The full report on the Torbay I-Tree survey entitled Torbay's Urban Forest - Assessing Urban Forest Effects and Values has now been published by Treeconomics. The completed cost / benefit analysis demonstrates that the value of urban trees to the environment significantly exceeds their cost in management. The figures have already had a positive impact as they have been used by Torbay Council to justify an additional investment of £25,000 into its tree maintenance budget.

The main findings of the Treeconomics Torbay survey, which estimated that the borough has around 818,000 trees, covering 11.8% of its land area, are included in the full report, which is now available, and include:

1. Torbay's trees have a structural (or replacement) value of around £280 million.
2. Torbay's trees store around 98,000 tonnes of carbon, worth over £5 million and sequester around another 3,320 tonnes per year, valued at over £170,000.
3. The trees remove around 50 tonnes of particulate air pollution from the local atmosphere each year, equivalent to the emissions of 53.000 large family cars and worth £1.3 million per annum.

The Treeconomics report concludes that Torbay's urban forest provides the equivalent of at least £1.5 million in ecological services each year. The value of these services alone is much greater that the annual cost of their care and maintenance. However, this is a conservative estimate because only a proportion of the total benefits have been evaluated and the trees actual value will probably be even greater.

In his forward to the Treeconomics report, Sir Harry Studholme, GB Forestry Commissioner, commented: "This study represents a new way to analyse the Urban Forest and respond to the increased regulatory focus on the value of ecosystem services. By placing a value on the benefits to society of the urban forest, the importance of this resource can be made tangible to

policy makers, communities and businesses.

“With better information (including economic understanding) we can make better long-term decisions to maintain and improve the urban environment for the benefit of current and future populations of Torbay. Leading by example Torbay’s experience shows a way forward for other towns and cities in this country.”

The Torbay pilot project was the first UK study to employ the I-Tree Eco methodology, a combination of survey techniques and software models used to assess the true economic value of tree stocks. The work was carried out in the Borough of Torbay by Treeconomics, who acted with the assistance of Forest Research, Natural England and Tree Officers at Torbay Council.

Surveyors visited 241 plots within the Torbay area, recording a wide range of tree and shrub species, their size and condition, and the type of land they were found on. Information from the survey was combined with local weather and pollution data to produce an estimate of the monetary value of a range of environmental services from the local trees.