

**CABINET – 21 JULY 2026****TREE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND
TRANSPORT****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's approval of the revised Tree Management Strategy, which sets out the approach for the management of the County Council's trees and woodlands.
2. The Tree Management Strategy 2026-2031 is attached as Appendix to this report.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
 - a) Approves the revised Tree Management Strategy 2026-2031;
 - b) Notes the comments of the Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
 - c) Authorises the Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member, to make minor, factual, operational or consequential amendments to the Strategy as considered necessary, provided that any material change to policy, service standards, resource implications or legal/risk implications will be subject of a further report where required.

(KEY DECISION)

Reasons for Recommendation

4. The County Council is responsible for managing trees on land within its ownership or control and, as local highway authority, for managing tree-related risks affecting the public highway. The Strategy sets out a reasonable, proportionate and risk-based approach to inspection, maintenance, prioritisation and record keeping.

5. The Tree Management Strategy sets out standards and procedures for the management of the tree resource under the stewardship of the County Council. It is intended to assist the Council in protecting trees and woodlands as a valuable natural asset to Leicestershire while complying with recognised industry guidance and relevant statutory duties, mitigate legal and financial risk, including claims arising from tree failure.
6. The Tree Management Strategy will provide a framework to support delivery of the Council's ambition to plant a million trees for Leicestershire by 2032.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

7. The Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report at its meeting on 11 November 2025 and its comments are set out in Part B of this report.
8. The Environment, Flooding and Climate Change and Waste Overview and Scrutiny Committee will continue to receive annual reports on progress with the Strategy and target for tree planting to ensure that it continues to align with the broader Environment Strategy.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

9. 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. The Tree Management Strategy establishes a clear vision for ensuring that Leicestershire County Council's trees and woodlands are appropriately managed and can provide multiple benefits that improve the quality of life for residents and communities.
10. The Tree Management Strategy accords with the Council's Environment Strategy 2018-2030. Set within this context, the underlying principle of the Tree Management Strategy is to ensure that the Authority's tree assets improve the quality of life for its local communities and ensures the Council meets its obligations under the Biodiversity Duty in relation to land that it owns and manages.
11. The previous revision of the Tree Management Strategy was approved by the Cabinet in March 2020 and covered the period of 2020 to 2025.

Resource Implications

12. There are no additional resource implications arising directly from the approval of the recommendations in this report.
13. 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 Growth, Environment and Transport, the Director of Corporate Resources or the Cabinet as appropriate.

14. Delivery of one million trees for Leicestershire will continue to be pursued through partnership working, the Council's tree nursery, external grant funding where available and existing budgets already allocated through the Medium Term Financial Strategy to support the response to Ash Dieback and the forestry maintenance programme.
15. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer have been consulted on this report.

Legal Implications

16. As owner/occupier of land containing trees and as local highway authority, the County Council must take a reasonable and proportionate approach to the inspection and management of trees, having regard to the level of risk, use of the site and recognised industry guidance. The Strategy assists the Council in evidencing a consistent risk-based approach to tree inspection, maintenance, recording and prioritisation.
17. Implementation of the Strategy will need to comply, where relevant, with statutory requirements, including the Highways Act 1980, the Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984, the Environment Act 2021 biodiversity duty and duty to consult before felling qualifying street trees, tree preservation order and conservation area controls under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, felling licence requirements under the Forestry Act 1967, protected species legislation and the Council's procurement and contract procedure rules.
18. The Strategy does not itself authorise any specific tree works, procurement, disposal, expenditure or operational decision. Any individual project or operation requiring statutory consent, consultation, procurement approval, landowner consent, additional funding or a separate member decision will need to be progressed through the appropriate process.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

19. A copy of this report will be circulated to all Members.

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PART B

Background

20. The County Council is responsible for managing an estimated 321,000 trees comprising of individual specimens, tree groups and woodlands, including over 400 hectares of woodland on County farms and Country Parks.
21. The County Council is responsible for managing its tree stock on County Council-owned or controlled land and, as Local Highway Authority, for managing tree-related risks affecting the public highway. This requires a reasonable and proportionate inspection programme and appropriate works to manage foreseeable risks to Council staff, visitors to Council premises and users of the public highway.
22. The County Council also has a wider responsibility to provide leadership in relation to climate resilience and to mitigate against the social, economic and environmental problems that are exacerbated by the changing climate. 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.
23. The first Council's Tree Management Strategy was produced in 2008 and later revised in 2013 and 2020. The current revision of the Strategy ensures that tree management practice and procedures continue to align with industry best practice, reflect changing local and national policies and legislation and to align work with the Authority's own strategic priorities.
24. The Strategy continues to recognise the amenity value of all Council trees, which is calculated using the Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) system. This system is the principal method used in the UK to assign a monetary value to amenity trees. It treats trees as public assets rather than liabilities, making it highly effective for calculating compensation for trees damaged or lost. CAVAT has been successfully used by the County Council in recouping the value of individual trees lost from development or in litigation cases and the policy section of the Strategy has been updated to reflect the continued use of CAVAT to value the Authority's tree assets.
25. 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.

26. The strategic aims of the Tree Management Strategy are to:
- a) Conserve and enhance the tree resource in terms of quality and numbers;
 - b) Promote public safety through appropriately resourced tree inspection and maintenance programmes;
 - c) Assist the Council in fulfilling its legal obligations as a tree owner by addressing safety and major nuisance issues effectively;
 - d) Inform customers of the Council's approach to tree-related legal obligations and manage enquiries and expectations appropriately;
 - e) 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;
 - f) Establish sustainable management programmes for Council woodland utilising external funding from Government agencies and other sources.
27. 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 assist officers and Members in meeting the Council's legal obligations and to provide leadership in maintaining biodiversity across its landholdings. 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.
28. The County Council will continue to increase its tree planting activities to meet the objectives of the Tree Management Strategy and the target for one million trees for Leicestershire.
29. 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 and to reflect the appropriate landscape character of the County.

Comments of the Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee

30. The Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the draft Tree Management Strategy on 11 November 2025.
31. Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- a) It was noted that the County Council continued to develop its tree nursery, and the first batch of trees from the nursery was expected to be ready for planting later in 2025. These would be used for replanting areas affected by Ash Dieback and for highway schemes.
- b) In response to a Member query on tree values, it was noted that the Council used a tree inventory system to track the ecological and amenity value of individual trees. It was highlighted that figures were updated regularly and full CAVAT assessments had been done for development or litigation cases.
- c) It was highlighted that a previous project funded by DEFRA supported orchards in schools, but a lack of funding had slowed the progress made. It was suggested that plans were in place to restart the scheme using nursery tree stock for schools and plans were being developed to encourage children's understanding of food production.
- d) A Member raised concerns about the inspection of trees on disused railway paths like Brampton Valley Way suggesting some areas needed additional attention. It was noted that this fell under the Country Parks portfolio and would be inspected in due course.
- e) The Lead Member for Environment and Flooding commented that as the tree planting season approached, the County Council would be giving away free trees and encouraged everyone to take up this opportunity to plant a tree as this supported biodiversity and helped with flood prevention.

Conclusion

- 32. Trees are part of 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.
- 33. Through clearly defined guidelines, the agreed Tree Management Strategy will enable the County Council to preserve, develop and increase its tree stock and maximise the associated natural capital benefits. The 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.
- 34. The Tree Management Strategy will provide the necessary framework

required to meet the challenge of planting one million trees for Leicestershire and the Council will continue to provide leadership across the County to deliver and encourage an increase in appropriate tree planting and tree management.

Equality Implications

35. There are no direct equality implications arising from approval of the Strategy. The equality implications of any future changes to the Council's policies, procedures, functions or services arising from the Strategy or associated action plans will be considered at the relevant time and, where required, will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

Human Rights Implications

36. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Any future operational decisions taken under the Strategy will need to be considered on their own facts and in accordance with the Council's usual decision-making process.

Background Papers

Report to Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 November 2025 and minutes of that meeting:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1351&MId=8330&Ver=4>

Tree Management Strategy 2020-2025:

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

Appendix

Tree Management Strategy 2026-2031