

### **Hijack – The Misuse of Technical Arguments by Local Politicians**

*'Cut trees cut costs'* is a new phenomenon sweeping Britain, driven by a modern take on city management economics and the short-term nature of local politics. Since the banking crisis of 2008, urban accountants have been under increasing pressure to save money, and some see 'expensive' street trees as an obvious target. Trees that have taken decades to mature and now at the peak of their benefit delivery are being felled to save money during the next political cycle, irrespective of local community wishes.

Historically, an absence of methods to value trees made it easy for politicians to disregard tree benefits in the management equation. However, despite the modern development of credible valuation approaches, large numbers of urban trees are still being needlessly felled. In Sheffield, one of Britain's largest cities, the ruling political elite has overseen the cutting of more than five thousand street trees — a vast community asset destroyed against community wishes. In London, Wandsworth Council recently felled an historic 140-year-old tree avenue, despite thousands of community objections. A return to dirty politics reminiscent of the Third World is ripping the green heart out of our communities before our very eyes, but what can arborists do to stop the loss?

A disturbing commonality of the British experience is local politicians hijacking technical arguments to justify tree removals and the lack of any robust arboricultural response to counter false claims. Typical reasons to fell include the trees are *'unsafe'*, they are *'mature and it is normal to fell and replace'*, *'they are at the end of their useful life'*, and they are *'too costly to maintain'*. Arborists are having their own arguments used against them and it's time to turn the tide.

In this presentation, Jeremy will review these issues and advocate that a new National Tree and Woodland Strategy is needed before it is too late.

### **Short biography for Jeremy Barrell**

Jeremy Barrell is the Director of Barrell Tree Consultancy ([www.barrelltreecare.co.uk](http://www.barrelltreecare.co.uk)), one of the UK's leading planning and legal tree management practices. He leads a team of 15 specialists assessing trees on development sites and project-managing their protection, from design to occupation.

During his early career, Jeremy worked for the Forestry Commission before establishing his own contracting company in 1980, which evolved into his current consultancy in 1995. He is an accomplished expert witness, regularly appearing in High Court cases where tree failures have caused harm. Jeremy is a frequent keynote speaker at international conferences, authoring more than 130 articles and papers on tree management. His SULE, TreeAH, TreeABC, and TreeAZ, methods of tree assessment, are internationally recognised management tools ([www.TreeAZ.com](http://www.TreeAZ.com)), and he is a passionate advocate for the proper consideration of trees in built-environment decision-making though Facebook ([https://www.facebook.com/Heritage-Tree-Management-573985506028429/?ref=aymt\\_homepage\\_panel](https://www.facebook.com/Heritage-Tree-Management-573985506028429/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel)), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/JeremyDBarrell>), and LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jeremy-barrell-48b4ab19/>).