

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S
REPORT TO CABINET**

19 March 2024

Report Title: Tree and Biodiversity Management Plan

Submitted by: Service Director – Sustainable Environment

Portfolios: Sustainable Environment

Ward(s) affected: All

<p><u>Purpose of the Report</u></p> <p>To seek Cabinet approval for the adoption of the tree and biodiversity management plan which sets out the Council's approach to managing its current and future tree stock as well as planted meadowland.</p>	<p><u>Key Decision</u> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>That Cabinet: Approves the Tree & Biodiversity Management Plan</p>	
<p><u>Reasons</u></p> <p>Effective management of the Councils existing and future tree stock is vital in ensuring risk is minimised and contributes positively to the Council's and Borough's Carbon reduction targets. Having an effective Management Plan, formally adopted, and reviewed and updated as necessary is vital in providing assurance that the Council's tree stock is adequately managed.</p>	

1. Background

1.1 The Council adopted its Sustainable Environment Strategy (SES) in December 2020. The Strategy is a landmark document that sets out the Council's commitment to the sustainable environmental future of the Borough and is an over-arching strategy, under which a range of other linked and related plans and initiatives sit.

1.2 There are 4 Priority Outcomes associated with the Strategy as follows:

- Reduce the reliance on the use of fossil fuels.
- Reduce carbon and other damaging emissions.
- Minimise waste and increase recycling.
- Offset residual carbon emissions.

- 1.3 As part of the Council's SES protecting and enhancing biodiversity plays a major part in tackling climate change, and since 2018 the Council has focused work programmes such as tree planting, though its urban tree planting strategy, and planting wild flower meadows on land within its ownership.
- 1.4 To date nearly 15,000 trees have been planted in the first four phases of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy.
- 1.5 Biodiversity is a necessity in the Borough as it encompasses the variety and quantity of flora and fauna in the area and the more biodiverse an area is, the more healthy, resilient and more fertile the environment is. A biodiverse Borough therefore increases food security, climate change resilience, clean water, sanitation and many more other societal and environmental needs that are described by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. (UN SDG's)

2. Issues and progress to date.

- 2.1 Planting trees and wildflower meadows requires management moving forward, to ensure effective survival rates, and to ensure risks are adequately managed for the future.
- 2.2 One issue the Council has to address is new tree planting survival risk, which is the risk that 10% to 25% of new tree developments may not survive into maturity due to a multitude of factors such as adverse weather and climate, water and nutrient stress.
- 2.3 A comprehensive service review into how the Council manages its tree stock was undertaken in 2018, and £30,000 additional expenditure was identified to be incorporated into the Council's arboriculture work programme to effectively and sustainably manage tree work operations. This includes procurement of third party contractors to support the Council's own resources in inspection and management of the Councils tree stock.
- 2.4 The Council is now operating its second term contract with Thompsons Tree Care.
- 2.5 The Council has now formulated a Tree and Biodiversity Management plan, which focuses on tree and wildflower meadow planting and how these are managed moving forward.
- 2.6 The objectives of the Tree and Biodiversity Management plan are to:
 - Ensure the Council continues to manage and progress required tree work in relation to the Council's current and future tree stock.
 - Increase tree inspections within the Borough to reduce the risk of litigation and to ensure felled trees are replaced appropriately.
 - Support succession planning for the Council's tree team
 - Ensure the Council continues managing and promoting wildflower areas to positively impact the environment

- Maintain and enhance the Council's current tree stock and biodiversity developments
- Ensure the Council is following all biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) guidance for new and current developments.

2.7 The Tree and Biodiversity management plan includes a risk and progress tracker which measures and records issues and progress of the current biodiversity operations which have been mapped out into a risk and progress tracker to visualise the current risks and mitigations that have been and are being put in place to reduce that risk.

2.8 The risk and progress tracker uses a Red, Amber Green (RAG) progress tracker, where Green = Progressing Well, Amber = Progressing and Red = Progressing not as quickly as the Council predicted.

2.9 Current progress to date is listed below :

- Hired a new Arboricultural Manager in Streetscene
- Implemented a new software management system (Ezytreev) to identify and manage the council's current and future tree stock of 111,861 trees
- Purchased a mobile Elevated Work Platform Vehicle and Tracked Chipper to reduce risk and inefficiencies
- Planted 14,947 trees over 21 sites since the launch of the Urban Tree planting Strategy (2021)
- Planted 11 'Lindum' wildflower Meadow sites around the Borough with 27 different species of wildflowers
- Sustained regular maintenance and care for tree and wildflower developments in the Borough.

2.10 The tree and biodiversity plan also details how a managed planting scheme for trees and wildflower meadows can create effective Carbon Sequestration, the process of absorbing and storing carbon out of the atmosphere, which will play a significant contribution to the Council's net zero target for its own operations by 2030 and the wider Borough by 2050.

3. Recommendation

3.1 That Cabinet approves the Tree and Biodiversity management plan.

4. Reasons

4.1 Effective management of the Council's existing and future tree stock is vital in ensure risk is minimised and contributes positively to the Council's and Borough's Carbon reduction targets. Having an effective Management Plan, which is formally adopted, and can be reviewed and updated as necessary is

vital in providing assurance that the Council's tree stock is adequately managed.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 Do nothing is not an option, the risks associated with not adequately planning for managing the Council's tree stock, are very high.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal or statutory implications arising from this report.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 There are no equality impact issues arising from this report.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 Management of the Council's current and future tree stock is covered as part of the Council's medium term financial system (MTFS) and is fully budgeted for.
- 8.2 The current budget for agricultural works which support the management of the Council's tree stock is £30,000 per year.

9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1 Not having effective and appropriately resourced management of the Council's tree stock, and monitoring of the condition of trees, puts the Council at significant risk.
- 9.2 The Council's Tree and Biodiversity Management Plan sets out how the Council will manage and adequately resource the management of its tree stock, which can and will be subject to review and development moving forward.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

- 10.1 The Tree and Biodiversity Management Plan supports a number of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and supports the Council's plan in becoming net zero for its own operations by 2030, and the wider Borough by 2050.



11. Key Decision Information

11.1 The report is not a key decision.

12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

12.1 None

13. List of Appendices

13.1 Tree and Biodiversity Management Plan:

<https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/downloads/file/2139/tree-and-biodiversity-management-plan>

14. Background Papers

14.1 None