

# **NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**



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

**16 JULY 2024**

**Report Title:** Urban Tree Planting Strategy Phase 6

**Submitted by:** Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery

**Portfolios:** Sustainable Environment

**Ward(s) affected:** All

<b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b>	<b><u>Key Decision</u></b>	<b>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>	<b>No <input type="checkbox"/></b>
To seek the approval of Cabinet to progress Phase 6 of tree planting under the Urban Tree Planting Strategy and to seek approval to expand the strategy to include tree planting in selected sites in rural villages.			
<b><u>Recommendation</u></b>  That Cabinet:  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Approve Phase 6 of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy for consultation and implementation in winter 2024/25 (subject to consultation responses), and authorise the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery to seek and accept quotations for the work in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment.</li><li>2. Authorise the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery to bid for and accept external grant funding and secure community donations (if offered) to contribute to the cost of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy and other related projects.</li><li>3. Approve the expansion of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy to include rural tree planting schemes.</li><li>4. Invite ward members in the rural areas of the Borough to propose potential sites for tree planting on Borough Council land in their wards.</li><li>5. Agree that up to two rural sites are included in this phase of planting, subject to consultation with the relevant community and agreement with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment.</li><li>6. Authorise designation of appropriate tree planting sites as Carbon Capture Areas in the emerging Local Plan.</li></ol>			
<b><u>Reasons</u></b>			

To contribute to the Council's sustainable Environment Strategy, with a 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 protect urban greenspaces for future generations.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1** The Council adopted its Sustainable Environment Strategy in December 2020 which committed, under the "Offset" theme, to undertaking a feasibility study for a tree planting programme to facilitate carbon capture, and greening. The strategy also makes commitments in relation to tree planting in the priority outcomes for the Natural Environment theme. The refresh of the Sustainable Environment Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024.
- 1.2** On 7 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 4 years, the Council has delivered the first 5 phases of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy, planting 19,604 trees over 27 sites, and plans are now in place to deliver phase 6 over the winter of 2024/25.
- 1.5** A number of other linked initiatives have also been delivered including the planting of perennial plants in the town centre, as part of a phased plan to reduce traditional bedding usage, adoption of the Grassland Management Strategy and Plan and the Treetotalizer which now stands at over 9995 trees which have been planted by the community as part of the Britain in Bloom Plant a Bloomin' Tree project. When added to the trees the Council has planted in the first 5 phases of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy, 29,599 trees have been planted in the Borough in the last 4 years.

## **2. Issues**

- 2.1** A list of 8 urban sites from the previously approved long list have been identified for Phase 6 tree planting. They are located at Clayhanger Close, Dales Green Play Area, Waterhays, Laurel Drive Play Area, Porthill Dingle, Wye Road/Bunny Hill, Kingsbridge Avenue and The Butts and are considered to be suitable for planting. Therefore community consultation will be undertaken and, dependent on the outcome, planting will be scheduled to be completed by March 2025.

**2.2** The latest phase of planting 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.

**2.3** 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, with larger sites being included in the later phases. The first 5 phases have been successfully completed over the last 4 years as per the following table:

Site	Ward	Area (ha)
<b>Phase 1 &amp; 2</b>		
Sandy Lane	May Bank	0.91
Newchapel Recreation Ground	Newchapel and Mow Cop	1.96
<b>Phase 3</b>		
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
<b>Phase 4</b>		
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 and Northwood	0.14
Clough Hall Park	Talke and Butt Lane	0.05
Arnold Grove	Bradwell	2.24
Keele Golf Course	Silverdale	3.20
Sheldon Grove	Holditch and Chesterton	2.40

<b>Phase 5</b>		
Bradwell Dingle	Bradwell	3.29
Grange Lane Community Centre	Wolstanton	0.11
Betley Place	Clayton	0.19
Earls Drive	Westlands	3.69
Wolstanton Marsh	Wolstanton	7.37
Wye Road Community Centre Car Park	Westbury Park and Northwood	0.15

Phase 6 is planned to be delivered January – March 2025 as follows:

<b>Phase 6 – for planting Autumn / Winter 2024/25</b>		
Clayhanger Close	Bradwell	2.53
Dales Green Play Area	Newchapel & Mow Cop	0.21
Waterhays	Crackley and Red Street	18.15
Laurel Drive Play Area	Newchapel & Mow Cop	2.86
Porthill Dingle	Wolstanton	1.30
Wye Road/Bunny Hill	Westbury Park & Northwood	24.13
Kingsbridge Avenue	Westlands	1.74
The Butts	Thistleberry	10.41

- 2.4** A dedicated web page has been set up on the Councils website with information about the benefits of tree planting, details of the proposed Phase 6 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. Consultation on the Phase 6 sites will run for 6 weeks from September 2024 to October 2024 and dependent on a consensus of support for the proposals, planting will be planned for January - March 2025.
- 2.5** Ward members of the proposed Phase 6 sites will be issued with a pack including a consultation letter that can be delivered to residents and a plan of the particular site involved, with the intention that ward members can undertake appropriate distribution and consultation in their respective areas.
- 2.6** In order to provide an opportunity for the community to sponsor a tree or make a contribution to a particular site or project, a donation scheme has been set up on the council's website. Residents and businesses will be able to contribute to the Urban Tree Planting Strategy for which any donations collected will be used on the rolling programme of tree planting. Suggested donation amounts are 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.

- 2.7** Following on from the success of the first 5 phases of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy in the urban areas, it is proposed to expand the strategy to include the more built-up areas of the rural wards of the borough, which are located mainly within the rural villages.
- 2.8** This will enable a continuation of a long list of sites which could be declared as Carbon Capture Areas and support the Council's plans to become carbon neutral and to improve biodiversity across an increased range of sites.
- 2.9** Members in rural wards will be invited to put forward a list of sites within their areas, that are in Borough Council ownership, to be added to the long list for future planting. Dependent on proposals received, up to two of these rural sites could be included in the Phase 6 planting, subject to consultation with the relevant community, and agreement with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment.

### **3. Recommendation**

**3.1** That Cabinet:

- Approve Phase 6 of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy for consultation and implementation (subject to consultation responses) and the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery is authorised to seek and accept quotations for the work in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment.
- Authorises the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery Services to bid for and accept external grant funding and secure community donations to contribute to the cost of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy and other related projects.
- Approve the expansion of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy to include rural tree planting schemes.
- Agree that ward members in the rural villages in the Borough are invited to propose potential sites for tree planting in their wards.
- Agree that up to two rural sites are included in this phase of planting, subject to consultation with the relevant community and agreement with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Environment.
- Agree that appropriate sites are designated as Carbon Capture Areas in the emerging Local Plan.

### **4. Reasons**

- 4.1** To contribute to the Council's sustainable Environment Strategy, with a particular focus on carbon sequestration and off-setting as part of its journey to net carbon zero.
- 4.2** To contribute to the removal and sequestration of carbon from the atmosphere.

- 4.3 To contribute to the good management of the Borough Council's tree stock and appropriate decision making on tree planting proposals.
- 4.4 To contribute to the Council's Nature Recovery plans.
- 4.5 To protect urban greenspaces for future generations

## **5. Options Considered**

- 5.1 The options considered are whether or not to approve the Phase 6 tree planting as part of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy, and to expand the strategy to include rural sites.
- 5.2 The recommended option is that the proposed Phase 6 of the tree planting is implemented, subject to consultation responses, and the strategy is expanded to include rural areas, for the reasons outlined in the body of the report.

## **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.

## **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 community-planting events with schools and other groups.
- 8.3 This work, in relation to phase all of the tree planting, detailed in the body of this report, has been reprioritised over other projects and work streams depending on the scale and timing of the proposals.
- 8.4 Initial cost estimates in the sum of £71,000 have been prepared for Phase 6 of the tree planting, which can be fully funded from the UKSPF Nature Recovery Project budget of £113,000.
- 8.5 Further provision will be required to be made in the 2025/26 general fund capital programme for phase 7, and for any future phases in 2026 onwards.

- 8.6 Opportunities to secure external funding for planting schemes are also being explored to supplement the Council's resources, and any successful bids will be reported at the appropriate time.

## 9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 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 built up 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 the Urban Tree Planting Strategy will support the realisation of the aims of UN SDG 3, 13 AND 15.



## 11. Key Decision Information

- 11.1 Approval of the report is considered to be a key decision as it impacts on all wards in the borough and may require cumulative expenditure and has been included on the forward plan.

## 12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions

- 12.1 None

## 13. List of Appendices

- 13.1 None

## 14. Background Papers

- 14.1 Urban Tree Planting Strategy  
14.2 Sustainable Environment Strategy