

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

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

**13 JANUARY 2026**

**Report Title:** Borough Tree Planting Strategy (Phase 7) and Update on Protection of Green Space

**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> | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| To seek the approval of the Cabinet to progress Phase 7 of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy.   |                            |   |                             |
| <b><u>Recommendation</u></b><br><br><b>That Cabinet:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approves Phase 7 of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy for immediate implementation, subject to the final consultation responses, and the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery is authorised to seek and accept quotations for the work.</li> <li>2. Agrees that the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery is authorised to bid for and accept external grant funding and secure community donations to contribute to the delivery of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy and other related projects.</li> <li>3. Approves that the new planting sites are designated as Carbon Capture Areas in the Open Space Strategy.</li> <li>4. Notes the progress made with the Field in Trust applications for the selected sites.</li> </ol> |                            |   |                             |
| <b><u>Reasons</u></b><br>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.<br><br>To contribute to the removal and sequestration of carbon from the atmosphere.<br><br>To contribute to the good management of the Borough Council's tree stock and appropriate decision making on tree planting proposals.<br><br>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 commits, 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.
- 1.2** On 7 July 2021 the Cabinet approved the Urban (now Borough) 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 5 years, the Council has delivered the first 6 phases of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy, planting 24,070 trees over 37 sites, and plans are now in place to deliver Phase 7 over the winter of 2025/26.
- 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 and over 9995 trees which have been planted by the community as part of the Britain in Bloom Plant a Bloomin’ Tree project, meaning that when added to the trees the Council has planted in the first 6 phases of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy, 34,065 trees have been planted in the Borough in the last 5 years.

## **2. Issues**

- 2.1** A list of sites for Phase 7 tree planting has been identified. The list includes 8 sites at Bathpool Park, Birchenwood Countryside Park, Crackley Recreation Ground, The Donkey Field to the rear of Ellam’s Place, Station Walks by King Street, Land by Paris Avenue opposite The Butts, Queen Elizabeth Park, and Land off Bignall End Road, which are suitable for community planting and therefore consultation has been undertaken and planting will be scheduled to be completed by March 2026.
- 2.2** 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.

- 2.3** The approved Borough Tree Planting Strategy Action Plan proposed 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 and the first 6 phases have been successfully completed over the last 5 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 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------|

|   |                            |       |
|---|----------------------------|-------|
| <b>Phase 6</b>                                |                            |       |
| Clayhanger Close                              | Bradwell                   | 2.53  |
| Dales Green Play Area                         | Newchapel & Mow Cop        | 0.21  |
| Waterhays                                     | Crackley and Red Street    | 18.2  |
| Laurel Drive Play Area                        | Newchapel & Mow Cop        | 2.86  |
| Porthill Dingle                               | Wolstanton                 | 1.3   |
| Wye Road / Bunny Hill                         | Westbury Park & Northwood  | 24.13 |
| Kingsbridge Avenue                            | Westlands                  | 1.74  |
| The Butts                                     | Thistleberry               | 10.4  |
| <b>Phase 7 (proposed)</b>                     |                            |       |
| Bathpool Park                                 | Talke and Butt Lane        | 63.4  |
| Birchenwood Countryside Park                  | Kidsgrove and Ravenscliffe | 33.0  |
| Crackley Recreation Ground                    | Crackley and Red Street    | 3.9   |
| The Donkey Field to the rear of Ellam's Place | Silverdale                 | 1.04  |
| Station Walk by King Street                   | Town                       | 0.93  |
| Land by Paris Avenue opposite The Butts,      | Thistleberry               | 0.26  |
| Queen Elizabeth Park                          | Town                       | 0.87  |
| Land off Bignall End Road                     | Audley                     | 0.48  |

- 2.4** A dedicated web page was set up on the Councils website with information about the benefits of tree planting, details of the proposed Phase 7 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 7 sites has run for 7 weeks from 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025 to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and as a consensus of support for the proposals was indicated, planting is planned for February - March 2026.
- 2.5** Ward members of the Phase 7 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.

- 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 so that residents and businesses will be able to contribute to the Borough Tree Planting Strategy if they wish. 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** The Phase 7 sites will be declared as Carbon Capture Areas in the Open Space Strategy and will support the Council's plans to become carbon neutral and to improve biodiversity across an increased range of sites.
- 2.8** It is the intention with the Borough Tree Planting Strategy that members will continue to 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.
- 2.9** In order to achieve wider green space protection, May 2025, Cabinet approved a schedule of approximately 80 sites to be classified as Fields in Trust, which gives a green open space protection in perpetuity for each site, via the Fields in Trust Charity. Since that time 17 sites have been applied for (see October 2025 Cabinet Report) and a further 5 are being finalised for submission to the Charity.
- 2.10** The Fields in Trust Charity have confirmed that the sites submitted will be agreed for the protection and the requisite legal agreements are being finalised, in order for the Council to submit the sites to the Land Registry to register the protection on the title deeds.

### **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1** That Cabinet approves Phase 7 of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy for immediate implementation, subject to consultation responses, and the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery is authorised to seek and accept quotations for the work.
- 3.2** That the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery is authorised to bid for and accept external grant funding and secure community donations to contribute to the delivery of the Urban Tree Planting Strategy and other related projects.
- 3.3** That the new sites are designated as Carbon Capture Areas in the Open Space Strategy.
- 3.4** Notes the progress made with the Field in Trust applications for the selected sites.

### **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 7 tree planting as part of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy.
- 5.2 It is recommended that the proposed Phase 7 of the tree planting is implemented, subject to final consultation responses.

## **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 Borough 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 7 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 Cost estimates in the sum of £25,772 have been prepared initially for Phase 7 of the tree planting, which can be met within the approved 2025/26 Capital Programme allocation of £25,000 and the anticipated Forestry Commission grant receipt of £4,805. There is an additional maintenance grant of £1,124 per year for 15 years from the Forestry Commission which will be used to carry out any required maintenance operations to the new tree planting.

- 8.5 Further provision will be required in the 2026/27 capital programme for Phase 8, and for any future phases in 2027/28 onwards.
- 8.6 Opportunities to secure external funding for planting schemes are also being explored to supplement the Councils resources, and any successful bids will be reported.

## 9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1 The major risks associated with this report relate to the Council's duty to safely maintain its current 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 is being 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.



## 1. One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council ☒

*We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.*

Securing external funding where possible to reduce the strain on the Council's capital programme is a key element of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy.

One Digital Council ☒

*We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction*

Access to digital consultation opportunities alongside methods which consider digital exclusion issues are a key element of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy.

One Sustainable Council ☒

*We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle.*

Supporting communities to be involved in managing green spaces and contributing to the Council becoming carbon neutral by 2030 are a key element of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy.

## **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 requires cumulative expenditure over a number of years and has been included on the forward plan.

## **12. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

**12.1** There have been a number of previous Cabinet resolutions for the previous phases of the Borough Tree Planting Strategy.

## **13. List of Appendices**

**13.1** None

## **14. Background Papers**

**14.1** Urban Tree Planting Strategy

**14.2** Sustainable Environment Strategy