

Statement from Jacques MAMET, Mayor of CHALABRE, and the Municipal Councillors

Renovation works on Cours Colbert – Some useful clarifications

Having read the article published here on 1st August by the collective “**Sauvons les arbres de Chalabre**” (“**Save the Trees of Chalabre**”), two points in particular call for clarification. We hope that this will contribute to a more objective understanding among those who are questioning the decisions taken by the municipality.

Of course, we do not in any way dispute the right to express opposing views: we live in a democracy. However, such debate should be based on clear and factual information.

We share the idyllic image of the double avenue of trees lining Cours Colbert, even if this presentation overlooks the effects of time and the damage caused by human activity to these venerable trees. We also share the view that it is essential to preserve the precious shade provided by the **506 trees planted throughout our commune**. On this point, describing the project as “deforestation” seems to us somewhat exaggerated.

We share the emotional attachment that these trees represent for the people of Chalabre, and the history of our village that is closely connected with their presence. This shared attachment is entirely sincere.

However, it is our responsibility to consider the future in the medium and long term. This requires us to set aside emotions and nostalgia when they might distort our analysis and influence our decisions. The same applies to the need to move beyond purely ideological positions.

The debate is **not about choosing between trees and no trees**. It is about choosing between keeping, in the short term, trees whose diagnostic assessments have demonstrated limited long-term viability, or beginning now to recreate a tree canopy capable of withstanding the climatic conditions of the coming decades.

What was actually decided?

In an article published on this blog on 1st August under the title “Why not let the trees on Cours Colbert live?”, the collective appears to suggest that the new municipal administration has taken a radical decision, whereas our predecessors preserved most of the trees during previous renovation works:

“...this is what the town hall chose to do on the other three avenues: some trees were replaced, but most were preserved.”

For the record, the municipal administration that chose to preserve a number of trees on Cours Sully, Cours J. Raynaud and Cours d’Aguesseau is the same administration that decided to remove 20 trees from Cours Colbert.

As we stated before the elections, we fully accept this inheritance. This decision does not represent a break with the project previously undertaken. Rather, it forms part of a project whose studies, diagnostic assessments and technical choices were carried out before we took office.

A second point is that the collective does not clearly state that **all the trees removed will be replaced**, leaving some uncertainty about our intentions.

Why did the previous municipal administration take this decision?

Precisely in order to take into account the negative consequences that became apparent following the previous works, and to anticipate a situation that could be far more damaging from an ecological point of view.

Such a situation would permanently affect both the shade provided by the trees and the architectural character of the historic bastide.

The consequences would be irreversible, because replacing trees after the completion of the works has now become extremely difficult. I invite everyone to see for themselves what has happened on Cours J. Raynaud, where a pistachio tree has replaced a plane tree.

Four plane trees on Cours Sully have already been identified by the Department as being in a “very worrying” state of health, unfortunately suggesting that this shaded area may soon disappear.

This situation illustrates very concretely the risk we want to avoid on Cours Colbert: having to intervene in the future on trees that have become fragile following the works, with no possibility of recreating the tree canopy.

In this context, the conclusions of the **SMDA** (*Soins Modernes des Arbres - patrimoine arbore*) appear to us sufficiently clear to require a genuinely sustainable, reasonable and responsible long-term approach.

A coherent project for Cours Colbert

The decision also aims to create a redevelopment of Cours Colbert that is consistent with the three other historic avenues.

The project aims to restore the tree canopy while taking into account the major climatic changes that are already having a significant impact on our environment.

The trees will be replaced on a tree-for-tree basis, using species that are better able to withstand future climatic conditions.

Why does the new municipal administration fully support the decision taken by its predecessors?

Because we believe that this decision is rational, coherent and responsible.

Conversely, it would be irresponsible to invest more than **€500,000 of public money** without taking into account the conclusions of the SMDA, the opinion of the engineer responsible for the Departmental Council's tree charter, and that of the **ABF (Architecte des Bâtiments de France – the French heritage architect)** (see attached documents).

Unless there is evidence to the contrary, these professionals are recognised as qualified experts.

Their opinions were among the elements on which the State authorities relied when issuing the order authorising the removal of the 20 trees (see attached order).

There is also a fundamental principle behind our position.

A project is developed in four stages: consideration, study, decision and implementation.

We are now at the final stage: **implementation**. The work was originally scheduled to begin in January 2026.

At this stage, modifying, postponing or cancelling the work would result in substantial financial losses and additional expenditure for the municipal budget: loss of grants, costs already incurred for studies, and possible compensation or penalties payable to the company contracted to carry out the work.

Finally, we are also listening to the majority of Chalabre residents who, at first, may understandably be concerned or surprised by this decision, but who come to understand and support it when the arguments outlined above are explained.

The same applies to most of the shopkeepers on Cours Colbert.

Thinking beyond today's trees

Our natural and tree heritage is not limited to the trees we have today.

Our responsibility is to **preserve and pass on this heritage**, while thinking about what our children and grandchildren will see tomorrow.

We therefore invite everyone to attend the **public meeting** devoted to this issue – as well as to the future of the Post Office – which will take place at:

Salle Georges Méliès (Cinema) Wednesday 26 August 2026 at 6:30 pm

We hope that this meeting will provide an opportunity for an open, calm and constructive discussion based on facts and on our shared responsibility for the future of Chalabre.