

Email response:

Dear Orla,

I hope that you don't mind me emailing you with my idea.

I noticed in last week's Kent Messenger that people are annoyed that KCC have been cutting down trees and not replacing them all, and now say that it's up to individual councils to replace them. I've also seen in this week's KM that you are collecting ideas for money-generating schemes for the Council.

This idea wouldn't make money - unless the Council would like to collect trees etc and then sell them, which I'm sure would also be workable - but it would save the Council having to spend money on new plants.

For some time now I've been thinking that maybe Maidstone Borough Council might like to ask people whether they have any trees or shrubs that they might like to donate?

For example, the previous owners of the house where we now live (40 Bell Meadow, Maidstone) planted a spreading juniper tree right next to the neighbour's boundary. It is about 10 feet high and 6 feet across, and the neighbours have had to cut it back on their side to stop it interfering with their fence and their tree, and every year I have to cut it back too. It's totally the wrong type of plant for this type of garden, and absolutely in the wrong place! What it really needs is to be in a wide open space, such as part of the landscaping for the new Library, or maybe in Mote Park as part of its regeneration scheme, or other parks or alongside roads. Then it could grow to its heart's content and become a magnificent specimen - there's one at Maidstone Hospital that is really impressive.

All it would need is a couple of men with a digger and a lorry to take it from here and transport it to its new site with a big enough rootball so that (with a bit of attention such as watering for the first week or so) it would continue to grow happily in the space which nature meant it to have. We also have a laurel tree, two decorative conifers and a couple of other things that they could have as well, all for free. The times I've looked at them and thought - if only they could be in the right space, they'd look wonderful! But they are just not in the right place here.

I'm sure that there will be lots of people in the same position as us, living with things that they or others before them have planted in ignorance of the size to

which these trees and shrubs will grow, and that will never reach their full potential unless they have the proper space in which to flourish. If you were to advertise for them you will probably receive lots of offers!

This would save the Council having to spend any money at all in purchasing new trees/shrubs for their own planting schemes, at whatever cost they would normally be, and if they can sell them to other places (such as businesses who are landscaping their surrounding land), so much the better.

It would also be a good way of recycling plants which would leave small, over-crowded front gardens and instead enhance Council and public areas, provide a haven for wildlife and also make sites instantly look more 'established' because the trees and shrubs would already be mature.

I hope that you think that this idea would be a workable one; please feel free to contact me if you would like further details or if the Council would like to have our juniper and any other shrubs to start with, to see whether or not the scheme would work.

Thank you for considering it.

All best wishes,

Mrs. Linda Weeks

My apologies - in my previous email I rather overestimated the height of our juniper, it's more like 6 or 7 feet high, not ten! (But it would be much higher if we didn't have to keep pruning it.)

Facebook responses:



The screenshot shows a Facebook post from Maidstone Borough Council. The post text reads: "We need your ideas. Many of you will have seen Alan Sugar's 'The Apprentice' and understand we are again in an age when we must embrace our entrepreneurial spirit! We all sit there watching and come up with far better money making ideas, why not share them with us...". Below the text, it shows "535 Impressions · 0.37% Feedback" and a timestamp of "July 22 at 4:26pm" with options to "Like · Comment · Share". A comment from Julia Batt is visible, stating "Both fantastic ideas - and good luck to getting plenty more. :D" with a timestamp of "July 30 at 5:36pm" and a "Like" option. A comment input field at the bottom contains the text "Write a comment...".

Hi Maidstone,

Lucy Reed also commented on Maidstone Borough Council's status.

Lucy wrote "I'm not keen on this idea. Who would want to get married or have a reception here? No parking close by and the residents of Maidstone at the bus stops having a good old beak. The town hall is nice inside if you don't mind the boards with the councillors listed in your photos. There's no opportunity for photos outside. In comparison the Archbishops palace has nice grounds, the palace itself is lovely, close convenient parking and is away from the hustle and bustle in the town, plus it sounds a bit more salubrious on the invitations. I really don't think many brides would want to be outside the town hall for any length of time with all the Maidstone chavs watching. Having said that I did see a stretch hummer outside the Archbishops palace for a wedding the other week, classy!"