



Press Release

London Plane Tree Conference

Can you imagine a London landscape without its Plane Trees?

(London: June 2019) Picture the Mall, the Embankment, Berkeley Square and Park Lane in the full leaf of summer. These are just a few of the London landmarks which would be starkly unrecognisable without the ubiquitous London Plane tree.

The London Plane (*Platanus x hispanica*) is the subject of a half-day conference, hosted by The Conservation Foundation and chaired by Matt Brown, Editor at Large of *The Londonist*. It takes place at City Hall on Wednesday 10 July and will address how we can protect London's unique landscape and what action is needed to save these iconic views for future generations.

Characterised by their peeling khaki-coloured bark, a mottled mixture of creams, olive greens and browns, London Planes once made up more than half of London's tree population and have been thriving in the capital since the early days of Industrial Revolution.

Today, however, with an estimated 121,000 of the trees growing in and around Central London, our Plane population is ageing. The trees are not necessarily being replaced when they do need to be removed and currently they represent a mere 4% of the city's 8.4 million trees in total.

Under threat from redevelopment, deteriorating air quality and public spending cuts, the species is also increasingly at risk from drought, climate change and Massaria, a non-native fungal disease. To add to this, Canker stain of plane (*Ceratocystis platani*), the disease responsible for the felling of the 42,000 plane trees that lined the once majestic Canal du Midi, has recently been reported to have spread as far north as Paris.

"Even though Plane trees are found throughout the world they are known as *London* planes. It's great for London to be spearheading this vital campaign and taking responsibility for what is an international challenge", says Conservation Foundation director **David Shreeve**. We're delighted that the Mayor's office is supporting us in this important work and hope that this event will lead on to a programme of international networking and concern which could prove so important for landscapes of cities around the world".

"London Plane trees have graced the city's parks, gardens and streets for a century and more," explains **Paul Wood**, a speaker at the conference and author of *London's Street Trees* and the

recently published *London is a Forest*. “The Planes represent a genus able to thrive in difficult urban conditions and it is of great importance, therefore, that we appreciate the benefits they provide for the cityscape and to the urban environment, and to understand the threats they face now amassing on the horizon”.

“Plane trees make up some of the world’s most iconic landscapes – Pall Mall and Parliament Square in London, the Circus in Bath, the Champs Elysees in Paris, the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin and many more,” adds environmentalist and campaigner **Professor Chris Baines**, a fellow speaker at the City Hall conference. “All these trees are mature, seriously at risk and need to be better understood. Their skilful long-term management is vital”.

Paul Wood and Professor Baines will be joined by other Plane tree experts at the 10 July event, including Dr Ana Perez-Sierra, Head of Tree Health Diagnostic & Advisory Service, at Forest Research, Greg Packman, incoming Senior Tree Inspector of Islington Council, and Barbara Milne, City of Westminster and London Tree Officers Association. It’s also hoped that Professor CY Jim, Department of Social Sciences, University of Hong Kong, will attend.

Tickets to the conference cost £10 and can be booked at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/london-plane-tree-conference-tickets-62302578690?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

Ends

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Media interested in covering the London Plane Tree Conference are asked to contact Roselle Houston at media@conservationfoundation.co.uk.

Founded in 1982, The Conservation Foundation creates and manages environmental projects, award schemes, awareness campaigns, publications and events covering wide ranging issues and aimed at different and diverse audiences. www.conservationfoundation.co.uk

For further information, interviews and images please contact Roselle Houston at The Conservation Foundation, at media@conservationfoundation.co.uk or on 020 7591 3111.