



**Author/Lead Officer of Report:** Lisa Firth, Head of Parks & Countryside

**Tel:** 27 34700

**Report of:** Executive Director Place

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of Decision:** December 12<sup>th</sup> 2018

**Subject:** The Sheffield Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2018-2033

Is this a Key Decision? If Yes, reason Key Decision:-	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
- Expenditure and/or savings over £500,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	
- Affects 2 or more Wards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Which Cabinet Member Portfolio does this relate to? Culture Parks and Leisure		
Which Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee does this relate to? Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee		
Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 213		
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-		
<i>"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."</i>		

**Purpose of Report:**

This report presents the new Trees and Woodlands Strategy for trees within Sheffield's greenspaces for the period 2018-2033. The city's street trees are to be dealt with in a separate strategy.

Sheffield's population is projected to increase to c652,000 by 2039: As Sheffield becomes more densely developed and as demand for housing increases, the competition for space will inevitably grow, and the city's woodlands will become an ever more valuable resource. There is a need to protect and manage the

established trees in the city, whilst continuing to increase planting and to increase visits to our woodlands, especially in parts of the city where the health benefits would be greatest.

The headline actions in the Trees and Woodland Strategy include;

- We will protect, enhance and promote Sheffield's trees and maximise their benefits in all parts of the city.
- We will increase visitor numbers and volunteering in woodlands that serve areas of Sheffield that have the lowest visitor numbers and the greatest health inequalities.
- We will plant at least 100,000 additional trees and replace trees on a 2 for 1 basis in our greenspaces and woodlands over the next 10 years.
- We will achieve at least one new Green Flag (national quality standard) woodland in the first 5 years of the strategy and bring all the council's woodlands up to the Sheffield Quality Standard within 10 years.

The Strategy highlights the overarching vision for Sheffield's trees and woodlands ;

*'Working to provide outstanding, resilient and sustainably managed trees and woodlands which are rich, diverse, healthy, attractive, and of maximum benefit to everyone in Sheffield.'*

The Strategy recognises the contribution that trees can make in promoting health and wellbeing, air quality and flood alleviation. It outlines how Sheffield residents can help to deliver the aims of the strategy by visiting Sheffield's woodlands and by getting involved and volunteering to help look after them.

It identifies 53 actions (including the headline actions above) which, when implemented over the life of the strategy, will help to protect and shape the landscape of Sheffield.

This report seeks Cabinet approval to the Sheffield Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2018-2033.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

**R1.** Notes the contents of the Sheffield Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2018-2033 (attached as an appendix to this report) and approves it as a statement of the Council's vision and aims.

**R2.** Approves the Strategy's Five Year Action Plan.

**R3.** Notes that the implementation of any of the proposed actions may be subject to further decision making in accordance with the Leader's Scheme of Delegation.

**Background Papers:****Appendix 1: Sheffield Trees and Woodland Strategy 2018-2033**

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: Janinne Scarborough
		Legal: Andrea Simpson
		Equalities: Annemarie Johnston
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	<b>EMT member who approved submission:</b>	<i>Laraine Manley</i>
3	<b>Cabinet Member consulted:</b>	<i>Cllr Mary Lea</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Decision Maker by the EMT member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> <i>Lisa Firth</i>	<b>Job Title:</b> <i>Director of Culture &amp; Environment</i>
	<b>Date:</b> 25.11.2018	

## 1. PROPOSAL

Sheffield has an estimated 4.5 million trees of which approximately 2.7 million are managed by Sheffield City Council.

This brand new data, developed using the i-Tree Eco survey, shows that Sheffield has approximately 105 trees per hectare which is significantly higher than the UK average of 58 trees per hectare in towns and cities.

Our 4.5 million trees provide canopy cover of 21.6% of the urban area of the city, far in excess of Manchester or Glasgow which have 15% canopy cover. Roughly speaking, this is equal to about 7 trees per person across Sheffield, compared to 1 tree per person in London.

Using this data, the new Trees and Woodlands Strategy highlights the environmental, health, community, educational and economic benefits of Sheffield's trees and woodlands.

This Strategy covers all trees and woodlands across Sheffield except the Council's 36,000 Highways trees. Its main focus is on the 2.7 million trees managed by the Council's Parks and Countryside Service. Highway trees will be further developed in a supplementary street tree strategy in 2019 with partners in the city which will be a 'sub strategy' of the Trees and Woodlands Strategy.

The aims of the Trees and Woodlands Strategy are supported by a number of actions, set out in a five year action plan at Appendix 5 to the Strategy.

The headline actions of the Strategy are;-

**We will protect, enhance and promote Sheffield's trees and maximise their benefits in all parts of the city**

The Council's commitment is to continue to develop a greater understanding of the value of the city's woodlands and associated ecosystems by building on the information provided by the recently completed i-Tree Eco survey. The strategy promises to protect, improve and promote this major natural asset for the city.

Sheffield trees and woodlands provide many benefits, including:

- Alleviating around 520,000m<sup>3</sup> of storm water, reducing stress on storm water drains and mitigating flood risk.
- Removing approximately 374 tonnes of pollution every year.
- A positive impact on mental health symptoms of stress and depression.
- All of our publicly owned woodland is open to the community

The Strategy commits to improving the quality of the city's woodlands so Sheffield residents can continue to realise the benefits that good quality tree coverage provide.

The Council will protect and enhance its woodlands to increase these benefits, especially in parts of the city where these benefits are currently realised to a lesser degree. We will also capitalise on our woodlands as a key asset in promoting the city's unrivalled credentials as a 'green city', alongside our Outdoor City Economic strategy.

**We will increase visitor numbers and volunteering in woodlands that serve areas of Sheffield that have the lowest visitor numbers and the greatest health inequalities.**

Woodlands and green spaces provide places for people to socialise, exercise, relax, connect with nature and to learn and explore. These benefits should be available to everyone in the city, but some areas have less access to woodlands or access to poorer quality woodland and so participation and visitor levels vary across the city.

To address low participation, visits and volunteering in some of our woodlands, the Council will introduce a number of measures including;

- Commit to greater consultation, discussion and volunteering work, in those areas where visitor numbers are currently low and health inequalities are high. This will be delivered via a combination of new tree planting, investment in quality, better promotion and new volunteering initiatives.
- Seeking and targeting additional resources – whereby the Council will seek new external funding specifically to support initiatives where woodland is of poor quality and where participation by the public is low. This will bring significant health and environmental benefits, but also high quality woodland will make areas more attractive to live, work and invest.
- Directing the Council's existing Parks & Countryside Public Health money to improve access and participation in woodlands serving our areas of greatest health inequality. This will start with the potential investment of £100,000 in the Shirebrook Valley, a local nature reserve serving the areas of Woodhouse and Hackenthorpe and the wider South East of the city. It is a site which offers great opportunity for people to get outdoors and to exercise through walking and cycling. However the

site has a small, outdated visitor centre which is in a poor state of repair and there are no other facilities at the site. Subject to final business planning, these improvements will enable the site to welcome new volunteers and school visits and become accessible to not only the local community, but to people from across Sheffield, as a place to meet and experience the health and wellbeing benefits of the natural habitat.

- Refocusing the Council's Ranger team to develop dedicated programmes in our areas of highest health inequalities. The Rangers will work with volunteers and partners and increase community involvement in local woodlands, thus helping to improve mental and physical wellbeing with the people of Sheffield who need it the most. This will give greater focus, consistency and continuity to the Council's existing work in these areas and will allow much stronger personal links to be established with local people and with agencies who can offer financial and non-financial support. Referred to below we aim to achieve another Green Flag for a site in the East or North East of the city and the work of the Ranger service will be key to this through targeted engagement with local groups.

- Make woodlands safer by reducing antisocial behaviour. The Council will reinforce its work with South Yorkshire Police on joint initiatives to reduce illegal motorcycling and off road activity and invest in new technology to combat and catch those who are fly tipping in our green spaces. We know that a perceived lack of safety in some of our woodlands is the first and major stumbling block to participation. We will do everything possible to eliminate the anti-social behaviour of a few which currently prohibits the participation of many.

**We will plant at least 100,000 additional trees and replace trees on a 2 for 1 basis in our greenspaces and woodlands over the next 10 years.**

We know that good quality tree coverage provides many benefits and so

the Council will plant more trees in our greenspace, at least 100,000 more in the next 10 years, which is the biggest commitment the Council has ever given to tree planting in our greenspaces. They will be planted across the whole city, but largely in the areas where tree coverage is lowest and the health benefits will be greatest.

As well as planting the trees, the strategy renews the Council's existing commitment to managing them sustainably, meaning the right species will be planted in the right places, in line with the principles of good forestry and arboriculture practice. To help achieve this, the Council will create new and strengthen existing partnerships to help deliver the new commitment to 100,000 extra trees. What's more, the choice of tree species will be designed to increase the resilience of the tree stock to disease outbreak and climate change.

Sometimes trees have to be removed because they are diseased or dying, or pose a health and safety risk to the public. In addition to planting 100,000 new trees, the Council promises to plant two trees for every one that has to be replaced in the city's green space or woodland. The new trees might not always be in the same place, but they will be in the right place that will make sure they can thrive and provide valuable habitats for numerous animals and plants and increase the biodiversity of the area.

**We will achieve at least one new Green Flag (national quality standard) woodland in the first 5 years of the strategy and bring all the Council's woodlands up to the Sheffield Quality Standard within 10 years**

Thirteen of the council's parks and woodlands have been awarded the prestigious Green Flag quality mark for parks and green spaces. This is the highest number of flags of any authority in the region.

This national award offers assurance to the public that the space is

accessible, boasts the highest possible environmental standards, is beautifully maintained and has excellent visitor facilities. Each site is assessed against eight strict criteria, including, cleanliness, health and safety, sustainability, heritage and community involvement.

Of the thirteen sites, ten are parks or gardens and only two are woodland areas: Ecclesall Woods and Wheata Woods. Despite the budget pressures faced by the council there is still a commitment to investment in our outdoor city to increase the number of woodlands that can achieve these high standards.

The strategy outlines the Council's commitment to gain at least one more Green Flag award in an area in the east or north east of the city that will realise major environmental health benefits to the local community. This could be Wincobank Woods or Shirebrook Valley. The additional resources needed to deliver this commitment will be sourced from the Parks & Countryside Public Health spend which is currently being invested in the areas of the city with greatest health inequality.

The strategy also outlines the Council's commitment to improve the quality of all woodlands by bringing them all up to the Sheffield Quality Standard within no more than 10 years. This is a local initiative which sets out the minimum quality standard based on key aspects of the Green Flag assessment and will ensure that all the spaces will be clean, safe and well signposted. We know that safety and cleanliness are the core expectations of visitors and so our commitment to the Sheffield Standard in our woodlands will play a major part in driving up participation, with the greatest gains to come in areas where current participation is low.

## **2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?**

The Strategy contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan 2015 -18

priority of thriving neighbourhoods and communities. It will ensure that people have access to high quality parks and open spaces. It also contributes to the priorities of better health and wellbeing and a strong economy.

The strategy has a direct influence on the delivery of the Outdoor City Economic Strategy. The implementation of the strategy will also play a role in mitigating climate change.

### **3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

Consultation has taken place with key partners and groups in a workshop held at the Woodland Discovery Centre at Ecclesall Woods.

Members of the public were consulted via a drop in session in the Town Hall and an online survey was carried out which received over 200 responses.

The majority of people responding to the online survey were from the South West of the city. Whilst this is encouraging we need to focus improvements and provision in areas of deprivation in particular more tree planting and access. We also need to ensure that more feedback is generated from deprived communities to reflect their needs.

The key findings of the consultation noted (of those who responded)

- 88% were satisfied with Sheffield's woodlands
- The majority of people used our woods on a weekly basis
- Ecclesall Woods was the most visited woodland
- Walking, enjoying the trees, fresh air, exercise and relaxation were the reason for most visits to our woodlands.

The findings have been fed into the Strategy and influenced the aims.

We will therefore make a commitment to tree planting, improvement to access, addressing abuses in our woodland and refocussing the work of rangers to areas of deprivation to support friends groups in sites like Wincobank Wood .

#### **4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

##### 4.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications

Overall there are no significant differential, positive or negative, equality impacts from this proposal. The Strategy should have a positive impact on the people of Sheffield by providing access to nature, woodlands and trees across the whole city and providing opportunities for recreation.

##### 4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

There are no immediate direct financial or commercial implications arising from the Strategy. Any costs incurred with the strategy are being met by the general fund and existing revenue budgets, contracts or grant funding.

The implementation of any of the actions set out in the Action Plan, or any potential opportunities for generating income identified within the Strategy, may be subject to further decision making in accordance with the Leader's Scheme of Delegation, and the financial and commercial implications will be considered fully at that time.

##### 4.3 Legal Implications

There is no legal requirement for the Council to have a Trees and Woodlands Strategy but to do so enables the Council to plan strategically in respect of its legal powers and duties. The Council's management of its trees, woodlands and countryside is governed by a number of statutory provisions which are listed with a description of their effect at Appendix 1 to the Strategy. They include:

- National Parks and Countryside Act 1949
- Forestry Act 1967

- Countryside Act 1968
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
- Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c) Regulations 1994

The implementation of any of the actions set out in the Action Plan, or any potential opportunities for generating income identified within the Strategy, may be subject to further decision making in accordance with the Leader's Scheme of Delegation, and the legal implications will be considered fully at that time.

#### 4.4 Other Implications

A Health Impact Assessment has been completed indicating that the Strategy will have a mainly positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents.

## **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

The only alternative option is to not have a Trees & Woodlands Strategy. This will not allow the Council to plan for the future and prioritise work and resource allocation in maintaining Sheffield's trees and woodlands.

## **6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

Sheffield is known as one of the greenest cities in Britain with one of the highest numbers of urban trees. Of the 2.7 million trees managed by Sheffield City Council, a large proportion is to be found in our ancient woodlands or upland forests on the edge of the city. These areas attract over 25 million visits each year, we are proud of our rich variety of urban parks, woodland, countryside and green spaces.

This Strategy complements Sheffield's Outdoor City Economic Strategy demonstrating that our trees and woodlands provide outstanding opportunities for health and relaxation. However there is still a lot to be done to address health inequalities across the city and this Strategy will ensure that access to good quality woodlands is improved for the people of the city who need it the most.

By working together we can maintain and protect Sheffield's valuable tree resource, ensuring the realisation of the wide range of benefits that trees and woodlands can offer, not just for today's citizens but for generations to come.

Appendix 1- Sheffield Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2018-2033

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