

LEICESTER
tree strategy
2025 – 2030



City Mayor

Executive Summary

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.

Leicester City Council's first Tree Strategy was launched in November 2018 with a 5-year plan to guide us in sustaining and increasing our tree stock and help us improve the quality of the city's trees.

The strategy helps to promote the important role trees can play in maintaining a high-quality city environment, reducing air pollution, and contributing to flood risk management.

The involvement of the community with engagement and participation in all aspects of tree issues and projects is a key aim to celebrate the benefits of trees within the community.

Following on from the success of the first strategy this revised strategy will also be a 5-year plan running from 2025 to 2030.

I am very proud to be the executive lead for the wonderful trees within our city and I hope that you take the time to visit some of our beautiful parks and gardens and joins us in the community events that take place throughout the year.

Cllr Vi Dempster

Assistant City Mayor – Culture, Libraries & Community Centres

Gallery



City Mayor attending the replanting of the Peace Trees at Victoria Park on 14th February 2024. The event was organised by members of CND & the Peace Group



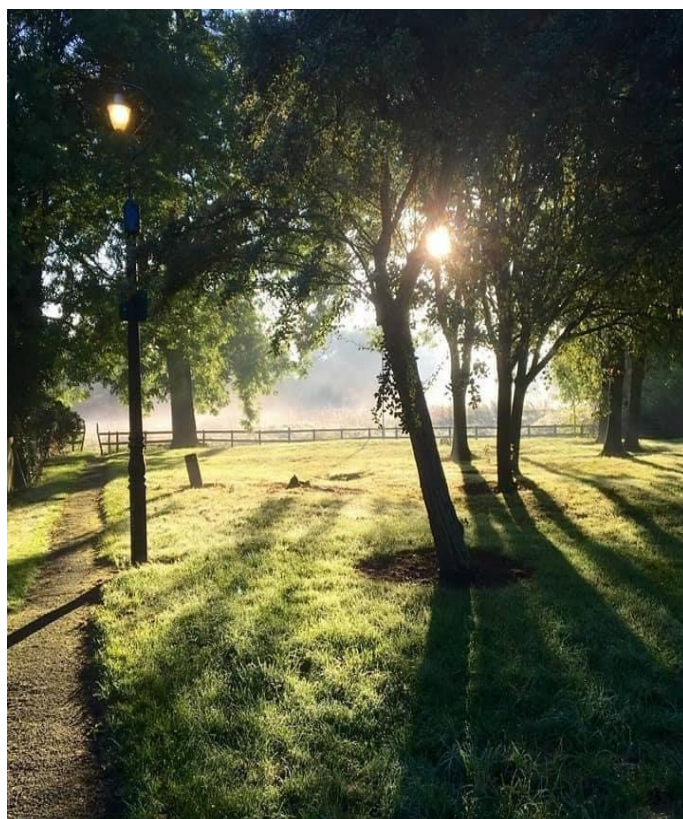
Aylestone Playing Fields, new woodland planted by Leicester Environmental Volunteers, February 2024



To access the council's tree trails, scan the QR codes on the park information signs or download from the council's web pages



New Walk, Leicester's Monster Eyes trail event held in October & November 2023



Cressida Place with morning sunshine coming through the trees



Newly planted Cherry trees at Western Park



Ash dieback tree works at Highway Spinney

Introduction

Following years of significant and sustained investment by the city council, over 16% of Leicester's 28 square miles is now covered with trees. Since the 1980s, the council has been responsible for the planting of more than 97,000 trees.

During the 5-years of the first tree strategy between 2018 – 2023 over 38,000 new trees were planted.

As a result, the city's woodland has more than doubled in size — from around 40 hectares to 113 hectares (or over one million square metres) today.

From schemes like the award-winning Ellis Meadows, where more than 600 trees have been planted, to the now well-established woodlands in Castle Hill Country Park, we have taken direct action to increase the city's tree canopy, improve its biodiversity and create some wonderful outdoor spaces.

At Watermead Country Park, on derelict gravel pits, thousands of trees have been planted and a cluster of lakes has been created. On Aylestone Meadows an open waste tip has been transformed into woodland and a network of footpaths created.

New wooded areas have been created in many of our parks, including Aylestone Meadows, Aylestone Playing Fields, Knighton Park, Monks Rest Gardens and Western Park. These new trees were the result of successful applications to government planting schemes, such as the Local Authority Treescapes Fund and Urban Tree Challenge Fund.

Smaller schemes have had an impact too. The city now has community orchards within many of its parks, with more recent additions at Western Park, Evington Park, St Marys and the Washbrook Nature area. There has also been the creation of over 25 Tiny Forests, a scheme run by Earth Watch where 600 trees are planted within the size of a tennis court, these tiny forests are located at various schools and public open spaces.

In an urban environment like our city, trees are an important natural resource — but it's a resource that must be actively managed. As new trees are planted, others may need to be pruned or sometimes removed.

Tree Management

Managing such a large stock of predominately mature trees will inevitably lead to difficult management decisions. The changing climate is affecting the health of our trees with increased droughts, flooding, storms, pests and pathogens, milder winters, and changes in seasonal timings. This is having a significant impact on the city's trees.

The effects from ash dieback are now clearly visible, this disease will have a devastating impact on the ash trees within the city, which make up 15% of all council trees. It is the most significant disease to affect the UK since Dutch Elm disease. It is estimated that we will eventually lose around 80% of all our ash trees, as there is no cure once a tree is infected.
[Ash dieback \(leicester.gov.uk\)](https://www.leicester.gov.uk/ash-dieback/)

At Western Park major tree works were recently undertaken as a direct result of these pests and pathogens which had made many of the trees unsafe. Over two seasons 100 dangerous trees were removed. A comprehensive tree replacement scheme was carried out with over 200 new trees planted within the park.

All council trees are managed within cyclical cycles, and we will always aim to manage our trees in a way that removes the conflict and hazard its trees can cause. Though this must be undertaken within the bounds of the council's available resources.

We recognise that in owning a large stock of trees they are likely to cause some level of inconvenience to some individuals at certain times, and complaints will be inevitable when certain requests for tree works are declined. On balance it takes the view that in some circumstances this can be acceptable given the benefits trees impart to the wider community and given the council's broader policy objectives.

Further details explaining tree issues can be found within our Tree Policy, section 4.4 resolving conflict and problems and priority management guides part 1 & part 2. ([add in link to policy](#))

The city council's aim of planting more than one replacement for any significant tree that is felled ensures that our total tree stock is maintained — and means that future generations will be able to enjoy the sight of mature trees in our city too.

Protecting the trees and areas of woodland that enhance our environment is an important responsibility, and the council has more than 500 Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) in place that cover many thousands of trees in private ownership. These TPOs provide protection for important trees, as well as for large areas of woodland.

From saplings to ancient oaks, the 189,600 trees in the council's ownership are expertly maintained by our highly skilled workforce, who prune, tend, and nurture the trees on our streets, in our parks and in our woodlands.

With the expertise of our arboricultural team Leicester City Council was one of the first cities to be awarded 'Queens Green Canopy, Champion City' which recognises cities that dedicate themselves to green initiatives, having trees and woodlands as a central part of its plans. The council is also a proud signatory of the Woodland Trust's Tree Charter.

Maintaining Leicester's tree stock is a huge responsibility and every year the city council spends around £2million planting, protecting and managing trees in our city. That investment is our commitment to ensuring that our tree stock is sustained, maintained and replenished for present — and future — generations to enjoy.

Ash Dieback

The early signs of infection started to be found within the city’s tree stock in 2020. In 2021 when it was clear that infection levels were rising significantly it was decided that a plan was required to establish the course of action that the council would need to take to manage the disease. The council’s Ash Dieback Action Plan was adopted in January 2023, followed by an information page on the disease going live on the council’s website in March 2023. [Ash dieback \(leicester.gov.uk\)](https://leicester.gov.uk/ash-dieback/)

The management of ash trees within the council’s ownership is a long-term plan, as the progress of the disease is affected by many factors. It is estimated that management works to remove infected trees that are a public danger will be ongoing for an estimated 10 years.

The loss of so many trees will require a comprehensive replanting scheme. In wooded areas we will manage the site to encourage natural regeneration from other tree species. We will also utilise the available government led schemes which can be used to restock larger areas with new planting. The council has already been successful in utilising schemes such as the Local Authority Treescape Fund within the city. The replacement planting of stand-alone ash trees, with new species suitable for their location, will be undertaken when available resources allow.

Aims and Objectives

Leicester's tree strategy

Our strategy builds on existing tree policy, and draws particularly from the Air Quality Action Plan, Biodiversity Action Plan, Green Infrastructure Strategy, Sustainability Action Plan and Climate Ready Leicester. It is complemented by a supporting strategy document and Tree Policy.

The strategy will help to ensure that Leicester's 'urban forest' will continue to be a major asset for generations to come.

OUR AIMS

The city council will:

- Ensure community engagement and participation to celebrate the benefits of trees in the community, with information and events to help further the knowledge, education and enjoyment of our valuable trees.
- 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 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.
- Compensate adequately for the loss of significant trees in the landscape by planting more than one replacement - wherever practical.
- 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.

PROMOTING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The city council will:

- Work in partnership with the Woodland Trust to support best practice.
- Support volunteer Tree Wardens, providing training, advice and guidance to enable individuals to provide a supporting role to officers.
- Develop a range of tree trails across the city's parks, as a fun and educational tool for all ages.
- Encourage volunteers via the Leicester Environmental Volunteer scheme to participate in the maintenance and management of our tree stock, including tree planting and the vegetation management of mass tree planting sites.
- Work with partners to develop and expand our community orchards.
- Work with schools and colleges to develop and maintain a network of 'Tiny Forest's' with a social science programme to provide a variety of ecosystems that offer both environmental and social benefits.
- Promote the Celebration Tree programme, giving people the opportunity of alternative memorial and burial of cremated remains along with marking anniversaries, birthday's and significant events.
- Provide comms and marketing on key projects, tree losses and disease impacts to ensure service users and the wider community understand the reason for works being undertaken.
- Consult the public before felling a tree or trees on Highways (unless the work is exempt under section 96A of Highway Act & section 115 Environment Act).

PROMOTING AMENITY

The city council will:

- Monitor the health of the council's trees.
- Maintain trees with the aim of reducing nuisance, hazard and complaint.
- Use a variety of species and cultivars.
- 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
- Purchase planting stock of good quality and prepare an underground environment that is conducive to good tree growth.

PROMOTING HABITAT AND WILDLIFE

The city council will:

- Encourage the planting and management of woodland and groups of trees.
- Where it is compatible with amenity and health and safety, seek to retain old tree stock, including trees in decline, and manage them in a way that promotes their value to wildlife.
- Favour native trees over exotics when specifying, planning and implementing new planting.
- Protect and conserve protected or rare species through appropriate compensation when loss cannot be avoided.

RESPONDING TO GLOBAL OBLIGATIONS

As the city council increases the city's overall canopy cover, it will:

- Respond appropriately and proportionately to the threat of pest and disease epidemics.
- Recycle the materials that arise from the management of trees.

MANAGING THE PRESSURE ON TREES IN OTHERS' OWNERSHIP

The city council will:

- Seek to preserve amenity afforded by trees when considering our response to tree work applications made under planning controls.
- When assessing planning applications, take into account the effect on trees and protect them where the balance of factors favours preservation.
- Where landscaping that includes tree planting is made a condition of planning consent, incorporate quality design and specification.
- Work directly with landowners and developers to support them with the management, inclusion and retention of trees affected by the planning process.
- Provide a 24/7 call-out service ensuring a response to tree emergencies at any time. Dealing with these quickly and proportionately - making appropriate resources available.
- Respond within 24 hours to reports of contraventions to protected trees and taking appropriate action.
- Be bound by the relevant planning practice guidance when managing protected tree regulation.

DELIVERING THIS STRATEGY

The city council will ensure that it makes available:

- Adequate financial resources from council budgets and income generation.
- Appropriately qualified, skilled, motivated and experienced staff.
- The organisation, systems, depots, facilities and good quality equipment that our staff need.
- Support from all appropriate sections of the council.

MONITORING AND REVIEWING THIS STRATEGY

The city council will:

- Annual report will be published on the council's website.