

Leicester Tree Strategy Review 2022/23



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Trees bring enormous environmental and ecological benefits to our city.

They enhance our streets and grace our parks, making a huge contribution to our health and wellbeing.

This five-year strategy will guide us in sustaining and increasing our tree stock and help us improve the quality of the city's trees.

It will also help promote the important role trees can play in maintaining a high-quality city environment, reducing air pollution and contributing to flood risk management.


Sir Peter Soulsby
CITY MAYOR


Cllr Adam Clarke
DEPUTY CITY MAYOR FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Our Aims

The city council will:

- Ensure that the current level of tree canopy and tree numbers under the city council's control are extended and the quality improved.
- Ensure trees under the council's control are managed with the intention of resolving conflicts and problems in a rational, consistent and economic way - listening to the different views, taking them into account but ultimately taking responsibility for, sometimes difficult, decisions.
- Encourage other landowners to plant and manage their trees through advice, guidance and where necessary, the use of tree protection legislation.

It will also:

- Compensate adequately for the loss of significant trees in the landscape by planting more than one replacement - wherever practical at, or near, the location of the removed trees.
- Ensure that public realm infrastructure schemes that involve tree removal or tree planting will incorporate quality planting and design and that designers and lead agents liaise with the council at appropriate stages of planning, design and implementation.

Review:

- The delivery of the aims of the Tree Strategy is via five key strategic objectives, with a series of identified actions. The strategy will be judged against these actions.

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Trees & Woodlands Portfolio Key Facts

Management of tree stock of 178k registered trees including 112 hectares of woodland.

10,580 small trees and 412 large trees planted. 714 trees felled as part of stock management, ash dieback & storms. That's 15 trees planted for every tree felled.

100% of by-product waste recycled, combination of biofuel woodchip material, logs & mulch, at 900 tonnes, saving an estimated £95k in landfill costs plus transport costs.

Leicester City Council's Ash Dieback Action Plan & online information page is now live, it will be used to manage the risks associated with this disease over the next 10 years.

534 Tree Preservation Orders & 25 Conservation Areas in place offering a level of amenity tree protection.

Successful completion of phase 2 Western Park project. 40 diseased trees felled, and 80 heavy stock trees planted. This project has now been completed.

In-house team comprising of an establishment of 35 staff, as appendix 1. Annual revenue budget of £1.4m.

Four of the city's parks now have online tree trails that will encourage people to find out more about our magnificent trees. At Abbey Park, CHCP, Humberstone & Western Park.

In partnership with The Tree Council, we now have 28 volunteer tree wardens, 6 of these wardens joined us this year.

Planting schemes in partnership with Earthwatch & the Woodland Trust, such as Saving Saffron Brook project has resulted in over 9,500 new trees being planted in the city.

159 planning consultations undertaken relating to Tree Preservation Order applications and notifications of trees in conservation areas.

LCC was recognised as a Queen's Green Canopy Champion City. A silver birch tree from the Tree of Trees sculpture was presented to the Lord Mayor and was planted at Abbey Park.

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Lord-Lieutenant of Leicester, Mike Kapur OBE (right) presenting the late Queens Tree of Trees silver pot to Lord Mayor of Leicester, Cllr George Cole (left)



Ash dieback tree works, Anstey Lane/Gorse Hill



Mature Beech tree inspection with PICUS Tomograph, Abbey Park. Results show tree has advanced fungal decay

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New trees at Beaumont Park depot ready for planting



Avenue of Limes at Victoria Park

Ref	Strategic objective	Delivered by	Measured by	Lead responsibility	Current position
1	Promoting amenity	Monitor the health of the council's trees.	Inspection and survey programme.	T&W	<p>Schools, Highway, Housing and Parks tree stock inspections undertaken to identify works required to manage the health of the tree stock.</p> <p>2022/23 - 285 surveys completed</p> <p>This equates to 22% of all LCC sites with trees were surveyed (total 1,290 sites). Sites include 208 parks, 185 housing transects, 645 highway transects etc.</p>
			Continue to expand the council's tree stock.	T&W	<p>Replacement planting of large trees has been undertaken in the highway, housing areas and parks & open spaces, along with new developments.</p> <p>2022/23 - 412 large trees were planted</p> <p>Examples: 80 Western Park 29 Saffron Lane 18 St George Street</p>
			Engage a team of volunteer Tree Wardens.	LEV	In partnership with The Tree Council LCC now has a dedicated team of 28 Tree Wardens registered as a constituted group, trained to assess, and report issues and assist in tree planting and establishment, e.g., early identification of Ash Die Back etc.

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2	Promoting amenity (cont)	Maintain trees with the aim of reducing nuisance, hazard and complaint	Level of complaints.	T&W	Formal complaints received: 2022/23 – No formal complaints received.
			Tree inspection programme to identify and eliminate potential risk. Maintain inventory register for each tree on Ezytreev database.	T&W	Visual tree inspection regime as ref 1 above: Sites inspection frequency 3 – 7 years based on potential risk depending on location: This identifies the condition and health of the tree stock and any impact the whole tree might provide in terms of nuisance, hazard and complaint, typical examples being, obstruction of highway/streetlamp, removal of deadwood, tree disease and potential tree failure, etc.
			Aim for larger proportion of available budget to be targeted on proactive & selective maintenance, rather than reactive emergency works.	T&W	Annual programme of works identified following site surveys with the aim to manage the stock in a safe and healthy condition and reduce the reliance on emergency reaction works. 2022/23 Reactive spend £174k (28%) Proactive spend £444k (72%)

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3	Promoting amenity (cont)	Use a variety of species and cultivars.	Planting plans	T&W	<p>Tree species are chosen to meet the suitability to location being planted using a range of native trees but also recognising that non-native trees have a place in the landscape.</p> <p>e.g., Western Park used predominantly native tree stock, but non-native species were also planted where the location warranted this.</p>
			Promote the wide selection of species and cultivars used at key parks	P&OS	Four tree trails are now in place which can be downloaded or used as an App. They showcase and promote some of the city's magnificent tree species. The trails can be used at Abbey Park, Castle Hill Country Park, Humberstone Park & Western Park. Further Park tree trails will be added in 2023.
4	Promoting amenity (cont)	Reduce problems that can be associated with the presence of trees when making decisions about planting design and the positioning of trees in the landscape.	Right tree right place	T&W/ Planning	Early engagement between planning team and developer as part of the design process, to build in retained tree protection and new tree stock which provides appropriate amenity suitable for the location.
5	Promoting amenity (cont)	Purchase planting stock of good quality and prepare an underground environment that is conducive to good tree growth.	Procurement policy to ensure quality and scope of species.	T&W	Tender being developed for procurement to establish a framework contract for the supply of a range of species and cultivars to meet the needs of the council.

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			Successful establishment of large tree stock. Planted previous planting season.	T&W	Preparation of tree pits with appropriate soil conditioner, drainage, and irrigation system to ensure successful establishment. 2022/23 – 96% establishment rate Any establishment failures are replanted within the following planting season. Higher losses than normally expected occurred due to exceptional spring & summer drought conditions.
			Successful establishment of small tree stock (whips) Planted previous planting season.	LEV/P&OS	Preparation of planting site, correct planting technique for size of tree and use of appropriate shelters/tubes. 2022/23 – 72% establishment rate Establishment failures are replanted within the following planting season. Higher losses than normally expected occurred due to exceptional spring & summer drought conditions.

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6	Promoting habitat and wildlife	Encourage the planting and management of woodland and groups of trees.	Identify sites with scope for planting of woodland groups and seek funding to support projects.	P&OS	<p>Climate Woods group with representatives from a range of services meet several times a year, scoping opportunities for mass tree planting and utilising suitable schemes. Successful projects in 2022/23 include:</p> <p>Tiny Forest, in partnership with Earthwatch, 600 trees planted in a space the size of a tennis court, 7,200 small trees planted at 12 schools.</p> <p>Saving Saffron Brook scheme in partnership with the Woodland Trust planted 2,480 small trees.</p>
7	Promoting habitat and wildlife (cont)	Where it is compatible with amenity, seek to retain old tree stock, including trees in decline and manage them in a way that promotes their value to wildlife.	Number of trees identified and surveyed.	Nature Conservation/ T&W	<p>There are 177 mature trees which meet the Local Wildlife Site criteria for designation due to the size (girth) generally being over 3.77m and containing features likely to be of value for wildlife such as cracks, fissures, and crevices.</p> <p>Where practicable large standing dead trunks (habitat poles) are retained to support wildlife, as they are valuable eco systems.</p> <p>The Saving the Saffron Brook project undertaken to improve the condition of the woodland Local Wildlife Sites, improving structural diversity via selective thinning and coppicing works, along with woodland creation and tree species enrichment within Knighton Spinney and Washbrook Local Nature Reserves (LNR's).</p>

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8	Promoting habitat and wildlife (cont)	Favour native trees over exotics when specifying, planning and implementing new planting.	Species type and quantities	T&W/Planning	<p>Examples of schemes utilising British native tree stock, including oak, silver birch, hornbeam, field maple, cherry & hawthorn.</p> <p>Western Park project planting. Tiny Forest planting at 12 schools.</p> <p>Saving Saffron Brook project within Knighton Spinney and Washbrook Local Nature Reserves (LNR's).</p>
9	Promoting habitat and wildlife (cont)	Protect and conserve protected or rare species through appropriate compensation when loss cannot be avoided.	Staff training. Biodiversity action plan	T&W/Nature Conservation	<p>Tree inspection prior to felling to determine presence of protected bat species, team are LANTRA trained to undertake bat inspections and utilise specialist equipment, such as the endoscope investigations.</p> <p>Trees & Woodlands team work closely with the Nature Conservation team to ensure Biodiversity Action Plan is adhered to and the presence of protected species checks have been undertaken e.g., to protect nesting birds, bats, badgers, and newts etc.</p> <p>Where protected species habitats are removed due to essential works, such as ash dieback fells, mitigation works will be implemented to limit the impact e.g., installation of bat boxes in remaining trees.</p>

Ref	Strategic objective	Delivered by	Measured by	Lead responsibility	Current position
10	Responding to global obligations	Respond appropriately and proportionately to the threat of pests and disease epidemics.	Monitor the impact of Ash Dieback.	T&W	<p>Ash dieback disease is already having a significant impact on the tree stock in the city. Nationally the disease has been under reported and public awareness is still low. It is now clear that this tree epidemic will have a significant impact on ash tree deaths within the city (estimated at 80% – 90%).</p> <p>2021/22 10 infected ash trees felled. 2022/23 265 infected ash trees felled.</p> <p>As the disease takes hold these numbers will rise significantly over the coming years.</p> <p>The council's Ash Dieback Action Plan is now in place. There is also a dedicated information page on the council's web site. These give details on the disease, ash trees in the city and management information. Ash dieback (leicester.gov.uk)</p>
			Through tree surveys identify concerns on tree stock health and condition and review each site for potential pathogens.	T&W	<p>Western Park phase 1 & 2 project works were completed in February 2023. This was to fell trees infected with Phytophthora and Needle Blight.</p> <p>A comprehensive replacement planting programme was undertaken.</p>

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11	Responding to global obligations (cont.)	Recycle the materials that arise from the management of trees, including the use of woodchip as a carbon-neutral fuel & mulch, as weed suppressant at council sites.	Volume of material diverted from landfill and recycled.	T&W	<p>By diverting by-product waste from landfill, costs of approximately £950k per annum have been avoided on landfill costs and transporting costs. Woodchip is recycled for biofuel.</p> <p>Woodchip is also used as a mulch for weed suppression at council sites.</p> <p>Recycled by tonnage/total sale value/percentage recycled</p> <p>2022/23 – 900t / 100%</p>
12	Managing the pressure on trees in others' ownership	Seek to preserve amenity afforded by trees when considering our response to tree work applications made under planning controls.	Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) review & revoke	Planning/T&W	<p>LCC has 534 Tree Preservation Orders in place offering a level of amenity protection.</p> <p>2022/23 works have been progressing on programs & procedures to revoke & renew TPO's as an ongoing project. It is expected that the revocation of outdated TPO's will start in 2023/24.</p>
			Revise policy to support tree preservation.	Planning	Pine Tree Avenue, tree preservation strategy in place. In planning terms, the document represents Informal Guidance. It promotes the trees as a "material consideration" when planning or assessing works that might affect their retention.

Ref	Strategic objective	Delivered by	Measured by	Lead responsibility	Current position
13	Managing the pressure on trees in others' ownership (cont.)	When assessing planning applications, take into account the effect on trees and protect them where the balance of factors favours preservation, and/or conditions	Consider all planning applications within timeframe.	Planning/T&W	2022/23 – 215 (all within timeframe)
14	Managing the pressure on trees in others' ownership (cont.)	Where landscaping that includes tree planting is made a condition of planning consent, incorporate quality design and specification.	Process to ensure conditions issued provide suitable design outputs.	Planning	All Planning consents issued seek to secure the standard and specification as requested by Trees and Woodlands officers. Where this cannot be negotiated the reasons are reported and recorded in the Decision Report.
15	Managing the pressure on trees in others' ownership (cont.)	Work directly with landowners and developers to support them with the management, inclusion and retention of trees affected by the planning process.	Number of planning consultations undertaken.	Planning	<p>Planning consultations undertaken relating to TPO applications and notifications of trees in conservation areas.</p> <p>2022/23 – 159 (all within timeframe)</p> <p>T&W offer British Standard 5837 surveys required to ensure all trees are considered as a material consideration for all planning applications, e.g., Great Central Way & Forest Road Education Centre.</p> <p>Planning, Development and Transportation & Urban Design work with each developer as part of the design process to ensure that existing landscape features can be retained, preserved, and enhanced with new design features.</p>

Ref	Strategic objective	Delivered by	Measured by	Lead responsibility	Current position
16	Managing the pressure on trees in others' ownership (cont.)	Provide a 24/7 call out service ensuring a response to tree emergencies at any time.	100% of emergencies responded to within two-hour response	T&W	Responding to a range of situations, e.g., tree failure, road traffic accident. storms etc. 2022/23 295 total emergencies responded to 25 out of hours
17	Managing the pressure on trees in others' ownership (cont.)	Respond within 24 hours to reports of other contraventions, actionable nuisance and hazards and deal with these quickly and proportionately - making appropriate resources available.	Number of contraventions responded to within timeframe.	Planning	2022/23 – 11 tree related claims received, and site visits undertaken. 73% undertaken within 24 hours.
18	Managing the pressure on tree in others' ownership (cont.)	Be bound by the relevant planning practice guidance when managing protected tree regulations.	Consider planning enforcement action as required.	Planning	2022/23 - 8 cases with no breaches. 2 still under investigation. No action agreed in 1 case.
19	Delivering this strategy	Adequate financial resources from council budgets and income generation.	Annual review of budget allocation and income forecast.	P&OS	Revenue budget: £1,264,100 Salaries £163,400 Running costs £777,000 Income £650,500 Net All vehicle and plant expenditure budget held centrally by Fleet; annual budget £226K. T&W team had a £500k capital budget for the sanitisation works at Western Park and the treatment of Ash Die Back during 2021/22 and 2022/23.

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20	Delivering this strategy (cont)	Appropriately qualified, skilled, motivated and experienced staff	Certificates of competence and CPD for all staff.	T&W	<p>100% of operative's have achieved the required certificate of competence for the range of tasks undertaken.</p> <p>2022/23 – 140 refresher & technical training undertaken.</p> <p>The majority of operative training is a legal requirement as nearly every function requires certification, leading to some operatives holding as many as 50 certificates, many of which require regular refreshment, e.g., climbing at height, use of chain saw, pesticides use etc.</p> <p>All staff training and competency is reviewed as part of the quality conversations.</p>
21	Delivering this strategy (cont)	The organisation, systems, depots, facilities and good quality equipment that our staff need.	Infrastructure in place to support T&W team in service delivery.	T&W	<p>Health and safety audit identified pressures on Beaumont Park Depot capacity, identified opportunities to relocate part of service to reduce pressure on available space.</p> <p>Capital funds secured for purchase of tracked 23m platform, estimated delivery August/September 2023. Essential for ash dieback works.</p> <p>Ongoing replacement programme of chippers and chainsaw equipment.</p> <p>Ezytreev software system in place to manage council's tree stock.</p>

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22	Delivering this strategy (cont.)	Support from all appropriate sections of the council.	Awareness and understanding of the Tree Strategy within departments and with core clients.	Marketing & Comms	<p>Tree Strategy marketed with clients and council divisions, including Members.</p> <p>The document will be available on the LCC website.</p> <p>Directing officers to online documents and reiterating policy on replacement planting and tree policy management guide.</p>

Trees & Woodlands Team Structure

