

Chairman's Report Surrey Tree Warden Network 2020

I was Chairman of Surrey Tree Warden Network for a grand total of thirteen days in 2020. It was a most unusual year with many of us either confined to home or severely restricted in our activities for much of the year. For many of us 2020 meant four walls closing in while we did our best to protect those we loved, sadly for some it meant the loss of loved ones. Personally, I spent much of my time in 2020 working to support those in my local area who were struggling to feed their families due to the economic impact of the pandemic. However, at the end of 2020 I was also one of the creators of a Calendar for 2021 featuring Surrey Heath's Trees.

At the time of the Executive Committee meeting where I was appointed to the Chairman role our activities as a charity had been much reduced for the majority of 2020. The Lockdowns and a request from the Tree Council to cease active volunteering operations were obeyed. Effectively Surrey Tree Warden Network's volunteer activities hibernated throughout much of 2020 except for your Executive Committee doing our best to remain in touch with you through newsletters, Facebook, and our website. However, I will confess, I sneaked out with my planting spade and wellies, I checked up on our newly planted trees and I planted new ones several times. I just couldn't help myself.

No AGM was held in 2020 following the instructions received from the Charity Commission that due to the Coronavirus pandemic it was not practicable for charities to hold a formal AGM and that instead the Trustees should by resolution suspend the holding of an AGM.

This year is different although the virus is still a hazard for all. I am so glad to be able to see you and meet with you in person today at this Annual General Meeting. At the same time our various local groups have gradually recommenced operations albeit with some precautions and a little hesitancy, some old friends have moved on and some new ones appeared.

A problem that has been with us for a little while has been the bureaucracy getting permission to plant street trees in Surrey with two organizations that want to plant trees at odds with each other. This year I have dedicated myself to creating a better more productive working relationship between STWN and Surrey County Council. I'm pleased to say we have had a series of successful meetings and we now have every hope of a partnership relationship which focuses delivering our objectives as a charity of:

- Conservation,
- Protection and Improvement of the Environment and the
- Cultivation of trees.

I look forward to a Chairman's Report for 2021 where things are very different where our planting spades saw some serious use. In fact, I'm starting to really look forward to 2022. We need to get on with creating a Greener Future for the sake of our children and our grandchildren.