



**ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 11 NOVEMBER 2025**

TREE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to invite members of the Committee to comment on the refreshed draft Tree Management Strategy which sets out the approach for the management of the County Council's trees and woodlands.
2. The draft Strategy will continue to raise the profile and appreciation of trees under the custodianship of the Council, help manage the impact of Ash Dieback, and ensure we continue to see the wide-ranging benefit of trees and woodland by continuing our initiative to plant more trees across Leicestershire.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

3. The County Council's Strategic Plan recognises the importance of the natural environment and the countryside which makes Leicestershire an attractive place to live and work in. The Tree Management Strategy establishes a clear vision for ensuring that Leicestershire's trees and woodlands can provide multiple benefits that improve the quality of life for citizens and local communities.
4. The Tree Management Strategy also accords with the Council's Environment Strategy. Set within this context, the underlying principle of the Tree Management Strategy is to use the Authority's tree assets to improve the quality of life for the citizens and communities and support the Council in delivering its wider ecological and environmental strategic objectives.
5. The current Tree Management Strategy was approved by Cabinet in March 2020 and runs for the period of 2020 to 2025.
6. In July 2018 the Cabinet agreed the Ash Dieback Action Plan, which was aligned with the above iteration of the Tree Management Strategy.

Background

7. The County Council has a legal duty to manage and maintain all trees on County Council-owned land, in parks and open spaces and on the public highway.
8. The County Council produced its first Tree Management Strategy in 2008 and this was later revised in 2013 & 2020. The current revision of the Strategy will

refresh tree management practice and procedure in line with best practice and everchanging legislation and to also align work with the Authority's strategic priorities.

9. The County Council is responsible for managing an estimated 321,000 trees comprising of individual specimens, tree groups and woodlands. This includes over 400 hectares of woodland on its land holdings with approximately 37% of trees on country parks, 35% of trees on highways, 12% of trees on county farms, 10% of trees on schools and 6% of trees located across other properties.
10. The County Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure tree safety under the Occupiers' Liability Acts, Health and Safety at Work Act and Highways Act. The responsibility requires the County Council to carry out an inspection programme undertaking works as appropriate to control the risk of injury to council staff, visitors to council premises, or users of the council's adopted public highway.
11. The County Council also has a duty under the Highways Act to ensure that an estimated population of over 420,000 privately owned trees adjacent to the highway, do not pose a danger to its users.
12. The County Council receives an average of 2,000 enquiries each year regarding tree management. Many of these relate to safety and nuisance issues (e.g. branches overhanging the highway) but also include requests for specialist advice and guidance from residents and landowners.
13. Additionally, the County Council has a wider responsibility to provide leadership in tackling climate change and to mitigate against the social, economic and environmental problems that are exacerbated by it. It also has a broader strategic role to provide leadership as an exemplar and to influence the behaviours of private landowners, schools, communities, and individuals to create a sustainable place, so that future generations enjoy a great quality of life.
14. In 2021 the County Council launched the Leicestershire Tree Charter in conjunction with the National Forest. The Charter calls for a collective vision and partnership working across Leicestershire to enhance the treescape and identifies three key drivers for action: to support a secure and safe future, to enhance the wellbeing of communities and to facilitate sustainable enterprise.

Value of Trees

15. The amenity value of Council trees is calculated using the CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) system. This system, developed by the London Tree Officers Association, is now recognised as a principal methodology for evaluating the amenity value of trees by expressing a trees' relative contribution to public amenity and its prominence in the urban landscape. This system and has been successfully used by the County Council in recouping the value of individual trees lost from development or in litigation cases. In 2018 an external assessment of Councils individual trees was made using CAVAT. This assessed 82,599 trees, giving a replacement cost of £99,522,000 and amenity valuation of £428,678,777.
16. i-Tree Eco is a specialist software tools developed by the USDA Forest service and

adapted for use in the UK. It is designed to use complete or sample plot inventories from a study area along with other local environmental data to: Characterise the structure of the tree population, quantify some of the environmental functions it performs in relation to air quality improvement, carbon dioxide reduction, and stormwater control. Headline figures from the 2018 assessment calculated that our trees prevented 32,000m³ per annum of stormwater from entering the sewerage system and removed 9.25 tonnes per annum of pollutants from the air.

17. Significant details of the study are included in the Tree Management Strategy to demonstrate the value of our trees. Further assessment of the Council tree stock and its value is ongoing as the tree inventory for all Council land is updated.
18. In 2023 the Value of Trees toolkit was produced. This report was commissioned by the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) and funded by the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund, The Value of Trees report was led by Leicestershire County Council, together with specialist consultants Treeconomics. The report provides information on species selection and latest guidance on tree planting and the costs and benefits of trees.

Ash Dieback

19. Ash dieback presents a significant public safety risk on our road corridors and public open spaces. The long-term effect of ash dieback on the county's rural landscape will be substantial with many areas potentially becoming devoid of mature trees.
20. To monitor and manage the effects of the disease, Leicestershire County Council developed an ash dieback action plan to inform and steer the authority's response to managing the disease and decline in our tree stock. The Tree management Strategy will ensure that it provides an overarching framework to spearhead the replanting of trees across the County in response to the disease.

Revised Draft Strategy

21. The purpose of the Tree Management Strategy is to recognise the importance of the tree resource under the stewardship of the County Council and identify standards for its management setting out standards which comply with nationally recognised codes of practice.
22. The Tree Management Strategy provides a framework within which the County Council can discharge its obligations to safeguard the trees under its stewardship. Adhering to the guidance contained within the Strategy will enable officers and Members to meet the Council's legal obligations and to provide leadership in tackling climate change. This ensures the County Council mitigates the risk (e.g. of insurance claims) as well as helping to protect trees and woodlands as a valuable natural asset to Leicestershire. This ensures the long-term conservation and development of the tree resource for the people of Leicestershire and future generations.
23. In developing a tree strategy, there is a need to strike a balance between

incorporating both native and non-native species into a programme of tree planting. Work undertaken on the Value of Trees project in particular, highlighted the need for the use of an appropriate range of naturalised and non-native species to create resilience to climate change. However, the council will be mindful that a healthy variety of native trees is essential to make a significant contribution towards biodiversity.

24. The strategic aims of the Tree Management Strategy are to:

- I. Conserve and enhance the tree resource in terms of quality and numbers;
- II. Promote public safety through appropriately resourced tree inspection and maintenance programmes;
- III. Fulfil the council's legal obligations as a tree owner by addressing safety and major nuisance issues effectively;
- IV. Inform customers of our legal obligations relating to trees and manage enquiries and expectations appropriately;
- V. Establish sustainable management programmes for council woodland utilising external funding from central government agencies;
- VI. Promote and increase the current level of tree planting on public and private land to address the recent decline of individual trees and mitigate the potential effects of ash dieback and other potentially harmful diseases.
- VII. Establish sustainable management programmes for council woodland utilising external funding from central government agencies;
- VIII. Promote and increase the current level of tree planting on public and private land to address the recent decline of individual trees and mitigate the potential effects of ash dieback and other potentially harmful diseases.

25. A Tree Management and Planting Action Plan will be developed which will identify key annual actions and the timescale required for the County Council to manage and enhance tree and woodland assets under its stewardship. In particular, the planting plan will enable the Council to focus on ongoing targets and aspirations for new tree planting.

26. An annual review of the actions contained within the Action Plan will be provided to the Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

27. Consultation is in progress both with internal and external partners which will inform the final strategy as will comments received from the members of the Committee.

28. The final revision of the Tree Management Strategy will be submitted to Cabinet in 2026 for approval.

Resource Implications

29. There are no resource implications arising from this report. Tree planting initiatives are currently funded through external grants which have been sourced and also finances have been allocated through the MTFS to support delivery of the Ash Dieback Action Plan and the forestry programme.
30. Any future funding requirements that might emerge from the implementation of the Tree Management Strategy or measures to respond to the spread of ash dieback will require individual business cases to be developed and approved by the Director of Corporate Resources or by Members as appropriate.

Conclusions

31. Our trees make a valuable contribution to what makes Leicestershire a great place to live. As well as their aesthetic value, they provide enormous ecological and environmental benefits and make a huge contribution to the health and wellbeing of residents. The Tree Management Strategy enables the Council to preserve and develop its tree stock and to maximise the associated benefits.
32. The revised draft Strategy defines clear standards for the Authority to continue to manage its trees in accordance with relevant national guidelines.
33. The draft Strategy considers the key activities required to manage an extensive tree population effectively, aims to guide future planning and ensure that a consistent, high-quality approach is taken across the County.

Background papers

Tree Management Strategy 2020-2025

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2021/2/16/Tree-Management-Strategy-2020-2025.pdf>

Environment Strategy 2018 – 2030

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2018/7/19/LCC-Environment-Strategy-2018-2030-June-18.pdf>

Ash Dieback Action Plan

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2019/6/4/Ash-Dieback-Action-Plan.pdf>

Leicestershire Tree Charter

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2021/11/30/Leicestershire-tree-charter.pdf>

Report to Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee

November 2023 <https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/g7646/Public%20reports%20pack%20Monday%2011-Nov-2024%2014.00%20Environment%20and%20Climate%20Change%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny.pdf?T=10>

Value of Trees toolkit <https://www.adeptnet.org.uk/documents/value-trees-report>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

34. None.

Equality Implications

35. There are no equality implications arising from this report. Although any future change to the Council's policies, procedures, functions and services because of the Strategy or associated action plans will be the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment as appropriate.

Human Rights Implications

36. There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

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