etc*, all trees, if not effectively planned and managed, can have adverse impacts.



YA53 LHX



The politics of urban street trees

- The politics of urban trees in general and street trees in particular.
- Perceived costs and damages associated with big forest trees in the urban catchment are high.
- Perceived risks, whilst in reality very small, are also considered large.
- **CONSEQUENT INSURANCE COSTS AND ISSUES**
- Inspection, care, maintenance, and where necessary remediation or removal cost associated with these big trees are high, and compared with rural grown trees their lives are shorter and more fraught.

A photograph showing a large, mature tree trunk with thick, gnarled bark. The tree is situated in a residential area, with a concrete curb and asphalt road in the foreground. The tree's roots are exposed and spread out over the curb and road surface. In the background, there is a well-manicured hedge and a brick house with a chimney. The text "Not just big trees which cause problems" is overlaid on the image.

**Not just big trees
which cause problems**



BUT: BIG TREES – BIG BENEFITS

- ❖ The big trees, largely planted by enlightened Victorians or the planners of the early twentieth century, or subsumed into the urbanised landscape from the countryside as twentieth century towns sprawled across their rural hinterlands, which give the maximum benefits.
- ❖ It is these trees which give character to suburbs such as Sheffield's desirable Fulwood or Nether Edge for example.
- ❖ It is certainly these trees which will help climate-proof our towns and cities in terms of future climate change scenarios and extreme weather events.



WHAT ARE THE THREATS?

- Ever since we invented the modern town or city, the big trees have been under pressure.
- Pioneering work in North America and in Europe good practice in terms of care and maintenance, have been developed.
- But this requires money and skilled staff in order to deliver it effectively on the ground.
- Urban street trees have long been the

Cinderella of local authority expenditure

- On-going care and maintenance have frequently been replaced by pulses of intensive, often drastic, *'maintenance' or 'safety' works.*

So once again we face drastic cuts in public services and especially in local authority provision

- This will leave street trees especially vulnerable since they have no voice and cannot '*speak*', at least not to most of us.
- With the politics of street trees this is a potentially very bad scenario.

Issues of accountability, 'ownership', responsibility, and local environmental democracy

National Policies & Visions

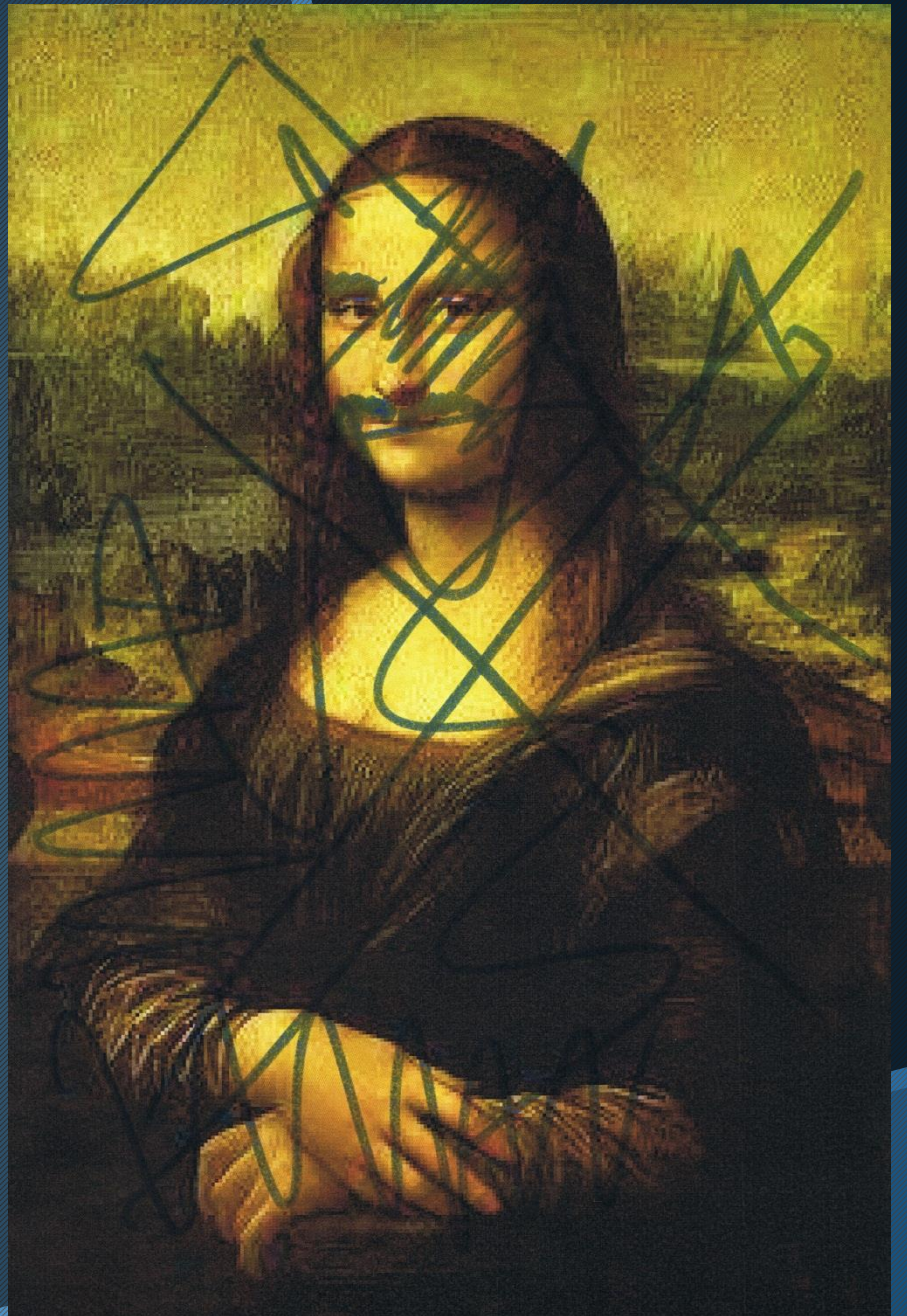
- Many **CURRENT POLICY AND STRATEGY STATEMENTS** and initiatives which relate positively to street trees.
- One in particular that provides a very robust platform from which to take the dialogue forwards.
- **TREES IN TOWNS II REPORT** which provides a very comprehensive and well-evidence grounding for the issues and future debates.
- The problem really, is that it is unlikely that many politicians or planners will take the time to read it.

HENLEY AVENUE 8

W
12

**Gaunt Road 200+year-old field
boundary oak – removed
despite protests July 2013 –
no prior notice given**







Meadowhead Roundabout

making Sheffield better.

www.sheffield.gov.uk/streetsahead
0114 273 4567





PLANT

amey

JSP

amey

JSP

HS2, motorway services & Smithy Wood



Composite Map may be out of date or inaccurate JP 2002-2013

BEAUCHIEF ABBEY, SHEFFIELD.



**Gulley's Meadow
@ Beauchief**



**The free wildflower meadows
— our biggest nature reserve**

**Loss of local
champions
and expert's –
Countryside
Management
Services, in-
house tree &
woodland
expertise and
more.....**

**Replaced by
an
anonymous
bureaucracy
of telephone
helplines and
excuses**

BIG ISSUES

CONCLUSIONS: *Champions for street trees and the decision-making process*

Unlike a parkland or even some urban woods for example, street trees have few publicly accessible and site-specific management plans, and almost no '*friends*' or at least friends groups.



ISSUES OF 'POWER AND INFLUENCE RELATIONSHIPS'

***LOBBY GROUPS WITHIN AND AROUND LOCAL
POLITICS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT.***

Decision-making & policy

Risk, liability, insurance and cost

***We are locked in to a 25-year process of loss of environmental
democracy which is unacceptable***

Consultation & Empowerment?

- ❖ When trees are felled and the stump grinders swiftly move in to remove all evidence, one questions the degree to which the community and local householders were consulted?
- ❖ To what extent too would they understand the implications for their house values and even for their health? I wonder.

THE MESSAGES OF RIO AND AGENDA 21

The role of the responsible authorities should be to **ENGAGE**, to **CONSULT**, to **INFORM** and to **EMPOWER**

local people

