

Executive Summary

This report highlights and explores some of the challenges experienced by those in tree and woodland management and maintenance when it comes to skills, recruitment, and retention.

As well as highlighting the challenges, this report also sets out some next steps for sector organisations to explore and drive forward. The findings show the broad range of skills and responsibilities that those already involved in tree and woodland management and maintenance undertake. The range of skills required has increased and is predicted to further increase to adapt and respond to the constantly changing environment.

The key findings are:

Workload

- 87% of respondents anticipated their workload increasing in the next five years.
- Only 48% felt confident in their organisations ability to deliver future workload with staffing levels a common reason for respondents feeling less than confident.

Barriers to progression

- Salaries associated with arboricultural professions and limited career development options were the top barriers experienced by respondents.
- Other barriers experienced were lack of experience and a perception that job remits are wide, which could be related.

Training

- 74% of respondents had a budget for staff training and professional development.
- Specific comments around training called for more specific focus on urban forest management, and more London based training and professional development opportunities.

Recruitment

- 70% of respondents felt they had a current skills gap within their organisation.
- 45% have been unable to find people with the required knowledge and skills.
- 43% struggled to recruit people with the skills needed as a result of headcount and budget freezes.
- 58% had experienced a low volume of applicants, with 53% reporting applicants lacked sufficient knowledge, and 40% lacked practical skills.

Potential initiatives

- Respondents overwhelmingly highlighted the importance of improving career progression and salaries.
- Other initiatives that were popular with over half the respondents were better promotion of the industry, increasing availability of training, and a call to sector bodies and training providers to better promote and develop apprenticeships, internships, and traineeships.

Skills and recruitment issues remain a key concern to London based organisations and individuals involved in tree and woodland management and maintenance. Both finding and attracting people with the required knowledge and skills and providing opportunities for upskilling existing staff seem to be key themes and something sector partners will need to explore and collaborate to address.