

Using i-Tree for Sustainable Management of the Urban Forest A review of exemplar projects in the UK

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ABSTRACT

In the UK, i-Tree and the range of tools it provides has become increasingly popular as a means of quantifying the ecosystem service benefits of the urban forest. Since the UK pilot in 2011, i-Tree (both Eco and Canopy) has been increasingly used by municipalities, housing associations, park owners and large landowners to assess the structure and composition of tree stocks.

Over the last 7 years both the way in which i-Tree Eco projects have been delivered and the subsequent use of the results has evolved. In this presentation we explore how various exemplar projects have sought to maximise the potential of iTree.

We present a number of case studies to show the effectiveness of undertaking an iTree project as the first step in the process of putting trees on the agenda. The experiences of a local housing authority, a London Borough, a collection of Royal Parks and a municipality in the north of England are presented here amongst others, as evidence of the effectiveness of quantifying canopy cover and ecosystem service benefits. Each of these projects hold individual characteristics which make them particularly interesting, and represent a range of different types of project.

For example, we will discuss how some projects have used the iTree field data and results in concert with other models and methods to derive values for additional benefits such as amenity (using Capital Asset Value of Amenity Trees (CAVAT)) and recreation (using OrVal). In addition we will illustrate examples of how the results have been presented in novel ways and the different messaging that has been utilised to maximise effect.

Finally it will be shown how the UK iTree metadata has been used in new models and methods such as the work undertaken by the US i-Tree Team and Treeconomics to develop a bespoke i-Tree Design tool for Highways England which provides cost benefit estimates on new planting projects.

All these studies have been instrumental in highlighting the importance of trees as elements of green infrastructure and the associated ecosystem service contributions they provide. Decision makers at the strategic level are better able to understand the monetised benefits of trees, and so budgets for protection and planting have been secured. By rewording the conversation surrounding urban trees into a constructive discourse concerning the benefits they provide, as opposed to the costs incurred, it shifts the perspective of decision makers into a positive frame.

BIOGRAPHY

Kenton Rogers is Co Founder of Treeconomics, a Social Enterprise based at the University of Exeter, with a mission to work with communities, businesses and research institutions to highlight the value of trees.

Treeconomics was set up in 2011 after leading on the UK pilot of iTree Eco in Torbay. Since then Kenton has collaborated on over 20 large scale i-Tree Eco projects in the UK and Europe as well as working on bespoke tools with the US iTree team, including ongoing work with Highways England to develop tools for cost benefits analysis for its 'natural capital'.

Kenton has worked with trees since leaving school and holds a diploma in Forest Management and a masters degree in Forest Ecosystem Management. He was a contributing author on the UK National Ecosystem Assessment and the Springer Handbook on 'The Urban Forest'. Kenton also recently co authored a Homeowners Manual for Trees, recently published by Haynes.

Kenton was a serving Trustee of the International Tree Foundation (ITF) for 10 years, and is also a Chartered Forester and became a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in 2009 for his work with tree conservation for the ITF in North Africa.

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