
TOM BUTLIN

Memories & Achievements





The Mersey Forest

The Mersey Forest covers 1500km² of north Cheshire and Merseyside. A Forest Team, which Tom was a key member of, supports the delivery of new woodland planting and woodland management across this area, working on many different projects with lots of different organisations.

Whilst we do have a focus on planting new woodland to increase our woodland cover, we are always looking at how our work helps to address other issues as well. In his work Tom helped us to target where we worked, to tackle health issues, reduce air pollution and help to reduce flooding. We sum up what we do by saying we want “More from Trees”.

We strive to create places and neighbourhoods that people cherish and provide opportunities for people to have a say in what happens in their local environment.



The Mersey Forest Team

Tom joined us at The Mersey Forest in 2006 on a recommendation from his friend and fellow band member Mike Bray. Director, Paul Nolan, met Tom on a sunny day outside Waterloo Station and Tom joined us soon after. From the first meeting Tom's intelligence shone through. Paul knew he would be a great addition to our team, and so he was.

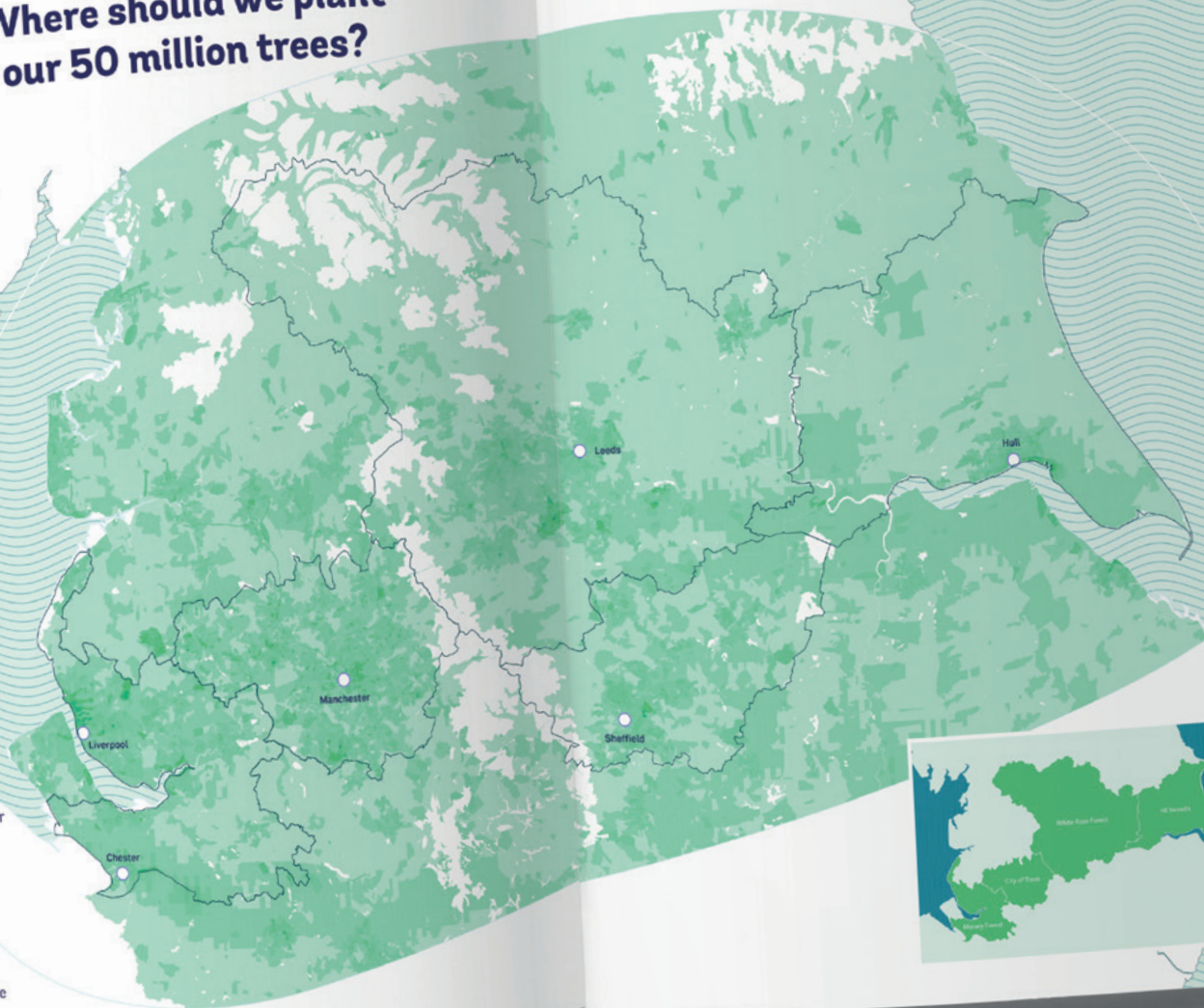
Tom started as our Geographic Information System Coordinator, gathering, analyzing and mapping data to create maps and provide data that could be used to support and communicate the work of the Forest Team. Tom's arrival transformed how we worked. Very quickly we all gave up pretending to use GIS. Tom would answer a query or provide a map to show impact before we had even started to think how it might be done.

Tom became an expert in the Green Infrastructure mapping and analysis. His work supported a transformation in how we think about planning the natural environment. His groundbreaking work took him across the country and to work with international partners. Anyone who worked with Tom for any length of time could not fail to be impressed by his work, his ability to find answers and his clear, logical approach to solving problems.

Tom is forever woven into the work of Mersey Forest Team. We miss him.

Where should we plant our 50 million trees?

Tree planting
Fewer
More



Northern Forest – a forest from Liverpool to Hull

The Northern Forest brought together four Community Forests and the Woodland Trust. The aim was to create an inspiring vision for a new initiative that would bring the partners together to create a forest that was of national significance and which complimented the work of the Northern Powerhouse.

Tom used his usual GIS magic to gather, analyse and show data that indicated where we ought to create the Northern Forest. Different scenarios were also developed. One looked at where we would plant if we wanted to maximise the socio-economic impact of Northern Forest, the other was described as a scenario that looked at where we might plant in a “dash for carbon” to mitigate climate change.

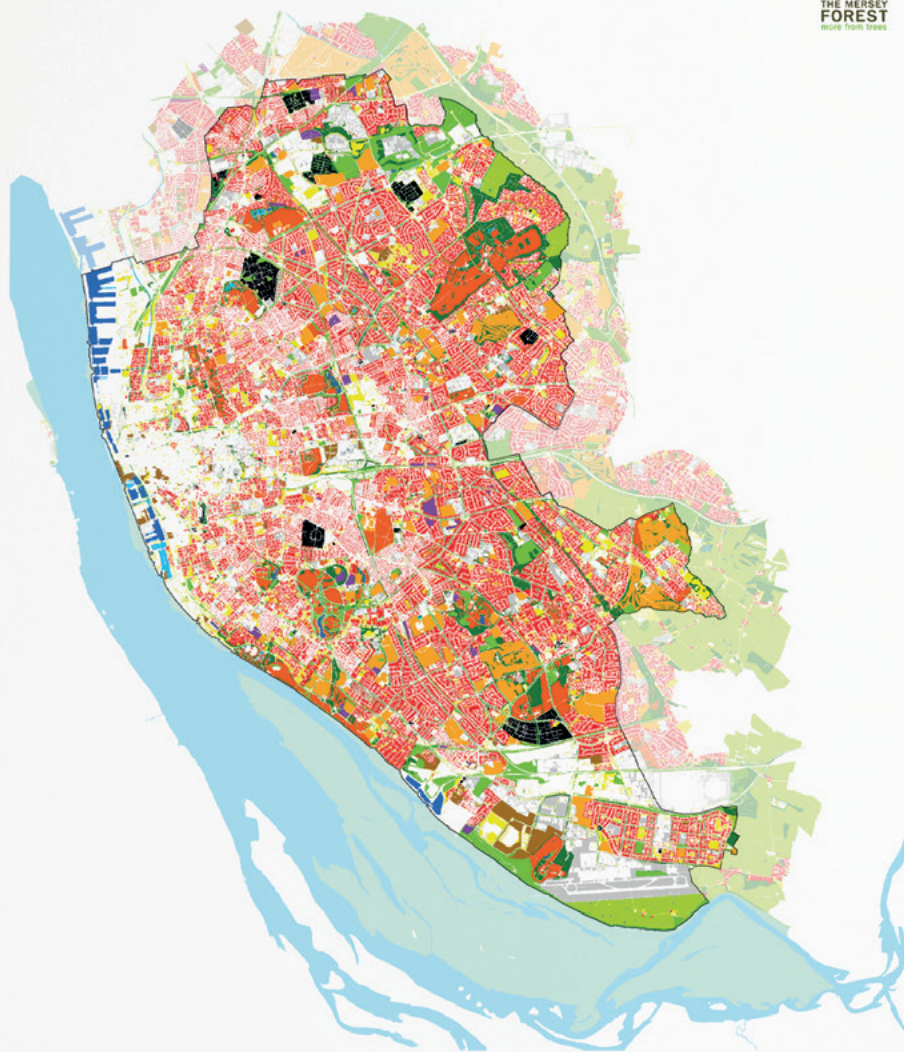
Tom’s work underpins all of the Northern Forest approach. It has led to national recognition of the Northern Forest, government funding and already more that 600,000 trees in the ground.

“ The Northern Forest was just an idea before Tom helped shape it into a physical space... as a team we came together to use our decades of experience to frame the vision...but the mapping and modelling brought it truly to life... it was a distillation... an iceberg of data sitting beneath a clear and hugely powerful message.

Tom’s work was absolutely critical and gave us the added dimension needed for Government and other key stakeholders to sit up and take notice. Tom helped build the foundations. ”

Simon Mageean, *Programme Director – Northern Forest, Woodland Trust*

Liverpool City GI Typology



Agricultural land	Derelict land	Orchard	Street trees
Allotment, community garden or urban farm	General amenity space	Outdoor sports facility	Water body
Cemetery, churchyard or burial ground	Grassland, heathland, moorland or scrubland	Park or public garden	Water course
Coastal habitat	Institutional grounds	Private domestic garden	Wetland
			Woodland

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Creating a **Green Infrastructure Strategy for Liverpool** to complement the Local Plan

The Liverpool Green Infrastructure Strategy was published nearly 10 years ago, so it may seem strange to pick this as an example of Tom's work. But this project marked a transition point from small scale, slightly theoretical green infrastructure plans to city wide, all encompassing, data driven green infrastructure planning.

The Strategy was not without its challenges, and Tom had to develop new approaches and new ways of analysing data from a wide range of sources. This data then had to be translated into maps and plans that could be used by planners.

Ten years on, it is still one of the best strategies in the country. It has been used as a template in the UK and abroad, most recently in Turkey. The work was years ahead of its time.

“ Tom's insight, questioning, creativity and thoroughly professional approach placed us in the vanguard of evidenced based approaches to planning and prioritising the delivery of green infrastructure activities across the North West. More fundamentally Tom's work was central to us bidding for and being awarded many millions of pounds to enable us to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of people across the region. ”

Keith Jones OBE FICFor,
Area Director North West and West Midlands – Forestry Commission



Discover The Mersey Forest – Where would you like to go?

Discover the Mersey Forest is a web-based resource that provides information on great places to walk or cycle in The Mersey Forest. It focusses on many of the new woodlands that have been created over the past 25 years and provides easy guides and downloadable maps. It also provides information about places to eat or stay which are close to the routes selected.

Tom loved this project. It provided a mix of mapping and programming, an opportunity to experiment and test new resources and his skills. It also mixed his love for getting outdoors and exploring with his skills as a web site developer.

The site continues to be well used, with thousands of maps downloaded.

“ Tom’s wizardry on Discover The Mersey Forest was a perfect example of how he brought superb technical skills together with his clear thinking to create something magical. Every May, during ‘Walk in the Wood’ month we chose a number of his favourite woodland rambles to share with nearly 5,000 friends and partners. It is a wonderful legacy. ”

Clare Olver, *The Mersey Forest Team*

“ Discover The Mersey Forest was a project made in heaven for Tom, combining his love of exploration with his mapping expertise. We made use of Tom’s creative route-planning skills on several of our Christmas team walks – his quiet leadership and enthusiasm will be sorely missed. ”

Carl Smethurst, *The Mersey Forest Team*

The green infrastructure journey that The Mersey Forest has been part of since 2004



Tools that help to understand the value of trees and woodlands

Tom was involved in developing tools such as GiVal and Star Tools that help us to place a monetary value on some of the benefits that trees and woodlands provide. Working with a range of partners and closely with Mersey Forest colleagues, Tom continued to develop the GI-Val tool, now on its fifth version, and alongside Susannah Gill developed an innovative tool based on Susannah's PhD that looks at the impact of green infrastructure on flooding and the urban heat island.

These tools are used to help Mersey Forest team and others communicate the monetary value of what we do and provide a way to compare the potential investment in green infrastructure against other investment options.

“ Tom was a very special person – hugely talented in spatial analysis, with immense skills in GIS. From the short Neighbourhood Plan project that we worked on together in Wilmslow I got an inkling of the huge contribution he must have made to The Mersey Forest and beyond that. Tom was always patient and kind in explaining to us mere mortals the secrets of his art and suggesting novel and innovative ways of exploring the green infrastructure. ”

Professor Emeritus John Handley OBE, *University of Manchester*



More from trees

The Mersey Forest Plan



The Mersey Forest Plan

The Mersey Forest Plan is our blueprint for what we are trying to achieve. In 2014 we had an opportunity to refresh our Plan. With Tom in the team, it was a great opportunity to use his knowledge and skills to inform the Plan with data analysis and mapping.

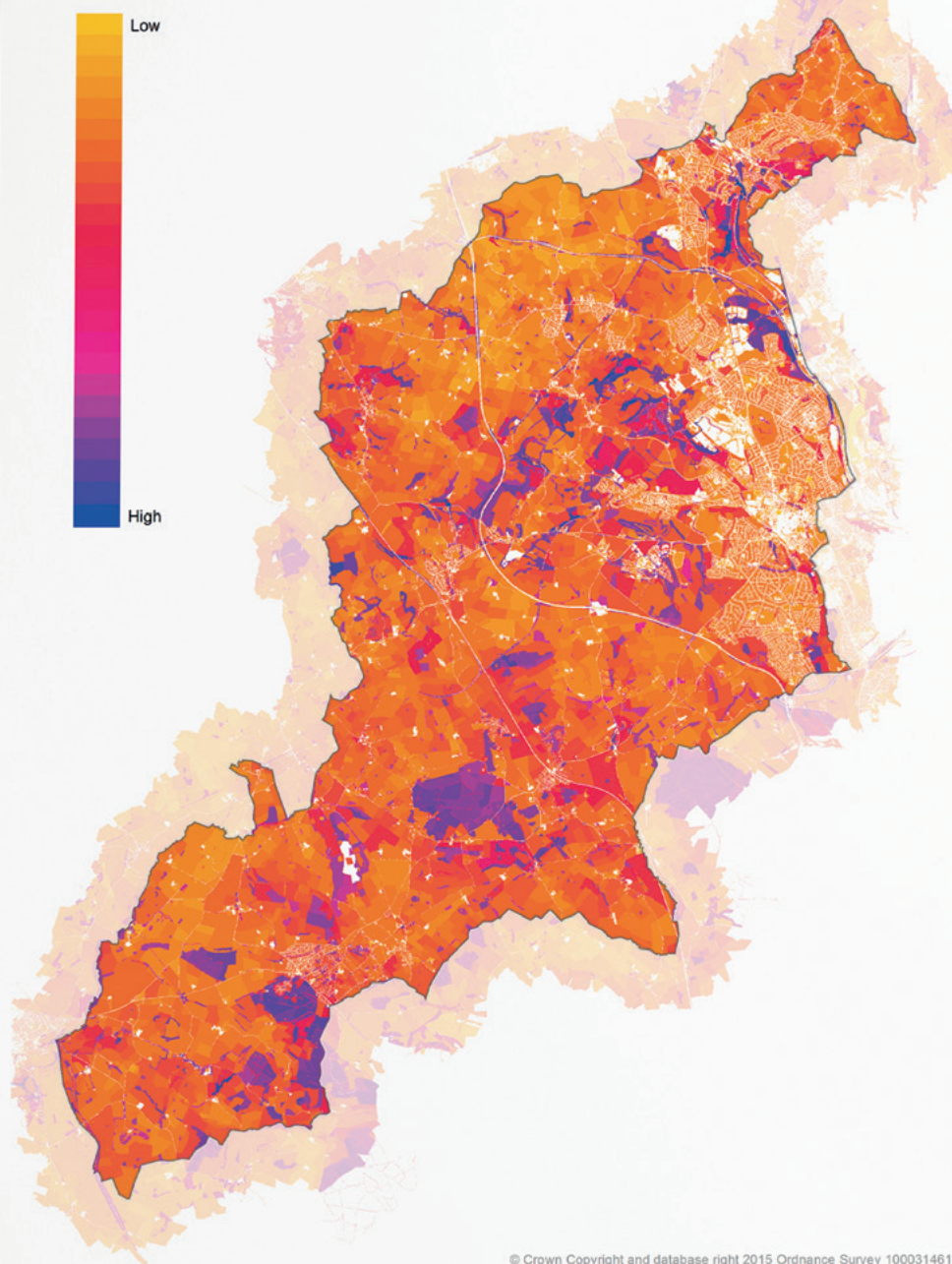
Tom worked closely with Mike Bray and Susannah Gill to create a Plan that people loved and still love. The Plan is simple to read and look at, but has depths of data and analysis to dive into for those who want to explore.

“ Tom was a joy to work with on the Plan refresh; playful, fun, responsive, patient and professional. His technical wizardry brought a 13-year-old Plan into the digital age. He helped to combine and explore numerous data layers to produce 102 spatial policies covering all of The Mersey Forest area.

Tom relished the challenge of developing the online mapping tool as part of the wider community consultation. He combined his mapping skills with his love of coding and web development. It proved to be very successful, allowing people to engage with the Plan at a scale which was meaningful to them. ”

Dr Susannah Gill,
Green Infrastructure & Climate Change, The Mersey Forest Team

Multifunctionality



Open Space and Green Infrastructure Strategies – planning for sustainable municipalities and ecosystem services

Open Space and Green Infrastructure Strategies are commissioned by local authorities to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and individual Councils Local Plan Evidence Base. Preparation of these strategies involves a great deal of in-depth research to ensure that they meet local needs for as long as 15 years hence. A key part of their preparation is GIS analysis, work that involves developing and then applying locally derived standards for Open Space Strategies and valuing, prioritising and discerning spatial connectivity for Green Infrastructure Strategies. This is an advanced mapping exercise, one that involves data collection, manipulation, original research and analysis.

Tom was principle GIS investigator for all the main studies undertaken by MD2 Consulting Ltd between 2010 and 2020. For the District of Wyre, he produced plans of green infrastructure corridors that linked the Lancashire Moors to the Fylde Coast. In Stockport, Greater Manchester he worked in the central business district to identify potential green infrastructure locations in a densely urban setting. In neighbouring Newcastle-under-Lyme and the City of Stoke on Trent he worked on a complicated set of metrics to inform a joint Local Plan evidence base spanning two authorities with highly contrasting needs. Latterly he was working on an Open Space Strategy for the famous market town of Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire. This last project remains to be finished and is dedicated to Tom. His work will have a positive impact on many local communities well into the 2030's.

“ Tom was a fantastic individual to work with, always professional, timely and insightful. Without his inputs the studies we undertook together would never have been completed to the final standard they were. His was never a technical role, but very much that of an innovator and creative thinker. MD2 Consulting Ltd is deeply grateful for all his work and his legacy will continue to be of benefit to many communities for years to come. ”

Clive Davies, *Director, MD2 Consulting Ltd*

