



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

21 September 2023

Report of the Executive Director - Place

A Tree and Woodland Strategy for Derbyshire
(Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Environment)

1. Divisions Affected

1.1 County-wide.

2. Key Decision

2.1 This is a Key Decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral areas in the county.

3. Purpose

3.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of Cabinet to a Tree and Woodland Strategy for Derbyshire.

4. Information and Analysis

4.1 The Council is committed to enabling nature recovery and tackling the causes and impacts of climate change. This is a long-term endeavour that is very much founded in the Council's net zero and nature positive organisational values, its partnership working ethos, and priority to stimulate commercial enterprise.

4.2 The Tree and Woodland Strategy (provided as Appendix 2) initially focuses on the three-year period of 2023/24 to 2025/26. During this

time, the Council's intention is to accelerate appropriate action to improve the quantity and quality of, and public accessibility to, Derbyshire's varied treescapes. The Strategy will be reviewed and updated accordingly.

- 4.3 The Strategy has been prepared at a time of unprecedented global, national, regional, and local recognition of the necessity to protect the natural environment. This is due to a growing appreciation of the wide-ranging benefits that a nature connected society can secure, not least in the essential drive to net zero. Hence, the Strategy's actions are designed to benefit society and local wildlife now, whilst ensuring the famous attributes of Derbyshire's diverse and beautiful natural heritage is enhanced for the generations to come.
- 4.4 The Council's Natural Capital Strategy for Derbyshire (February 2023) is an important reference point for the Strategy as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the current condition of Derbyshire's natural environment; the type and value of the ecosystem services it provides, and where opportunities exist for improvement. Natural capital is the stock of renewable and non-renewable natural resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals) that combine to yield a wide range of benefits (ecosystem services) to people.
- 4.5 The Natural Capital Strategy's findings are of great relevance to ensuring a robust landscape-scale approach is applied to tree and woodland protection and enhancement in Derbyshire. It considers in detail the diverse network of Derbyshire's woodland, heathland, wetland, and grassland habitats. It identifies how trees and woodlands make a huge contribution to enhancing biodiversity, mitigating the impacts of climate change, improving public health, providing jobs, supplying markets, sequestering carbon, and in celebrating cultural heritage. However, the effects of climate change, increasing population pressure, and a decline in biodiversity are negatively impacting on the resilience of these woodland habitats and restricting their ability to provide many of the ecosystem services that much of society takes for granted and will increasingly need.
- 4.6 The proposed Tree and Woodland Strategy reflects these opportunities and challenges. It provides a blueprint for Council action to achieve a step-change in the quantity, quality and diversity of trees and woodlands in Derbyshire. The Strategy sets long-term objectives in this regard, whilst ensuring focused near-term action over the three years of 2023/24, 2024/25, and 2025/26 to build momentum to facilitate the planting of a million trees in Derbyshire by 2030.

- 4.7 It is acknowledged that this will require a significant collective effort. Hence, the Strategy represents a route map for the people of Derbyshire to apply their enthusiasm, enterprise, and civic pride to delivering the Council's call to action to plant a million trees across the county by 2030.
- 4.8 In so doing, the aim is to partner with the public, community groups, landowners, businesses, our local authority peers, and civil society organisations. Subject to the Strategy's approval good practice will be applied to the design, planting and aftercare of new tree planting and woodland creation; ensuring the right tree is planted in the right place and they are intrinsic to Derbyshire's public infrastructure. Furthermore, the Council will encourage the implementation of best practice management plans to the county's existing treescapes and ensure the Council leads by example in this regard.
- 4.9 New resources will need to be identified to ensure the Strategy's effective delivery. Hence, through the Strategy the Council will seek innovation in combining public, private and community sector vigour, experience, landholdings, and funding to identify solutions that demonstrate a viable return on investment from the high value ecosystem benefits of woodlands and trees.

The Tree and Woodland Strategy has been arranged as follows

4.10 Vision

The Vision sets out an overarching vision for trees and woodlands in Derbyshire, which is:

"To create a network of thriving woodlands and trees that complement Derbyshire's landscapes and contribute to the county's success as a Nature-Positive and Net Zero place to live, work & visit."

4.11 Strategic Objectives

The primary goals of the Strategy are detailed below.

By 2050:

- Trees and woodlands across Derbyshire are making their greatest contribution to protecting society from the impacts of climate change; through carbon sequestration, flood prevention, cooling and shading and nature conservation.

- Woodlands are sustaining and connecting wildlife-rich habitats that are valued by all the county's residents, businesses, and visitors; for the social, economic, and environmental benefits that nature provides.
- A collaborative and evidence-based approach will have increased the quantity, quality, and diversity of Derbyshire's treescape; that is effectively maintained and adapted to ensure its maturity and replenishment against the challenges of a changing climate.
- The Council and its partners have demonstrated their commitment and credentials for delivering sustainable tree and woodland stewardship; and have secured fitting levels of Government and investor funding to enable the delivery of this Strategy.

4.12 **Guiding Principles**

Six principles have been developed that the Council will follow to ensure the array of benefits provided by trees and woodlands in Derbyshire are maximised, these are:

- I. Collaborative leadership that demonstrates good practice and mobilises collective endeavours.
- II. Connecting those who live, visit, work and do business in Derbyshire with nature.
- III. The application of practices that maximise the value of trees across all ecosystem services (as explained in the Derbyshire Natural Capital Strategy).
- IV. The strategic alignment of tree and woodland management and renewal with the prescribed habitat types of Derbyshire's Landscape Character Areas.
- V. The sustainability of trees and woodlands by ensuring they are planted and maintained to the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS), and Woodland Carbon Code where planting is being undertaken for carbon sequestration.
- VI. Woodland should not be planted on existing ecologically valuable habitat including species rich grassland and heathland.

4.13 **Near, Medium/Long-term Targets**

The measurable improvements that the Strategy has been designed to secure are detailed below.

The Strategy's near-term target for the Council is:

- Facilitate the planting of up to 300,000 trees across Derbyshire by March 2025.

The Strategy's medium- and long-term targets for the Council are:

- Facilitate the planting of up to a further 700,000 trees across Derbyshire by 2030 (medium-term).
- In accordance with Government national targets (long-term):
 - Increase tree canopy cover by 14% across the total land area of Derbyshire by 2050 when compared to 2020.
 - Halt the decline in species abundance associated with woodlands and hedgerows by 2030, and then increase such abundance by at least 10% to exceed 2022 levels by 2042.

4.14 Five Delivery Themes and an Action Plan

A structured explanation as to why trees and woodlands are important now and, in the future is provided set against five themes (A-E). This informs the Strategy's Action Plan to be delivered in 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26.

Theme A: Championing and realising the benefits of trees.

Theme B: Managing trees for safety and a changing climate.

Theme C: Directing the transformational growth, renewal, and protection of woodland.

Theme D: Financing tree planting and woodland creation.

Theme E: Nature connected tree and woodlands partnerships

4.15 Governance, monitoring and review

The Council's Climate Change and Environment Programme Board (the Board) will be responsible for providing strategic oversight and direction for the overall delivery of the Strategy. Accountable to the Place Programme Board and ultimately the Council's Portfolio Direction Group, the Board will oversee the successful delivery of the Strategy and make recommendations around the commissioning and resource implications of priority projects and initiatives. The Board will also provide assurance that the Strategy is delivering the required outcomes, manage any key risks, and provide direction and advice to ensure the

Strategy is delivered in a value for money, good-quality, and timely manner in accordance with the Council's strategic priorities.

The Strategy will be reviewed and updated in full in 2025 to form Phase 2 of the Strategy for the three-year period 2027-28 to 2030-31.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Vision Derbyshire partnership of local authorities has been consulted on the draft Strategy and officers have provided helpful feedback which has informed the final document. Furthermore, the Strategy has been shared with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust, both of whom have confirmed their support of the Strategy's intent.

6. Alternative Options Considered

- 6.1 The do-nothing option has been considered and rejected as without a coherent and strategic approach to the stewardship of Derbyshire's treescape the Council's policy objectives for nature recovery, net zero and climate change resilience will not be effectively delivered.

7. Implications

- 7.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 The Council's Climate Change Strategy: Achieving Net Zero 2021-2025.
- 8.2 The Council's Natural Capital Strategy for Derbyshire.
- 8.3 Vision Derbyshire Climate Change Strategy: 2022-2025.
- 8.4 The Council's Nature Recovery Motion (2 February 2022).

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Implications.
- 9.2 Appendix 2 – A Tree and Woodland Strategy for Derbyshire.

10. Recommendation

That Cabinet:

- a) Approves the Tree and Woodland Strategy for Derbyshire

11. Reason for Recommendation

- 11.1 To ensure the Tree and Woodland Strategy forms part of the range of measures that the Council is progressing to meet its policy commitments and legislative obligations that support the delivery of the Thriving Plants and Wildlife objective of the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (EIP 2023), the national route map to meet the 2030 Global Biodiversity Framework targets. These Council measures include a commitment to facilitate the planting of up to 1 million trees in Derbyshire by 2030 and a Responsible Authority role in the preparation and delivery of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the county.

12. Is it necessary to waive the call in period?

- 12.1 No.

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Implications

Financial

- 1.1 This report seeks to adopt the Tree and Woodland Strategy only. At this point there are no directly associated costs. These will be presented to Cabinet at future meetings for consideration as the associated Action Plan is developed.

Legal

- 2.1 The preparation of the Strategy is being undertaken to support compliance with the Council's policy commitments and obligations that support the delivery of the Thriving Plants and Wildlife objective of the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (EIP 2023), the national route map to meet the 2030 Global Biodiversity Framework targets. The Government's long term environmental targets in relation to the natural environment stem from Part 1 of the Environment Act 2021.

Human Resources

- 3.1 None.

Information Technology

- 4.1 This report has Information Technology implications for the Council. These will be assessed as part of the delivery of the Strategy's Action Plan.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 This report has Equalities Impact implications for the Council. These will be assessed as part of the delivery of the Strategy's Action Plan.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 6.1 This proposal will help deliver the following Council Plan priorities:
- Resilient, healthy, and safe communities.
 - High performing, value for money and resident focused services.
 - Effective early help for individuals and communities.
 - A prosperous and green Derbyshire.

Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.1 Delivery of the Strategy will improve the environmental sustainability of the county through tackling the causes and impacts of climate change and enhance biodiversity.
- 7.2 The Council's Executive Health and Safety Policy Statement in respect to protecting its employees and members of the public, so far as is reasonably practicable, from danger arising from trees on its premises, highways, and landholdings.