

Arboricultural Association

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2027



Arboricultural
ASSOCIATION

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The home of tree care



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The Arboricultural Association Strategic Plan 2025–2027 was produced by
the Association’s staff team and Trustees. It was formally adopted by the
Board of Trustees on 20 October 2024

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FOREWORD

FROM THE CEO AND TRUSTEES



In 2022 the Arboricultural Association (the Association) published the Strategic Plan 2022-2024 to set out the direction of travel for the organisation over that three-year period. That document – produced by the Association’s staff team and Trustees – helped us deliver a huge amount for our members and the wider arboricultural profession, and supported our recent successes in every area of our activity into 2024, our 60th anniversary year.

The Strategic Plan 2025-2027 builds on the previous version, developing our objectives to reflect some of the emerging priorities in our sector. Many of our key challenges remain the same, including a lack of regulation, lack of resources and the ongoing succession crisis. However, these are symptoms of a deeper problem: the continued absence of proper recognition of our profession. The Association has done much to address this issue in recent years, and we believe things are improving. However, there is still much to be done and our mission remains the same – to inspire, support and promote the tree care community for a society that better appreciates and cares for trees.

One part of our sector critical to this mission has arguably been underserved over the years, despite being disproportionately important. I am referring to our arboricultural educators – those nurturing the skills of the next generation. Simply put, without them our profession does not have a future. There is surely no greater strategic priority than to ensure that arboricultural education, and those working in it, are properly supported. Our succession work can be regarded as something like planting a tree – we may not see the benefit of it during our careers, but it is essential for the future that we act now.

As well as delivering for our members – and for those working in arboriculture who are not our members – we will continue to engage positively with those beyond our profession. This includes other sectors, politicians and the general public. We are well placed to act as a bridge between arboriculturists and communities, seeking to harness their enthusiasm whilst ensuring that the expertise of qualified, experienced tree care professionals is properly acknowledged and respected.

The Strategic Plan 2025-2027 is intended to help us as we navigate the coming years. As ever, we cannot do this alone. To support us in achieving our aims and objectives the Association is dependent on the continued support of our members, including those volunteers who help make it all happen. Whether acting as a Trustee or on a working group, getting involved with branches, reviewing professional complaints or getting out into the community as an Arb Ambassador, there are many ways to get involved.

Your Association needs you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Parker', written in a cursive style.

John Parker
CEO, Arboricultural Association

ABOUT US

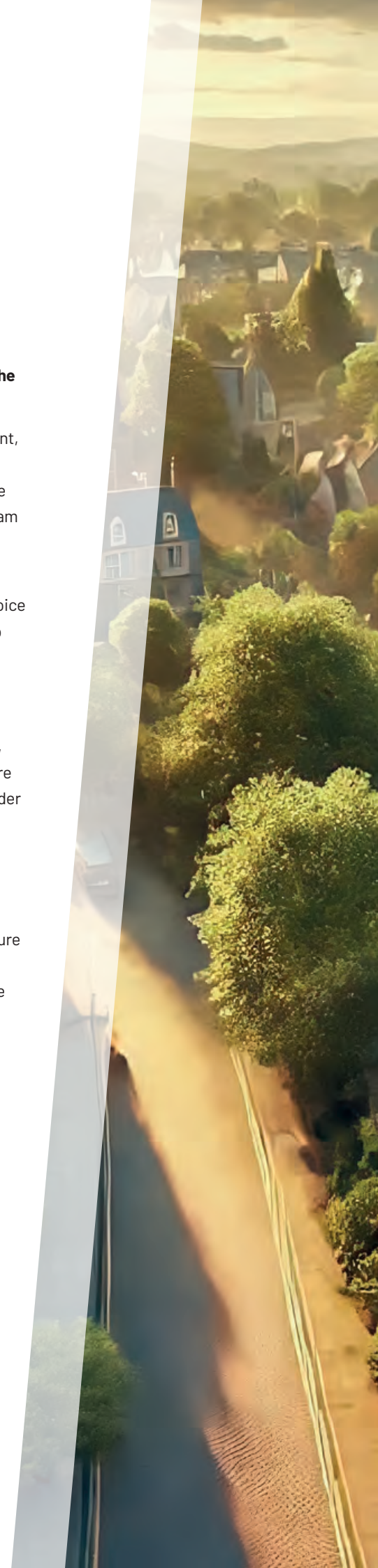
The Arboricultural Association (the Association) is the leading organisation in the UK for tree care professionals working in all areas of arboriculture.

These include contracting, consulting, local and national government, management, production, supply, policymaking, training, education, research and the charitable sector. The Association is dependent on its members, volunteers – including those on the Board of Trustees, working groups and branches – and a dedicated staff team operating predominantly from the Malthouse in Stonehouse, Gloucestershire.

With more than 3,000 paying members from all areas of arboriculture and urban forestry based in the UK and beyond, the Association is the leading professional voice for our sector. The Approved Contractor and Registered Consultant Schemes help raise standards in arboriculture, as do a wide variety of training courses, events – including the annual Conference, ARB Show and Wednesday Webinars – and publications such as the *ARB Magazine* and *Arboricultural Journal*.

The Association is the lead organisation representing UK tree care internationally, and is the UK's national representative for the International Society of Arboriculture and the European Arboricultural Council. It also promotes its members and the wider sector to national government and sits on key influencing bodies such as the Environmental Horticulture Group, as well as being represented on numerous industry-specific boards and groups.

In addition to being a professional membership organisation the Association is also a charity, with the charitable objective of advancing the science of arboriculture for the public benefit. It works to improve knowledge and appreciation not only of amenity trees but of the arboricultural professionals who are responsible for all life stages of those trees, from selection and propagation all the way to ancient and veteran status. The Association has worked for the good of its members and the wider tree care community for more than six decades, and continues to do so.



An aerial photograph of a village with a prominent church featuring a tall, dark spire. The church is surrounded by lush green trees and a dirt path. In the background, rolling hills are visible under a bright sky. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

THIS DOCUMENT

The Strategic Plan 2025-2027 contains the vision and strategic objectives of the Association for the coming years. It was developed by our staff team and Trustees and is intended to set out some of our priorities and showcase the kind of organisation we are and aspire to be.

As part of the process, we reviewed the Strategic Plan 2022-2024 to consider which parts of it are still relevant, and what has changed. It was decided that some of the key features – such as the vision and strategic aims – remain right for the organisation, and those aspects have not been amended. We considered whether or not a three-year strategic cycle is right for us, and decided that it is sufficiently long term to enable us to use it to influence our work in a stable way, but short enough to allow us to react to an ever-changing world and to review the situation as we find it at the end of 2027.

The Association does not exist independently in a closed environment – we are part of a much wider professional network, and collaboration and partnership with others are essential. This includes with other arboricultural and urban forestry organisations, those working in allied disciplines, politicians and the general public. This recognition is reflected in the pages of this document, as is the importance for us of continuing to ensure that the UK is seen as an international leader in arboriculture, and that the Association is at the forefront of that.

In this document we have set out different priorities and considerations under relevant headings, and some of those are more closely affiliated to particular Association departments or groups than others. However, it is important to note that all of this work is interrelated, and the success of any one part of the organisation is dependent on the success of the others. This can also be seen to apply to our sector as a whole. When working as a practical arborist, a tree officer, a consultant, a policymaker, in a nursery or in training or education, it can be easy to focus just on our own area. But each of these is interdependent and linked through the arboricultural ecosystem.

The Strategic Plan 2025-2027 is a high-level document that describes the ‘what’, and to an extent the ‘why’, but does not go deeply into the ‘how’. This will be addressed through a series of organisational and departmental Operational Action Plans which will set out in more detail our targets and milestones until the end of this strategic cycle.

ARBORICULTURE IN 2025-2027

The world can change quickly, and new challenges are constantly emerging. It is not possible to say with any certainty what the next three years will hold for arboriculture, but there are certain things we are committed to focusing on during the course of this Strategic Plan cycle.

These are some of the key topic areas we will be looking at in addition to everything else contained within this Strategic Plan. For the purposes of this document they have been divided into three parts, although we recognise there are many areas of overlap.

TREES AND SOCIETY

CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

We must continue to promote trees as part of the solution, and to prepare our sector for environmental change and the transition to carbon neutrality.

PESTS AND DISEASES

Each year brings new pest and disease risks to trees, and the Association will continue to learn and disseminate information about these threats, and to promote the critical role of biosecurity.

TREE ESTABLISHMENT

There is now more awareness of the importance of tree establishment as opposed to just planting, but we must continue to communicate this message and push for increased species diversity.

GREEN EQUITY

Ensuring equitable access to trees and green space is increasingly high on the agenda, but is far more complicated than simply planting trees in certain areas which are perceived to be deprived.





THE ARBORICULTURAL SECTOR

ARBORICULTURE AS A PROFESSION

Much has been done to promote arboriculture as an independent sector with great career opportunities, but this is an ongoing task which must always be a priority for the Association.

INDIVIDUAL ACCREDITATION

One important missing link in UK arboriculture is the use of established individual accreditations in arboriculture, and the Association will be exploring options to consider how this might be achieved.

AI AND DEVELOPING TECHNOLOGIES

There is no doubt that the rapid development of AI and associated technologies will have a dramatic impact on arboriculture, and we need to ensure we move with the times.

CLIMBING COMPETITIONS

Competitive tree climbing develops skills and innovation, creates a strong community and is a great tool to promote our sector to the general public, but it requires commitment and investment.

THE ASSOCIATION

SYSTEMS

The period 2025-2027 will see a considerable investment from the Association in our back-of-house management systems to streamline our processes and improve our member experience, including the website.

FINANCE AND FUNDRAISING

Continued financial viability is obviously a crucial consideration, and we will continue to explore opportunities for income diversification, including fundraising and grants.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

In a changing sector, and changing world, it is essential that our staff team and volunteers – including Trustees – are offered opportunities to develop and thrive.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

Arboriculture must be underpinned by evidence, professional expertise and societal values. This also requires a strengthening of the links between academics and practitioners.

OUR VISION

Inspiring, supporting and promoting the tree care community for a society that better appreciates and cares for trees.

THE ASSOCIATION WILL:

INSPIRE

EDUCATION

Work with education providers to embed trees in learning at all levels, and support arboricultural training and education professionals and providers.

INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY

Ensure there is a culture in our organisation and the arboricultural sector in which everyone feels welcome and sees a place for themselves. Tree care should be for everyone.

TREE CARE CHAMPIONS

Provide resources to help members to tell others about the importance of trees and tree care professionals, creating a link between the profession and the general public.

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Engage with our membership in a meaningful and mutually-beneficial way through the Board of Trustees, branches, working groups and Arb Ambassadors.

SUCCESSION IN ARBORICULTURE

Identify and encourage the next generation of arboricultural professionals, offering them a clear career pathway and making sure they are representative of the communities in which they work.



SUPPORT

MEMBERSHIP

Grow our membership and deliver for our members in the UK and around the world, supporting them in their development and representing them as their professional body.

ACCREDITATIONS

Enable our members to demonstrate their skills and expertise through provision of professional accreditations including the Approved Contractor and Registered Consultant Schemes, Chartered Environmentalist and VETcert.

BEST PRACTICE

Combine expert knowledge and experience with science and research to drive and disseminate evidence-based best practice.

PUBLICATIONS

Produce high-quality publications such as the *ARB Magazine* and *Arboricultural Journal* as well as industry-specific guidance and reference books. Commission new work and identify material suitable for translation into English.

TRAINING AND EVENTS

Develop and deliver a wide range of high-quality training courses and events, in person and online, to meet the learning and development needs of our industry as it changes.

PROMOTE

EXTERNAL EVENTS

Raise the profile of arboriculture and the Association through attending, and helping our members attend, external professional and community events.

INTERNATIONAL

Promote the reputation of the UK as a global leader in arboriculture, creating new relationships with international organisations while also developing and building on existing ones.

PARTNERSHIP

Work effectively with others to achieve our vision, with partners in arboriculture and urban forestry as well as those from other sectors and disciplines which could impact our industry.

INFLUENCE

Work with decision-makers at local, regional and national level to push for the changes our sector needs, operating independently and through networks and alliances of other organisations.

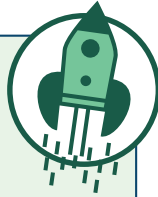
WEBSITE AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Develop our brand and communication through an ever-increasing and targeted social and traditional media presence, and an updated website and online presence.

2022-2024 PROGRESS UPDATE

MARKETING

Averaged 2m website views per year.
Attracted more than 30m views of the ARB Show 2024 knot tying video.
Increased social media following from 70k to more than 100k.



TRAINING

Delivered 256 courses to 2,789 learners around the UK and Ireland.
Recruited five new trainers.
Introduced four new courses.



PUBLICATIONS

Sold 19,686 publications (including eBooks).
Developed and launched a new eBook platform in 2023.



RESEARCH FUNDING

Awarded £10,000 in grant money to four arboricultural projects: researching a national database of tree data (2022), risk management (2022), trees and pollinators (2023) and ash dieback (2024).



REGISTERED CONSULTANTS

Increased the number of Registered Consultants by 13% (to 45).
Evaluated reports of 23 consultants through our Quality Assurance process.



TECHNICAL

Certified 37 new consulting-level and 10 practising level VETcert specialists.
Submitted responses to a number of wide-ranging professional consultations.



GOVERNANCE

Updated and adopted the Articles of Association.
Approved a new Governance Policy and Trustee Code of Conduct.
Provided training for all Trustees.



PUBLIC FACING

Sent out 15,000 tree watering tags and 130 boxes of arb resources in 2023/24.
Recruited more than 40 Arb Ambassadors.
Created the What is Arb? video, viewed by more than 43k people.



CLIMBING COMPETITIONS

Facilitated five tree climbing competitions including the UK & Ireland Championships and ARB Show Open, attracting more than 250 competitors.
Entered successful UK & Ireland Climbing teams to the International (ITCC) and European (ETCC) Tree Climbing Competitions.



WEBINARS

Delivered 34 free Wednesday Webinars live to more than 18,000 people in 125 countries.



EVENTS

Held three Annual Conferences at Warwick University, with 79 speakers presenting to a total of 983 delegates. Held two ARB Shows at Westonbirt (2023 and 2024), with more than 10,500 attendees in total. Helped deliver more than 46 branch events across the UK and Ireland.

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APPROVED CONTRACTORS

Increased Amenity Approved Contractor numbers by 5%. Increased Utility Approved Contractor numbers by 50%. Produced a new Scheme Handbook and Standards. Recruited seven new Assessors.



PARTNERSHIPS

Worked with a wide range of professional organisations covering areas including arboriculture, horticulture, the environmental sector and forestry. Represented on cross-sector groups such as the Access All Areas equality, diversity and inclusion strategy for horticulture. Supported charities such as Perennial to help people working in horticulture and arboriculture.



INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

Promoted UK arboriculture through attendance at international events and participation in working groups and meetings. UK & Ireland representatives to the International Society of Arboriculture and the European Arboricultural Council.



MEMBERSHIP

Overall membership growth of 5.4% between 2022-2024. Chartered Environmentalist numbers increased by 19% in 2024. Achieved the milestone of more than 3,000 paying members.



ARB JOURNAL

Published 71 articles. More than 350,000 article downloads. More than 120 citations.



SUCCESSION

Launched Succession in Arboriculture project to help secure the future of arboriculture. Created an Arb Educator Working Group to bring educators and trainers together. Promoted arboriculture at school and prison career days, and with Jobcentres through the Department for Work & Pensions.



POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Gardening and Horticulture and the Environmental Horticulture Group. Successfully lobbied for a change to primary legislation relating to red diesel regulations in 2023. Developed strong relationships with government departments such as Defra and the DWP.



AWARD WINNERS

Arb Association Award: Andy Summerly (2022), Chris Knapman (2023), Jo Hedger (2024). Young Arb of the Year: Sam Dudley and Greg Packman (2022), Cecily Withall (2023), Marcelo White (2024). Best Arb Student: Charlotte Bancroft (2022), Kinga Chudziak (2023), Ellie Watton (2024).



CLIMBING RESULTS

UK&I 23 & 24 both won by Michael Curwen and Jo Hedger
ITCC 22 & 23 Won by Jo Hedger
ITCC 22 Michael Curwen 4th
ETCC 24 Jo Hedger 1st
ETCC 23 Jo Hedger 3rd
ETCC 23 Michael Curwen 2nd
ETCC 22 Michael Curwen 3rd
ETCC 22 Jo Hedger 1st



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GET INVOLVED!

The successful delivery of this Strategic Plan will require input from many people, not just the Association's staff team and Trustees. Whether you are an experienced tree care professional, someone new to the industry, working in a related sector, a student or a member of the public or community group; whether you are based in the UK or in another country – whoever and wherever you are – there are plenty of ways to get involved.

MEMBERSHIP

With different grades of membership to cater for arboricultural professionals and the whole tree care community and with a wide range of member-only benefits, there has never been a better time to join the Arboricultural Association. To find out more, email members@trees.org.uk

ARB AMBASSADORS

The Association can support members in promoting arboriculture at local events, such as school career days, by offering free resource packs and advice. Become an Arb Ambassador and do your part to spread the word about the importance of tree care. To find out more, visit www.trees.org.uk

VOLUNTEERING

The Association is dependent on our volunteers. Do you have what it takes to be a Trustee, or would you like to join a Committee or working group, or get involved in your local branch? To find out more, email admin@trees.org.uk

TRAINING

The Association offers a wide range of high-quality training courses for anyone working with, or interested in, trees. Through a combination of in-person, online and pre-recorded content you can keep up to date with the latest industry developments and help with your career progression and CPD. To find out more, email training@trees.org.uk

EVENTS

Throughout the year, the Association holds in-person and online events such as the Annual Conference, ARB Show, Student Conferences, World Fungi Day and an acclaimed free webinar series which attracts a global audience. There have never been more opportunities to learn, socialise and gain CPD. To find out more, email events@trees.org.uk

ACCREDITATIONS

If you are working in arboriculture then why not help raise standards across the profession by applying to become an Approved Contractor, Utility Approved Contractor or Registered Consultant? To find out more, visit www.trees.org.uk/accreditation

PUBLICATIONS

The Association produces a wide range of publications including technical guides and best practice guidance documents, the *ARB Magazine* and *Arboricultural Journal*, and publications such as *Fungi and Trees: Their Complex Relationships* and *Fungi on Trees: A Photographic Reference*. To find out more, visit www.trees.org.uk/book-shop

DONATE

If you would like to contribute towards the work of the Association as a charity and help us deliver our charitable objectives then please consider donating, or fundraising through a sponsored event. To find out more, email admin@trees.org.uk