

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S
REPORT TO**

Health Wellbeing and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee
06 March 2023

Report Title: Urban Tree Planting Strategy Update 2023

Submitted by: Executive Director – Sustainable Environment & Operational Services

Portfolios: Environment and Recycling

Ward(s) affected: Urban Wards of the Borough

Purpose of the Report

To update the Committee on progress with the Urban Tree Planting Strategy, and to invite members to propose further planting sites in the urban wards of the Borough.

Recommendation

That

- 1. Progress on the Urban Tree Planting Strategy is noted, including consultation responses on the current phase (Phase 4).**
- 2. Progress on the proposed 850 Lyme Forest, consisting of 850 lime trees and other associated tree planting at the former Keele Golf Course site, to celebrate the forthcoming 850th anniversary of the Borough's Royal Charter, is noted, including consultation responses.**
- 3. Members are invited to propose further planting sites in the urban wards of the Borough for inclusion in future phases, subject to the parameters of the strategy and consultation responses.**

Reasons

To contribute to the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy, with particular focus on carbon sequestration and off-setting as part of its journey to net carbon zero

To contribute to the removal and sequestration of carbon from the atmosphere.

To contribute to the good management of the Borough Council's tree stock and appropriate decision making on tree planting proposals

To contribute to the Council's Nature Recovery plans.

To enable donations to be received that contribute towards the delivery of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy and other projects

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Council adopted its Sustainable Environment Strategy in December 2020 which commits, under the “Offset” theme, to a tree planting programme to facilitate carbon capture and greening in the priority outcomes for the Natural Environment theme.
- 1.2 On 7th July 2021 the Cabinet approved the Urban Tree Planting Strategy which set out its approach for the management and improvement of the urban forest of Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- 1.3 In November 2021 the Council was the first in Staffordshire to adopt a Nature Recovery motion in Full Council, in recognition that nature is in long term decline and action is needed to halt and reverse this urgently.
- 1.4 Over the last 2 years, the Council has delivered the first 3 phases of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy, planting 265 trees over 8 sites, and work is now in progress to deliver phase 4 over the winter of 2022/23.
- 1.5 A number of other linked initiatives have also been delivered including the Plant a Tree for the Jubilee scheme in conjunction with 17 local primary schools which saw 1176 trees planted, and the Treetotalizer which now stands at over 9400 trees which have been planted by the community as part of the Britain in Bloom Plant a Bloomin’ Tree project.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 A list of sites for Phase 4 tree planting was identified. The list included 4 smaller sites at Clough Hall Park, Kennet Close, Moreton Parade and St Edmunds Avenue which were suitable for community planting and therefore consultation was undertaken and planting was completed by Christmas 2022. This Phase 4a, heralded the initiation of the remaining 9 sites for which consultation was completed in December 2022 with a view to planting being carried out in March 2023 as Phase 4b.
- 2.2 As 2023 will be the 850th anniversary of the Borough’s Royal Charter, it is proposed to plant a commemorative 850 Lyme Forest of 850 lime trees and associated other tree planting, in recognition of the origin of the name of Newcastle-under-Lyme, at the former Keele Golf Course site. This project will be implemented as part of Phase 4b, but will have special recognition and in view of this, consultation on this particular site was completed on 5th December 2022. Planting will take place in March 2023 along with site signs and publicity to mark this legacy project.
- 2.3 The consultation results for all of the Phase 4 sites is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
- 2.4 The latest Phase continues to follow the principle of the importance of “the right tree in the right place”, involving the community in managing existing trees and new planting schemes, and the long-term nature of urban forest management, reflecting the lifespan of trees and the timescales (20 – 30 years) involved for newly planted trees to grow to the age where they begin to absorb large amounts of carbon dioxide. Ultimately, they will assist in the Council’s aim of becoming carbon neutral through carbon sequestration and offsetting when the trees begin to mature.
- 2.5 The Urban Tree Planting Strategy is focusing on carrying out tree planting in the urban wards in the Borough, as this is where carbon capture or sequestration will be most needed to mitigate the carbon footprint generated in built-up areas.
- 2.6 The approved Urban Tree Planting Strategy Action Plan proposed 4 initial phases of site selection for suitable areas of open space that have less than 2 ha of open area and the first 3 phases have been successfully delivered, with the 4th Phase now in progress:

Site	Ward	Area (ha)
Phase 1 & 2		
Sandy Lane	May Bank	0.91
Newchapel Recreation Ground	Newchapel and Mow Cop	1.96
Phase 3		
Repton Drive	Westlands	0.11
Winchester Drive	Westlands	0.13
Westbury Road	Westbury Park and Northwood	0.48
Wilson Street	Town	0.44
Hanbridge Avenue	Bradwell	0.48
Harriet Higgins/Poolfields LNR	Thistleberry	0.73
Phase 4 – for planting Autumn/Winter 2022/23		
Leys Drive/Whitmore Road	Westlands	1.29
Former pitch and putt Lyme Valley Parkway	Clayton	1.04
Rear of Homebase/Lyme Valley Parkway	Town	0.17
Moreton Parade	May Bank	0.05
St Edmunds Avenue	Wolstanton	0.25
Coalpit Hill	Talke and Butt Lane	1.74
Mount Road/Weir Grove	Kidsgrove and Ravenscliffe/Newchapel and Mow Cop	3.64
Silverdale crossroads	Silverdale	0.67
Kennet Close / Severn Drive	Westbury Park & Northwood	0.14
Clough Hall Park	Talke and Butt Lane	0.05
Arnold Grove	Bradwell	2.24
850 Lyme Forest	Silverdale (former golf course)	3.20
Sheldon Grove	Holditch & Chesterton	2.40

- 2.7 A dedicated web page has been set up on the Council's website with information about the benefits of tree planting, details of the proposed Phase 4 sites and an invitation to residents to let the Council know their views on tree planting and any other suggestions for further nature recovery improvements.
- 2.8 Ward Members of the phase 3 and 4 sites were issued with a pack including a consultation letter that could be delivered to residents and a plan of the particular site involved, with the intention that Ward Members could undertake appropriate distribution in their area. This approach can be replicated for any future sites which are proposed and members are invited to put forward suggested sites in their respective wards for consideration.
- 2.9 In order to provide an opportunity for the community to sponsor a tree or make a contribution to a particular site or project, in particular the 850 Lyme Forest, a donation scheme is being set up via the council's website. Residents and businesses will be able to

contribute to different donation areas; one for the Urban Tree Planting Strategy for which any donations collected will be used on the rolling programme of tree planting and one specifically for the 850 Lyme Forest. Suggested donation amounts will be included on the webpages as a guide, and the funds received will be stored in specific account areas. This will ensure that any funds raised are appropriately managed and can be rolled forward to match suitable planting seasons.

2.10 The intention is also to establish the principle of securing donations for other future council projects, subject to ensuring that such projects meet requirements for this funding mechanism.

3. **Proposal**

3.1. Progress on the Urban Tree Planting Strategy is noted, including consultation responses on the current phase (Phase 4).

3.2 Progress on the proposed 850 Lyme Forest, consisting of 850 lime trees and other associated tree planting at the former Keele Golf Course site, to celebrate the forthcoming 850th anniversary of the Borough's Royal Charter, is noted, including consultation responses.

3.3 Members are invited to propose further planting sites in the urban wards of the Borough for inclusion in future phases, subject to the parameters of the strategy and consultation responses.

4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 To contribute to the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy, with particular focus on its journey to net carbon zero in terms of removing and sequestering carbon emissions from the atmosphere.

4.2 To contribute to the good management of the Borough Council's tree stock and appropriate decision making on tree planting proposal

4.3 To enable residents to contribute towards this and future tree planting and other projects.

4.4 To contribute to the Council's Nature Recovery Plan

4.5 To enable donations to be received that contribute towards the delivery of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy and other projects

5. **Options Considered**

5.1 The option considered is to note progress on the Urban Tree Planting Strategy.

5.2 The option considered is that the proposed phase 4 of the tree planting is noted, including consultation responses, in line with the Council's Sustainable Environment Strategy.

5.3 A further option considered is that work begins on developing future phases of tree planting, including inviting members to propose further planting sites for consultation with appropriate stakeholders.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 The Council, as a landowner, has a statutory duty to ensure that its tree stock is managed safely. It also has a “biodiversity duty” under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, to which the provision and management of trees and woodlands contributes.
- 6.2 Donations from the community can only be used for non-statutory purposes; the proposed tree planting is not something that the Council is required to do and therefore the proposed donation scheme can be set up and used to support this purpose.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 There are no direct equality impacts associated with this report.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 There are financial and resource implications arising from the proposed delivery of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy as follows.
- 8.2 There is a significant requirement for staff time to engage and consult with affected communities and other stakeholders, design schemes, seek tenders, appoint and manage contractors and arrange and manage planting.
- 8.3 This work, in relation to Phase 4 of the tree planting and the 850 Lyme Forest has been reprioritised over other projects and work streams to enable successful delivery within the required timescales.
- 8.4 Cost estimates in the sum of £85,000 have been prepared for Phase 4 of the tree planting, including the Lime Forest. A sum of £85,000 has been included in the Council’s successful UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) bid which will cover the estimated total cost of the Phase 4 scheme.
- 8.5 On receipt of quotations and tenders, consultation will be undertaken with the Portfolio Holder prior to awarding contracts for the planting proposals so that funding amounts can be agreed and budgets managed appropriately.
- 8.6 There is currently provision of £25,000 in the 2023/24 capital programme for Phase 5 of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy, and provision will need to be made for any future phases in 2024/25 and onwards. The UKSPF bid also includes sums for tree planting in 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- 8.7 Opportunities to secure external funding for planting schemes are also being explored to supplement the Councils resources for future phases, and any successful bids will be reported. This includes the option of the donation scheme to enable residents and businesses to contribute towards the planting projects. Any amounts received via this route will be recorded and used to offset the above costs.

9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 The major risks associated with this report relate to the Council’s duty to safely maintain its current tree stock, and its ambition to be carbon neutral across its operations and assets by 2030 through a combination of reducing carbon production and offsetting of any residual carbon emissions. Tree planting, particularly in the urban areas of the Borough, would ultimately assist in such offsetting.

9.2 There is also a risk of a lack of community support for proposed new tree planting, depending on location and scale. This risk will be managed through community engagement and consultation on planting proposals for any sites identified for this purpose.

10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

10.1 The Urban Forest Strategy and Urban Tree Planting Strategy will support the realisation of the aims of UN SDG 3, 13 AND 15.

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

https://30312f94-9adb-4918-80dd-708c590bada3.usrfiles.com/ugd/30312f_79b08331d11e44bc888e1ee08c05474e.pdf



11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 Approval of the strategy is considered to be a key decision as it impacts on all wards in the Borough and may require cumulative expenditure of over £100,000 should the action plan be progressed. It has been included in the Forward Plan.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 February 2022

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 Appendix 1 – consultation report on Phase 4

14. **Background Papers**

1. Urban Tree Planting Strategy
2. Sustainable Environment Strategy