Cabinet

SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Tuesday, 14 May 2024 at 2.00 pm
Council Chamber - South Kesteven House, St. Peter's Hill, Grantham. NG31 6PZ

Cabinet Members:
Councillor Ashley Baxter, Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor Richard Cleaver, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Rhys Baker, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste
Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning
Councillor Philip Knowles, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing
Councillor Rhea Rayside, Cabinet Member for People and Communities
Councillor Paul Stokes, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture

Agenda

This meeting can be watched as a live stream, or at a later date, via the SKDC Public-I Channel

1. **Apologies for absence**

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting** (Pages 3 - 11)
   Minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2024.

3. **Disclosure of Interests**

Items for Cabinet Decision: Key

Items for Cabinet Decision - Non Key

Items for information

Minutes

Cabinet
Tuesday, 16 April 2024

Date of Publication: 22 April 2024
Call-in will end on 29 April, and decisions can be implemented on 30 April (provided no call-in)

SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Leader: Councillor Ashley Baxter, Leader of the Council (Chairman)
The Deputy Leader: Councillor Richard Cleaver, Deputy Leader of the Council (Vice-Chairman)

Cabinet Members present

Councillor Rhys Baker, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste (jobshare)
Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning
Councillor Paul Stokes, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture

Non-Cabinet Members present

Councillor Matt Bailey
Councillor Phil Gadd
Councillor Ian Selby

Officers
Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Paul Sutton, Assistant Director of Finance/Deputy Section 151 Officer
Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and Monitoring Officer
Emma Whittaker, Assistant Director of Planning
Nick Hibberd, Head of Economic Development and Inward Investment
Chris Prime, Communications Manager
Gyles Teasdale, Property Services Manager
James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Patrick Astill, Communications Officer

104.   Apologies for absence

There were apologies for absence from:

Councillor Patsy Ellis
Councillor Philip Knowles

Councillor Rhea Rayside

105. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 March 2024 were approved as a correct record.

The Leader of the Council then made a short statement commenting on a question received at the previous meeting of Cabinet on 12 March 2024 from Councillor Max Sawyer (the Leader's response to Cllr Sawyer's question is appended to these minutes).

106. Disclosure of Interests

There were no disclosures of interests.

The Leader of the Council welcomed Paul Sutton, who had recently been engaged as the Interim Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer.

107. Electricity Fixed Price Contract

Purpose of report

To seek approval to enter into a contract for the supply of electricity for Council operated assets.

Decision

That Cabinet approves up to a four-year contract to Total Energies Gas and Power Ltd incorporating a fixed 12 month tariff utilising the ESPO Framework for the supply of electricity commencing on 30th September 2024.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The report confirmed that alternative frameworks had been considered but none offered the Council the most economically advantageous solution that met the Council's requirements. Council could have chosen not to enter into a 12 month contract but this would have left the Council financially exposed to price uncertainty during the period.

Reasons for decision

The Framework consisted of a single supplier (Total Energies) with a proven and successful track record of delivering electricity, for various public sector organisations including South Kesteven District Council (SKDC).

As well as the supply of electricity, this framework provided a number of key features including:
• Automated Meter Reading (AMR);

• New meter connection, changes to existing connections/disconnections and upgrades; and;
• A dedicated account manager for ESPO Customers.

Additionally, ESPO also provided comprehensive support encompassing:
• Account management;
• Supply point administration;
• Portfolio management
• Price validation
• General queries and advice related to the contract and supply and market intelligence.

The framework was based on fully transparent pricing, with the supplier margin fixed for the full duration of the framework. Individual customer rates would however change based on changes to 'Regulated Charges' and the 'Wholesale commodity price', typically on an annual basis from 1 October. Customers were notified in advance of any price changes.

As the price of energy was extremely volatile, ESPO had adopted a flexible, aggregated risk management approach to energy procurement. The two 'Price Risk Strategies' currently used by ESPO under the flexible procurement option were:

- Pricing in Advance (PIA) – in which 100% of the total forecast volume requirement was purchased before commencement of the supply period for electricity (October to the following September).
- Pricing within Period (PWP) – in which an agreed portion of the total forecast volume requirement for the supply period (April to March) was purchased before the commencement of the supply period, with the balance purchased closer to the point of consumption, but before it was required.

These strategies allowed the price risk to be spread over an extended period of time, rather than purchasing 100% of the volume on a single day.

The principle behind the two options was that with PIA the price was known before the supply period commenced, whilst the PWP price was only partially fixed before supply period and was not completely known until the supply period ended.

The PWP option therefore represented a higher risk as a proportion of the cost was subject to fluctuation, depending on market price movement during the supply period, with reward partly based on the premise that the risk premium inherent in market prices reduces as the point of purchase and consumption becomes closer.

Flexible contracts of this kind required large volumes to access the pricing mechanism used for an effective Risk Strategy. By combining all ESPO customer volumes into a single supply with Total Energies, an economy of scale was achieved which reduced the supplier's margin. Additional benefits are also seen via the elimination of risk premiums applied by suppliers to fixed price contracts, where prices were held on the day, compared to real time wholesale market purchasing.

The emphasis on flexible energy purchasing was to manage risk and spread it over a period of time, which evens out annual cost avoiding price fluctuations and causing

budgeting uncertainty. Purchasing via this strategy provided increased budgetary certainty and provided earlier information on future costs.

ESPO would liaise closely with and fully support SKDC through the process of deciding on the appropriate risk option, both on joining the framework for the first time and for periodic intervals thereafter.

Total Energies understood that being one of the world's largest energy suppliers brought with it enormous environmental, social and cultural responsibilities. They take their obligations very seriously, and invest considerable time, energy and resources implementing action plans and assessing SKDC's performance to give continuous improvement. Industrial safety, supporting local development, securing the future of energy, environmental stewardship, and combatting climate change were all critical challenges that Total Energies was committed to meeting.

The following points were highlighted during debate:

- South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) sourced its existing gas and electricity via the ESPO framework, therefore in a sense this was a continuation of that supply network.
- LeisureSK Limited were not part of this energy contract because they were external to the Council's corporate assets. However the company could access the framework directly.
- There was an ongoing programme to improve energy efficiency of the Council's property portfolio; energy usage would be reduced where it was practical and afordable to do so.
- 'Half hourly' charging would remain part of the contract. Prior to the start of the contract a 12-month fixed tariff would be purchased, and this would be honoured whether the Council used more, or less energy than the volume stipulated in the fixed term contract.
- Data from previous contracts would be available and used to compare against the upcoming energy contract. This would enable the analysis of consumption and cost of energy use. This was particularly relevant in the area for street lighting.
- At the previous Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 March 2024 there was a strong steer to replenish the Climate Change Reserve.

The Deputy Chief Executive agreed to supply a breakdown of the budget figure against the costs of the contract, and it would be appended to the minutes.

108. Award of Contract for the Construction of the Waste Depot, Turnpike Close Grantham

Purpose of report

This report set out the procurement that had been undertaken in order to award the contract to the successful contractor for the construction of the new Waste Depot at Turnpike Close Grantham.

Decision

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the outcome of the tender process and appoints Lindum Group Ltd as the preferred contractor for the construction of the Turnpike Close construction contract.

2. Delegates to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement to enter into a NEC4 Professional Services Contract with Lindum Group Ltd in order to develop the submitted design to Stage 4 supported by a Value Engineering process in order to align the overall contract price with the approved budget.

3. Following the conclusion of the Value Engineering, delegation be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Property and Public Engagement to enter into the construction contract to enable the commencement of the works.

Alternative options considered and rejected

No other options were available as the decision to award the contract was essential to enable the project to continue to the construction stage.

Reasons for decision

This report set out the background behind the project. The procurement process that had been undertaken since the decision was taken by Council to allocate funding for this project. The awarding of the contract would enable the project to continue in accordance with the timeline.

The business case for the Waste Depot was approved by Cabinet in September 2023, and the funding for the project was approved by Full Council in September 2023 and February 2024.

An 'expression of interest' notice was published and presented to a list of approved contractors; from this, five contractors confirmed their interest in the project and were invited to tender for the work. This list of five contractors reduced to 2 for a number of reasons; the two remaining contractors formally submitted tenders and these were scored by a panel of experts using agreed criteria.

The contractors were interviewed on 19 March 2024 and the bids were scrutinised; Lindum Group emerged from this process with the successful tender.

The design of the Waste Depot would be reviewed in order to reduce the projected costs of the tender – a process known as 'value engineering'. Once this process was complete, the construction contract could be entered into.

It was hoped that works would commence no later than September 2024, with a completion by July 2025.

The following points were highlighted during debate:

- Officers were working with Lindum Group on bringing the costs of the tender down whilst not compromising the delivery or the quality of the project.
- The 'fit out' of the depot could not be costed at the moment because investigations were still ongoing regarding the potential transfer of equipment from the existing site.
- Whilst officers were confident of a start date of September 2024, the date was not definite because a value engineering exercise needed to be undertaken.
- The backstop date for completion of the project was April 2026, which was the anticipated start date for mandatory collection of food waste across South Kesteven.
- It was understood that 'completion of the project' would mean the date the contractor would hand over the keys to the new site to the Council. Officers involved with the project would do all they could to ensure minimal crossover between the old and new sites; for example it was expected waste collection rounds would complete at the old depot on a Friday, and, from the following Monday, vehicles and staff would operate from the new site.
- The planning permission for the site, the sustainability of the new building and the planners' design were confirmed; the value engineering process would not seek to change these elements. Instead the process would concentrate on the materials proposed by the contractor to whether these could be amended to reduce costs. Value engineering should not impact the running costs or lifetime of the asset.
- The project was being funded by internal borrowing which meant that a Minimum Revenue Provision had to be made, in this case, for 50 years which was the expected lifespan of the building. The report demonstrated a robust framework delivered by Gleeds' Consultants.
- The project had been scrutinised by various committees to this point, and the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Waste Depot Working Group would continue to monitor progress.

109. Draft Economic Development Strategy Consultation

Purpose of report

To seek approval for stakeholder consultation in respect of the draft Economic Development Strategy 2024 – 2028 and accompanying action plan.

Decision

That Cabinet approves a four week public consultation exercise on the draft Economic Development Strategy and accompanying action plan set out in Appendix A of the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The option to not provide an Economic Development Strategy may risk loss of focus on achieving the aims of the Council within the quickest practicable timescales.

An alternative to not consult on the Economic Development Strategy may risk the loss of critical engagement with the public, partners and delivery agencies who would be vital in achieving the aims of the draft strategy.

Reasons for decision

The public consultation would enable stakeholders to consider and recommend changes and additions to the draft Economic Development Strategy.

An Economic Development Strategy would help to deliver a vibrant economy in the District, promoting health, wealth and prosperity. The previous Strategy ran to 2021.

On 20 February 2024 the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a significantly evolved version of the Strategy. This Strategy was also seen at a Cabinet Member Workshop in March 2024 where it was further refined prior to public consultation. The next stage was to take the Strategy to partners in the community, such as members of the public and business delivery bodies.

The consultation would run for a four-week period and would be published online. Comments would be captured using the Opus software system, which was also being used for the Local Plan consultation. This system enabled members of the public to comment directly on each proposal within the Economic Development Strategy.

110. Key and Non-Key Decisions taken under Delegated Powers

Decisions taken since the previous meeting of Cabinet were noted.

111. Cabinet's Forward Plan

The Forward Plan ran to June 2024 currently, but this plan would be expanded in the coming weeks as essential items for the year ahead, such as the Budget would be added.

The item on Car Parking Orders was to move back to June 2024.

The remainder of the Forward Plan was noted.

112. Members' Question Time

The Leader of the Council gave Members the opportunity to ask questions of the Cabinet:

Councillor Phil Gadd asked when the refurbishment works in Grantham marketplace were due to commence.

Councillor Richard Cleaver promised to respond informally to Councillor Gadd.

The meeting closed at 2:54pm.

Dear Max,
You accurately point out that the Council receives from parking services must be ringfenced for purposes which are clearly specified by the 1984 and 2004 Road Traffic.

These purposes include meeting the costs of the provision and enforcement of parking services as well as "environmental improvements". These improvements may include:
  i) *the reduction of environmental pollution;*
  ii) *improving and maintaining the appearance or amenity of roads and open land to which the general public has access*
  iii) *the provision of outdoor recreational facilities available to the general public without charge.*

The income and expenditure of parking services in recent years is summarised below:

South Kesteven District Council Car Parking Income & Expenditure

	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £
Income				
Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs)	(45,771)	(29,722)	(47,097)	(48,578)
Season Tickets	(100,395)	(77,038)	(115,103)	(79,983)
Pay & Display	(1,154,505)	(414,001)	(1,081,654)	(1,199,994)
Other Income	(260)	(292)	(250)	(12,250)
Resident's Parking	(26,975)	(25,639)	(27,090)	(18,575)
Total Income	**(1,327,906)**	**(546,692)**	**(1,271,194)**	**(1,359,380)**
Expenditure				
Off-Street Parking (Operational, administrative and enforcement)	625,015	578,782	581,364	620,321
Total Expenditure	**625,015**	**578,782**	**581,364**	**620,321**
(Surplus)/Deficit (income minus expenditure)	**(702,891)**	**32,090**	**(689,830)**	**(739,059)**
Surplus Spend				
Environmental Maintenance Improvements - District wide	679,219	654,075	717,478	638,389
Capital Improvements - Welham Street Car Park				122,477
Capital Improvements - Wyndham Park Car Park	20,881			
Capital Improvements - Queen Elizabeth Park Car Park	38,078			
	738,178	654,075	717,478	760,866
Deficit	35,287	686,165	27,648	21,807

Unfortunately, while our spending of the surplus in recent years has been compliant with the law, the capital and revenue expenditure on the council's car parks has been much less than has been necessary to maintain them in good condition. Consequently, in the current financial year and in years to come, we need to catch-up on the backlog left by the previous Conservative administration. This requires spending of hundreds of thousands of pounds on our car parks, including the Welham Street and Wharf Road car parks in Grantham.

As you know, the Council has undertaken a parking capacity study which has been reviewed by the Finance and Economic OSC and as a result we intends to consult residents on a new Parking Order. Furthermore, we intend to invest in expanding the capacity of the Cattle Market car park in Stamford by around 100 spaces in order to

increase the supply of parking in response to demand from tourists, shoppers and visitors to that historic town.

I hope this provides clarification and reassurance that the Council is not only abiding by the law regarding parking income but also managing the service in ways which benefit everyone in our towns and wider district.

Best wishes,

Ashley Baxter
Leader
South Kesteven District Council

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Cabinet

Tuesday, 14 May 2024

Report of Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet Member for Housing & Planning

Housing Stock Condition Survey Contract Award

Report Author

Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing

✉ A.Hall-Wright@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To obtain approval to enter into a contract with Impart Links Ltd for the provision of Stock Condition Surveys and Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's) to dwellings that form part of South Kesteven District Council's housing stock. The contract would be awarded via the Efficiency East Midlands (EEM) Framework for a period of 2 years with the option to extend for a further 1 year plus 1 year.

Recommendations

That Cabinet approves the award of a contract to Impart Links Ltd for the provision of stock conditions surveys and EPC's with a contract value of £281k for a period of 2 years with the option to extend for a further 1 year plus 1 year.

Decision Information

Is this a Key Decision?	Yes
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Housing
Which wards are impacted?	(All Wards);

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance

1.1 The approved 2024/25 HRA Revenue Budget includes an allocation of £100k for stock condition surveys. This budget has already been allocated to the outstanding stock condition surveys which need to be completed. Therefore, there is no specific budget that can be confirmed to fund this contract in the current financial year. However, the service area has confirmed that in-year savings can be identified in order to enable the contract to be awarded.

Completed by: Paul Sutton, Interim Deputy s151 Officer

Procurement

1.2 It is confirmed that a fully compliant procurement process has been completed and the Council's Procurement Lead has been consulted throughout the process.

Completed by: Helen Baldwin (Procurement Lead)

Legal and Governance

1.3 There are no significant legal and governance implications arising from the report which are not already reflected elsewhere in the report, particularly in relation to procurement and compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Risk and Mitigation

1.4 Any risk will be monitored as part of the contract management process.

Completed by: Tracey Elliott, Governance & Risk Officer

Health and Safety

1.5 While the purpose of these works is purely surveying the condition of the housing stock, there are associated health & safety implications in terms of inspections of

lofts and other areas of the dwellings. The supplier will consider the aspects of health & safety associated with the survey works.

When the contract is awarded to the successful bidder, documentation will be requested on how all the health & safety risks associated with the survey phase will be implemented to minimise the risks and where possible, eliminate them.

Completed by: Phil Swinton Health, Safety and Compliance Manager

Safeguarding

1.6   Any Safeguarding issues that may be observed during the survey works will be reported back in line with the Councils and suppliers safeguarding policy.

Completed by: Sarah McQueen, Head of Housing Options and Safeguarding Lead

2.   Background to the Report

2.1   The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2024 – 2027 to ensure that all residents can access housing which is safe, good quality, sustainable and suitable for their needs and future generations.

2.2   The purpose of this report is to seek approval to enter into a contract with Impart Links Ltd for the provision of completing stock condition surveys and Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's) to dwellings that form part of South Kesteven District Council's housing stock. The contract would be awarded though the EEM Framework and would be for an initial period of 2 years with the option to extend for a further 1 year plus 1 year.

2.3   The information and survey data captured through the stock condition surveys will ensure that the Council has accurate and up to date information on the condition of its housing stock. This data will be used to develop the improvement and maintenance programmes in future years.

2.4   The tender exercise has been completed through the EEM Framework, following the completion of an Expressions of Interest in the opportunity.

2.5   As part of the evaluation process, clarification questions were generated in relation to the associated costs and the inclusion of energy performance certificates (EPC's) These were submitted via EEM. During this period supplier 2 made the decision to withdraw from the tender process.

2.6   Impart Links Ltd provided the appropriate clarification for the inclusion of EPC's and revised their costs accordingly.

The quotations received were as follows:
- Supplier 1 - £70,239.00 per annum.
- Supplier 2 – withdrew from the tender.

3. Key Considerations

3.1   The stock condition survey information will enable existing records to be updated to include works that have recently been undertaken on properties which will ensure that our data is an accurate representation of the property attributes and their condition. A robust process will be developed to ensure that the Apex system which holds the housing stock information is updated as works are completed.

3.2   As budgets are under pressure, having accurate stock condition information is crucial in the planning of the budget requirements for future repairs and planned maintenance programmes.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1   An alternative option would be to keep the works in house and utilise Council staff to complete the stock condition surveys but due to existing service delivery pressures, this would involve an extended period of time before the surveys could commence so this is not considered a viable option.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

5.1   The proposed contract award to Impart Links Ltd has followed a compliant procurement process and will ensure the Council's annual target of 1,000 reinspection surveys is met.

6. Consultation

6.1   The Council and the surveying contractor will engage with the residents at the properties where stock condition surveys are to be carried out on a frequent basis to ensure they are kept informed on appointment dates along with any other queries that may arise.

Cabinet

14th May 2024

Report of Councillor Rhys Baker, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Tree and Woodlands Strategy 2024 - 2034

Report Author

Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager

✉ Serena.brown@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To ask Cabinet to approve the South Kesteven District Council Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2024 – 2034.

Recommendation

That Cabinet approves the new South Kesteven District Council Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2024 – 2034.

Decision Information

Is this a Key Decision?	No
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Sustainable South Kesteven
Which wards are impacted?	All wards

1   Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

1.1   A newly established post for a Tree Officer has been established from the 2024/25 financial year onwards, in order to deliver on the Council's work on trees on land within the ownership of South Kesteven District Council as well as to deliver on the actions of the draft Tree and Woodland Strategy. In order to facilitate the delivery of specific actions there may a requirement to consider budgetary support as part of the Council's budget setting process. Sources of external funding will also be reviewed towards delivery of the Trees and Woodland Strategy Action Plan.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

1.2   South Kesteven District Council have several legal obligations regarding trees, particularly regarding those found in land within the ownership of the Council that could present a risk to members of the public. The introduction of the new draft Tree and Woodlands Strategy documents do not seek to override these obligations, but to set out a more proactive approach to management of trees for the whole district.

Completed by: Mandy Braithwaite, Legal Executive

Climate Change

1.3   The primary aims of the Trees and Woodlands Strategy are to protect, enhance and increase the district's tree canopy cover, therefore there are clear benefits for the environment. The planting of trees of any kind provides valuable ecosystem services such as climate change regulation, carbon sequestration, filtering of pollution and in some cases flood prevention.

Completed by: Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager

2 Background to the Report

2.1 Trees play an important role in helping us adapt to a warmer world: trees near rivers help to improve water quality and flood risk, and in our towns help to provide shade. The benefits of trees and greenspace for wellbeing and mental health is also becoming better understood.

2.2 As a county, Lincolnshire has one of the lowest levels of tree cover in England, at 5.67% compared to an average for England of around 10%. The lower than national average tree cover is driven by land use in the county, in particular the high proportion of agricultural land with low tree canopy cover. Lincolnshire, including the southern and eastern edges of South Kesteven, include areas of fenland where larger scale tree planting may not be advantageous. Features such as hedges and shrubby plants may be more appropriate to provide an effective ecosystem in some areas.

2.3 The UK Government published the new England Trees Action Plan in May 2021, which sets out the target for tree cover in England to be at least 12% by mid-century. This document includes a call to action for stakeholders to help deliver on the long-term vision for trees and woods in England:
- Apply for grants for establishing and managing trees and woodlands;
- Access more and better advice and guidance on establishing and managing trees and woodlands;
- Work with the UK government to unlock more private finance to invest in trees and woodlands;
- Plant trees particularly where they make the most difference – for water, biodiversity, climate resilience and close to where people work, live and play;
- Responsibly enjoy wooded landscapes.

2.4 The Environment Act 2021 sets out new environmental duties for public authorities in England. Under the Environment Act public authorities must, as of 2024, consider and report on what action the Council intends to take for biodiversity across the authority. The Council recognises that a carefully planned and managed tree canopy offers a wide range of benefits to the district's biodiversity. Trees can support health and well-being, improve air quality, offer shade for crops and livestock, prevent nutrient loss and soil erosion, improve water quality, and reduce the risk of flooding.

2.5 The Environment Act 2021 also includes expectations for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), to deliver a minimum of 10% BNG for qualifying development sites. This new policy is expected to have a significant effect on on-site biodiversity improvements, and interact with considerations for tree, woodland and hedge retention for sites.

2.6 Local authorities are looking to make progress on the ground to improve tree planting and deliver improvements for biodiversity on a landscape scale. To enable this and target informed selection of sites for wider scale planting, local

authorities are starting to produce tree strategies, and some have commenced mass planting programmes.

A Trees and Woodland Strategy for South Kesteven

2.7   South Kesteven District Council is itself responsible for the management of around 6,000 trees of varying age and maturity on land within the ownership or remit of the Council. The Council's Tree Guidelines for the Management of Trees in South Kesteven were approved on 17 September 2019. This guidance sets out the Council's approach as an authority to tree management and protection within the district, noting the need to balance safety with amenity concerns and continuity of care for all the Council's tree stock. South Kesteven District Council further recognised the value of trees through working with the Woodland Trust to develop and adopt the Local Government Charter for Trees, Woods and People at Cabinet on 12 November 2019. This endorses ten key principles to endorse the Council's community leadership role, while recognising the need to balance positive commitments to trees with wider responsibilities including safety, value for money, public amenity and development and growth.

2.8   The need was identified for the Council to take further action with regards to enhancing and protecting the trees of the whole district, as well as those directly managed by the Council. A district-wide Trees and Woodland Strategy would provide the Council with a strategic approach to the management of its tree assets. In order to provide the adequate technical knowledge to develop a high quality and informed strategy which is responsive to the context of South Kesteven, Treeconomics were appointed as an external organisation to assist with development of a new district wide strategy.

2.9   The aims of the Trees and Woodlands Strategy were:
        a) To set out the current level of tree canopy cover in the district
        b) To highlight main areas of opportunity to enhance trees and woodlands
        c) To set out what role the Council as local authority can play in facilitating that alongside key partners.

        The strategy considers key national, regional as well as local influences and provides clarity on the intricacies of managing trees as assets. By understanding these key requirements, the Council can prioritise service needs, improvements and investment.

2.10   Following the development of a draft strategy document, the Council launched a period of research and consultation to inform the new Strategy in early 2024, which included workshop events for internal and external stakeholders on proposed priorities and actions. The event was also open to Councillors and internal Council staff involved in the drafting process.

2.11 A public consultation exercise followed, which was completed in February 2024, consisting of a survey which was open to residents for 3 weeks. The purpose of the survey was to assess both public attitudes around trees and woodlands for to increase tree canopy cover within the district, as well as to gauge views on the Council supporting wider tree planting within the district. This consultation saw a response from over 900 respondents with a very strong consensus in support of increased tree planting, maintenance and protection. Detailed results from the consultation can be seen at Appendix 5, which have been used to inform the Trees and Woodland Strategy and clarified the importance of particular actions.

2.12 The Trees and Woodlands Strategy is comprised of four separate documents:
Trees and Woodlands Strategy Introduction and Vision (Appendix 1)
Trees and Woodlands Strategy Targets and Priorities (Appendix 2)
Trees and Woodlands Strategy Action Plan (Appendix 3)
Trees and Woodlands Strategy Appendices (Appendix 4)

2.13 Members are asked to provide comment on the suite of documents comprising the South Kesteven District Council Tree and Woodlands Strategy 2024 and are asked to recommend their approval and adoption to Cabinet.

3 Key Considerations

3.1 While the Council has in place Tree Guidelines to set out a number of duties around trees, there is an absence of formal strategic direction for the trees within the district as a whole.

3.2 This new strategy provides a stronger approach, which confirms the Council's commitment to enhanced tree management and increased tree canopy cover. The strategy comes following a period of research and consultation, which included a public consultation exercise which received a significant volume of supportive comments, as well as a detailed workshop for internal and external stakeholders on proposed priorities.

4 Other Options Considered

4.1 The Council could decide not to have a Trees and Woodlands Strategy. However, this decision would not align with the Council's commitment to delivering on its ambitions as set out in its adopted Climate Action Strategy and on new duties for biodiversity improvements. The results of the public consultation (Appendix 5) also demonstrate a clear desire from residents for the Council to develop a strategic approach to the management of its tree assets.

5 Reasons for the Recommendations

5.1 The Trees and Woodlands Strategy will inform how the Council will protect and enhance the district's tree population, with specific reference to tree preservation

orders, development control and tree canopy cover increase through public and partnership engagement. In doing so, the Strategy will play a key role in the Council's ambitions to increase biodiversity.

6 Consultation

6.1 All Members were invited to attend a workshop on the proposed Trees and Woodlands Strategy on 18 January 2024. The workshop was led by Treeconomics, who were appointed to lead on the development of a new strategy. This offered Members the opportunity to feed into the draft strategy and agree and amend the priorities and action plan.

6.2 A separate workshop was held for parish councillors and environmental stakeholders as identified by officers that same day. The workshop was led by Treeconomics and offered attendees the opportunity to feed into the draft strategy and agree and amend the priorities and action plan.

6.3 A three-week public consultation subsequently followed on the outcomes from the stakeholder workshops. The consultation received 919 responses which is one of the highest responses of any consultation undertaken by the Council in the last eighteen months. The consultation report is available in Appendix 5.

6.4 99% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that trees and woodlands are a valuable natural asset.

6.5 96.5% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that planting, maintaining, and protecting trees in South Kesteven is a worthwhile investment, and something the Council should be involved in/contribute towards.

6.6 Overall, the consultation found a very strong consensus for increased tree planting, maintenance and protection from respondents.

6.7 Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the proposed Trees and Woodland Strategy at their meeting on 19th March 2024. The Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet that the Trees and Woodland Strategy 2024-2034 be approved.

7 Background Papers

7.1 Environment Act 2021 – Government legislation, available online at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted

7.2 South Kesteven District Council Climate Action Strategy, available online at: https://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-10/Climate_Action_Strategy.pdf

7.3   *Update on Local Authority Biodiversity Duties* - Report to Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, published 4 December 2023 and available online at: https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s39873/Update%20on%20Local%20Authority%20Biodiversity%20duties%20Report.pdf

8   Appendices

8.1   Appendix 1 – Trees and Woodlands Strategy Summary and Vision
8.2   Appendix 2 – Trees and Woodlands Strategy Targets and Priorities
8.3   Appendix 3 – Trees and Woodlands Strategy Action Plan
8.4   Appendix 4 – Trees and Woodlands Strategy Appendices
8.5   Appendix 5 – Trees and Woodlands Strategy Public Consultation 2024 Report

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South Kesteven District Council
Trees & Woodland Strategy
2024 - 2034

SOUTH
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We are now facing the major challenges of climate change and experiencing changes in our weather patterns and disruption to the usual balance of nature.

In response to this, South Kesteven District Council recently published its revised Climate Action Strategy, which set out our way forward on reducing carbon emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

As we know, the planting of trees of any kind brings with it valuable ecosystem benefits such as providing natural habitats, limiting the impact of heatwaves in urban areas and the filtering of pollution and flood prevention. Trees also play an important role in positively impacting on the wellbeing of communities and residents. They improve air quality, offer shade for crops and livestock, prevent nutrient loss and soil erosion and improve water quality. They also help to reduce the risk of flooding.

To ensure we have a resilient tree scape that continues to deliver these benefits, there needs to be a comprehensive plan for the management of our existing canopy. The Council has therefore worked to develop and deliver a District-wide Tree and Woodland Strategy as part of its ensuing work-plan.

The purpose of the strategy and accompanying action plan is to establish the current level of tree canopy cover in the District, highlight main areas of opportunity to increase the number of trees and areas of woodland and set out what role the Council can play in facilitating this alongside key partners.

Knowing that trees play such an important part in ensuring our District remains habitable for the future means that we need to protect the trees we have and enhance the tree scape of South Kesteven through continual planting and an expansion of our canopy cover.

We are therefore delighted to introduce South Kesteven District Council's Trees and Woodland Strategy 2024 – 2034.

Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, Councillor Rhys Baker

Cllr Rhys Baker,
Cabinet Member for
Environment and Waste
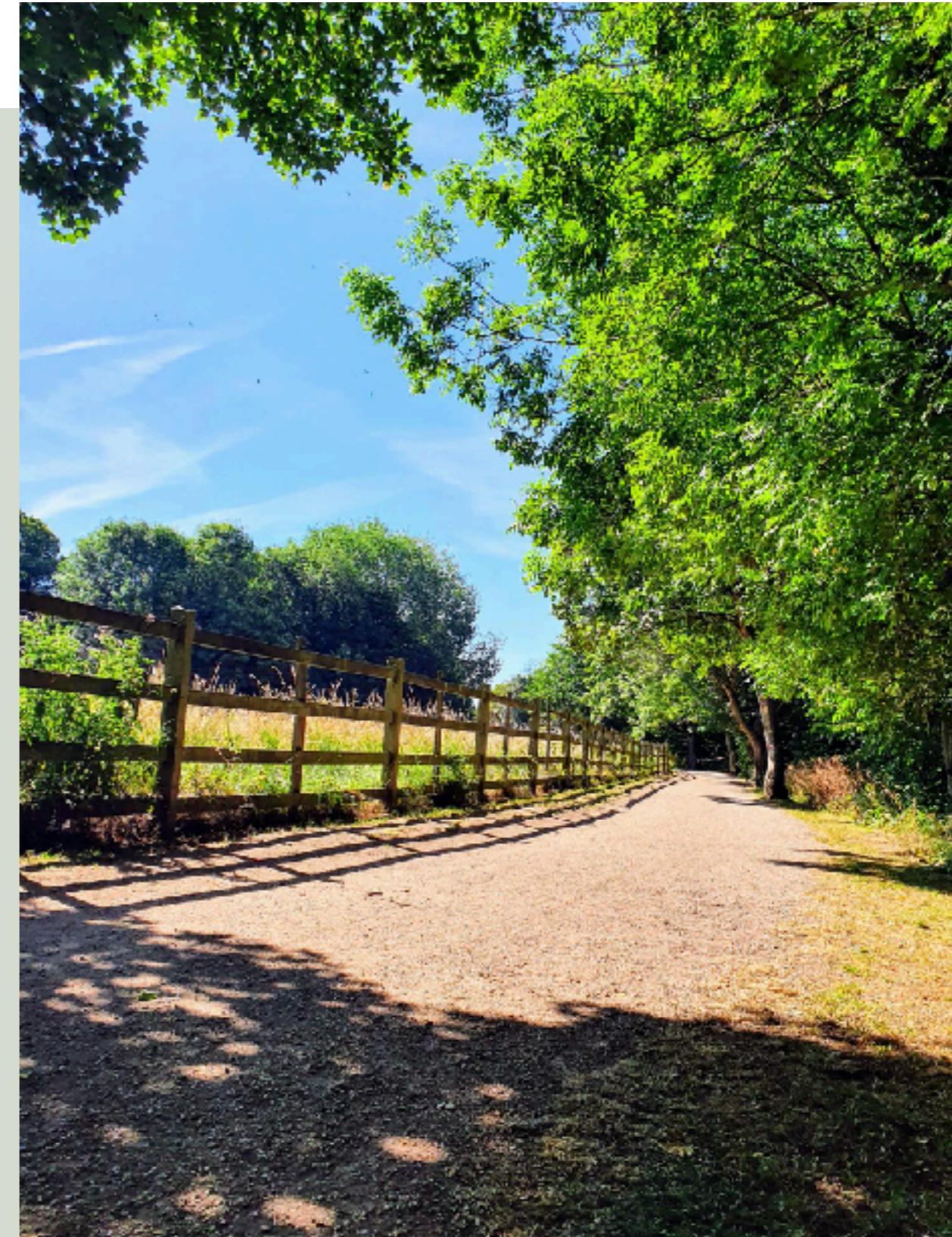
There are more benefits to trees than many of us appreciate. In keeping with benefits of other natural systems, they are also known as ecosystem services. This approach was standardised by the World Commission on Ecosystem Service Management of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Work continues to quantify and value each of them.

Those that are quantifiable with valuations adopted by national or local government have been included within this report. They include carbon storage and sequestration, pollution mitigation, avoided stormwater runoff, all determined using i-Tree.

Many UK local authorities have also adopted CAVAT (Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees) to place a valuation upon the amenity of public trees.

There are a large number of other benefits where research continues to help assign meaningful financial valuations.

Increased property or rental value:

A series of international third-party studies have shown that trees increase property prices by between 5% to 18%.

Increased consumer spending:

Consumers are willing to spend more in shopping areas with large, well cared for trees. This has been measured as an increase of 9% to 12%.

Climate Adaptation - Temperature Regulation:

Trees and woodlands can reduce peak summer temperatures by up to 7°C. This particular adaptation has long been adopted by authorities in warmer locations and forms a key tenet of green infrastructure thinking. Current research extends into examining the cooling effectiveness of individual species.

Reduced Stress and improved mental health:

Forest Research recently valued this particular benefit of forests and woodlands nationally at £185m. More trees immediately around the home (less than 100 meters) are associated with a reduced risk of being prescribed antidepressant medication. This association is especially strong for deprived groups.

Improved concentration and academic achievement:

Greener schools have higher test scores, even after taking income into account. Middle school students get a boost from school greening. Planting trees within 250m of schools has the greatest effect.

Improved recovery times from illness:

Patients placed in rooms with views of nature experienced shorter stays in the hospital than patients in rooms that faced other buildings.

The image on the following page serves as a good illustration of the many benefits of trees

The Benefits of Trees

Treeco₂nomics

- Increased property value and rental value
- Improved recovery times from illness
- Attractive high streets — Increase in consumer spending and restaurant patronage
- Reduced air-conditioning costs
- Improved concentration and productivity
- Winter windbreak
- Stormwater attenuation
- Evaporative cooling in hot weather
- Reduced heating costs
- Social cohesion
- Sense of place
- Cultural links to the past
- Connectivity and wildlife corridors
- Bio-diversity and habitat
- Oxygen production
- Summer shade
- UV protection
- Noise reduction
- Air quality — Pollution filtration
- Food
- Carbon storage
- Reduced surface flooding
- Soil infiltration
- Soil conservation
- Traffic calming and journey quality
- Encourages outdoor recreation
- Reduced stress
- Health and wellbeing benefits
- Timber — Fuel and building materials

South Kesteven has a rich range of trees and green spaces. The District is home to a number of ancient tree treasure troves, including over 600 protected ancient trees with notable sites including the charming Belton Park and Grimsthorpe Castle.

The Council is committed to its policy of planting two trees for every one removed. Recent years have also seen new additions to South Kesteven's tree canopy cover:

Queen Elizabeth Park is home to Grantham's Diamond Grove. In 2011, sixty silver birch trees were planted by the Wyndham Park Forum in an open area of the park. At the heart of the grove, an English Oak- 'Quercus Robur'- was planted to hopefully live on as Grantham's 'Elizabeth Oak' for hundreds of years.

Grantham's Heroes Commemorative Orchard is home to 75 heritage variety Apple, Plum and Cherry trees. These were planted in 2020 by the Wyndham Park Forum to mark the 7th anniversary of the end of WWII and the joint efforts of the RAF, airborne forces of First Airborne and America's Troop Carrier Command.

To celebrate National Tree Week in 2021, 50 trees - Wild Cherry, Rowan, Silver Birch, Hornbeam, Medlar and Whitebeam – were planted on council-owned areas of green space in Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and Market Deeping.

The Witham/Slea Blue Green Corridor ran from 2019 to 2023 and involved tree planting along the River Witham's corridor as well as tree hinging and felling;all with the aim to improve biodiversity in the local area.

2024 will see further trees planted across the District thanks to funding from the Coronation Living Heritage Fund which celebrates the coronation of King Charles III. This will fund up to 31 small community orchards which are due to be created across South Kesteven.

Wyndham Park, Grantham

South Kesteven's trees and woodlands are a vital resource for the District, with a growing role within the public policy of South Kesteven District Council.

Previous & Current Tree planting initiatives:

- Gaps in key settlement areas
- Connectivity as a challenge
- Threats of new development

South Kesteven's 10% tree cover is half of the 20% recommended by Forest Research and significantly below the 30% target for urban spaces within the 3-30-300 rule recommended by the IUCN. It is not, however, entirely unexpected; South Kesteven's rural setting is dominated by open farmland and hedgerows, with few woodlands. To address the low canopy cover, different approaches will be required in rural areas, versus towns.

This strategy strives to ensure we plant the right trees, in the right places for the right reasons and are also able to provide care and maintenance, involve communities and measure the outcomes (both good and bad), take stock, learn and continually improve.

This strategy reflects the aims of South Kesteven District Council, in line with current international, national, and local policy.

The plan will have a 10-year lifespan from its launch date and sets out a commitment to delivering Key Priorities and Actions for the next 3 years. The targets, priorities and actions laid out in this 10 year tree strategy document will build on South Kesteven District Council's previous successes and include actions around sustainable management, community engagement and on ongoing measurement of the structure and composition of the District's treescape.

As the climate changes, the loss of biodiversity and the need for resilience need to be tackled now to ensure that future generations can continue to benefit from our trees long into the future. This is a challenge for us all, hence the central focus on acting through local capabilities and decision-making.

Figure 1 - The 3-30-300 rule (Konijnendijk, 2021)

What is the 3-30-300 rule?

This rule of thumb provides clear criteria for the minimum provision of urban trees in our urban communities at the same time, it is straightforward to implement and monitor – and easy to remember.

1. You should be able to see 3 trees from your window
2. There should be 30% tree cover in every neighbourhood
3. You should only be 300m or less from your nearest park

What is covered by 'Trees & Woodlands'

We have taken a broad definition, to include all trees, shrubs and hedges, which can be found anywhere from deliberately planted roadside trees to self-seeded scrubland. They provide benefits to those who live nearby and within them. These benefits include air pollution removal, carbon sequestration and storage and reducing flood risk. Other social benefits such as an increase in house value, amenity value of trees and health benefits for residents are also increased in a diverse, healthy natural landscape.

Sources and References:
Konijnendijk, C. (2021) The 3-30-300 Rule for Urban Forestry and Greener Cities

Exploration of the decided vision and how the strategy will link to fundamental goals are within that vision. Description of how the strategy is divided into different sections which will aid the same vision but with very different approaches and outcomes.

The vision is centred upon local communities. It recognises the vital importance of the parish structure in enabling a responsiveness to the concerns and wishes of those who live in each particular part of the District.

The Strategy outlines key topics, priorities and actions under three central themes:
1) Trees and Forest Structure
2) Community Framework
3) Sustainable Resource Management Approach

The Strategy is structured around a comprehensive set of key performance indicators, informed by the current state of evidence and best practice. For each of these performance indicators, an assessment of the current situation is made, ambitions are laid out and priorities are identified.

Moreover, specific actions and roles and responsibilities are defined. This ambitious Trees and Woodland Strategy is an important step forward. Its implementation, in collaboration with both Lincolnshire County Council and all 65 parish and town councils, will create a greener, healthierand more resilient place to live and work.

Our vision:

Healthy Trees, Healthy South Kesteven: Strengthening our tree assets through protection, enhancement, and growth, ensuring resilience and vitality in perpetuity

Alternative formats are available on request: audio, large print and braille

South Kesteven District Council

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Targets and Priorities

3.1 Trees and Woodland Structure

This section covers the physical structure of the trees and woodland from various perspectives. It does not cover the management of those trees which is covered in a later section.

T1   Relative Tree Canopy Cover

Tree Canopy Cover, which is often also referred to as tree cover, can be defined as the area of leaves, branches, and stems of trees covering the ground, across a given area, when viewed from above. Canopy cover is a two dimensional metric, indicating the spread of canopy cover across an area. Potential canopy cover is the area which could be covered by tree canopy with constraints on tree establishment removed.

There are many methods of assessing canopy cover at this scale, including i-Tree canopy, Bluesky National Tree Map, Google Environmental Insights Explorer etc. These methods are not directly comparable with each other as they use different metrics and definitions of what constitutes canopy cover.

Low canopy cover percentage is often a result of widespread agriculture. Comparatively low canopy cover in these areas is not a reason to avoid or delay appropriate woodland management. Canopy cover increases can be achieved through both tree planting and increasing the canopy of existing trees (with improved management and maintenance).

In order to set realistic canopy cover targets, the opportunities for and constraints preventing new tree planting must be identified, ensuring canopy cover goals do not exceed what is possible at maximum stocking levels. It is recognised that the key goal for the District is canopy cover equity across settlement areas. It has also been acknowledged that for any future assessment it will be important to be able to differentiate between the tree canopy cover provided by woodlands, parks and street trees.

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Link to relevant corporate policies:

- SKDC's Local Plan

Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.Google Environmental Insights Explorer (202 3)

Figure 1: Canopy Cover by Ward
*Doick Et Al, 2017. England Canopy Cover Measured Over 283 Towns and Cities by Forest Research
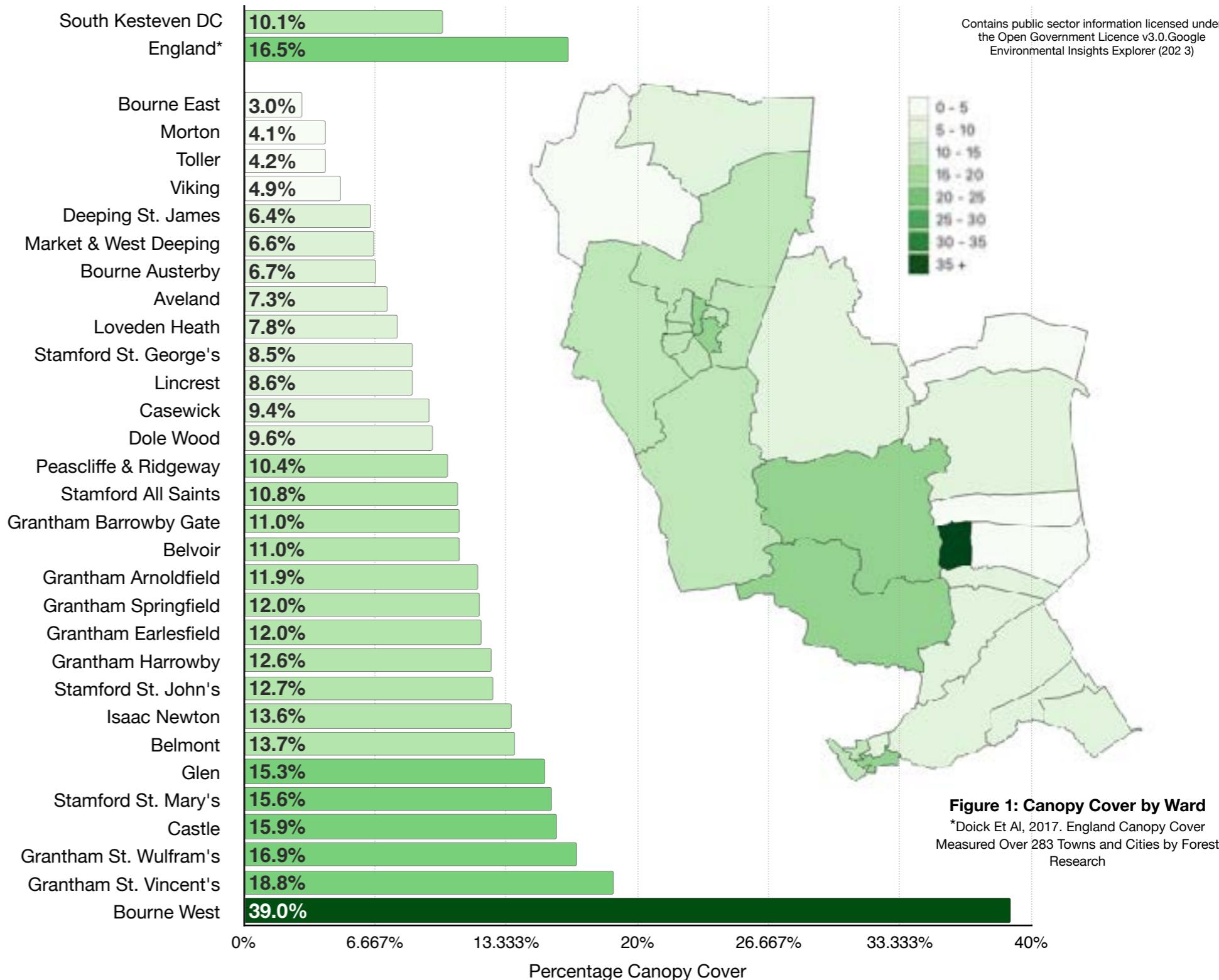
Geography	Tree Cover	Source
South Kesteven District	10.1%	Google EIE 2022

Table 1: Urban Tree Cover Estimates

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T2 Size (Age) Diversity

In total, trees and woodlands depend upon their age diversity to maintain their ability to provide constant benefits to the people who live in South Kesteven over time. The first step in this direction is to establish the current position in enough detail to enable meaningful decision making.

Maturing trees need to be protected and managed to best enable them to reach veteran status (senescent). Juvenile trees must be continually planted to replace old trees, dying trees and trees removed for safety reasons. Whilst larger, older trees typically provide more annual benefits than smaller, younger trees, the latter are vital to maintaining a healthy and sustainable treescape.

Generally, the most accurate way to gauge age diversity is to compare current tree size in each species (in terms of stem diameter) to the maximum diameter for that species. The goal would then be to maintain a tree population that is unevenly distributed among different age classes; thereforemaking sure that there are enough juvenile trees for the future.

It is of course also important to strive for age diversity across the entire tree population – including public trees managed "extensively" (as a group) in parks and natural areas, as well as trees on private property, both District-wide and at neighbourhood level.

Sources and references:
Richards, N.A., (1982/1983). Diversity and stability in a street tree population. Urban Ecology 7, 159–171 – as cited in McPherson, Urban Forestry & Urban Greening 12 (2013) 134– 143.
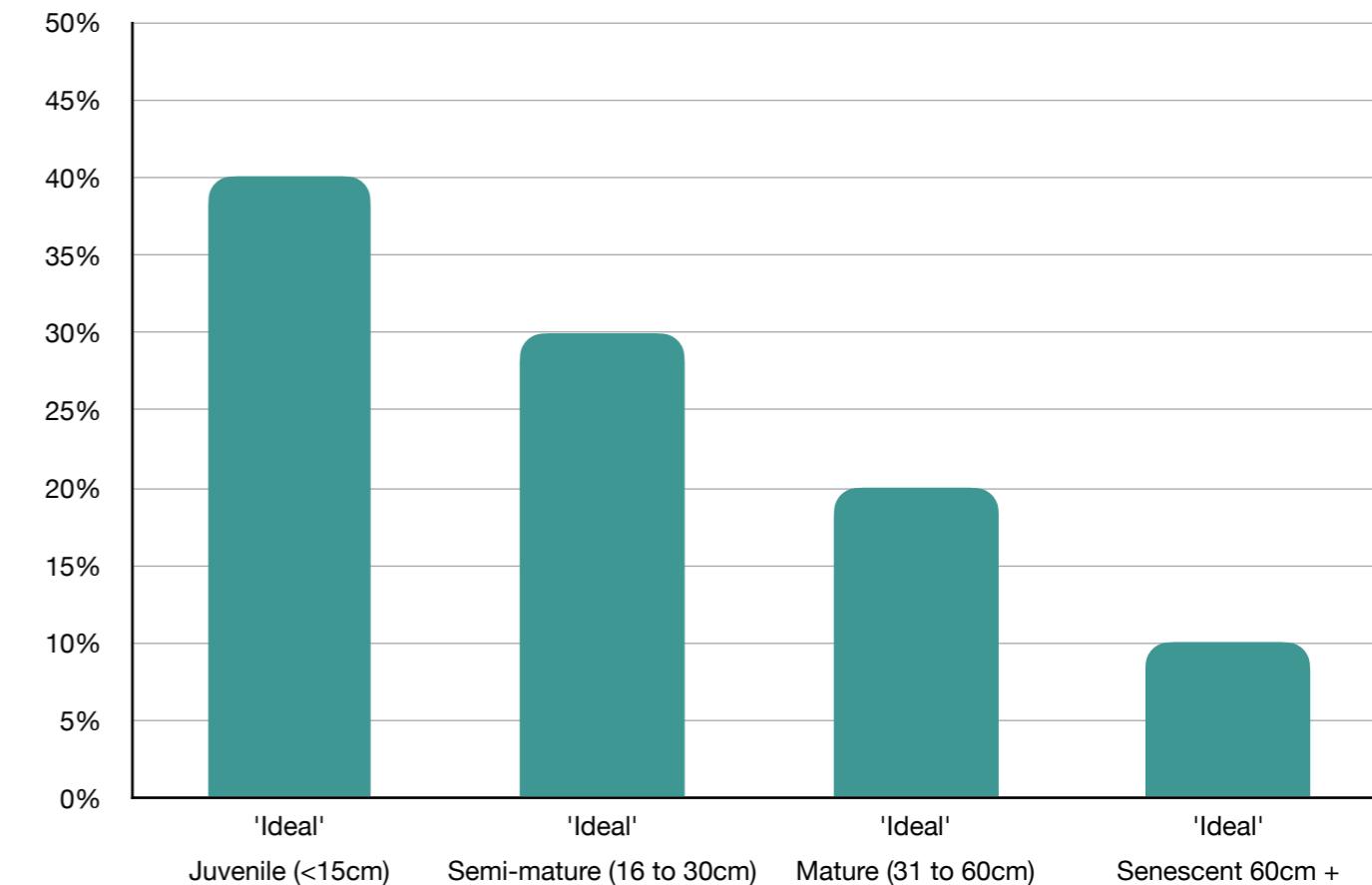
Figure 1: Richards "Ideal" Distribution of Tree Age Across the Urban Forest Showing Typical Stem Diameter for Each Age Class.

T3   Species Diversity

Diversity is an important aspect of trees and woodlands to monitor. It underpins the wider concept of biodiversity within our trees and woodlands and provides a natural protection against large scale tree loss. Trees are split into families, genera, species and varieties and a mix of these is what we understand by a diverse treescape.

Sufficient tree diversity can increase overall resilience in the face of biotic and environmental stresses and threats. Many threats target individual species, so in aggregate, a more diverse tree-scape is better able to deal with possible changes in climate or pest and disease impacts.

Understanding the species diversity of South Kesteven DC's existing trees and woodland is a vital first step. From there, tree planting and management plans can enhance the diversity in line with the goals and KPI's of the action plan.

Santmour's (1990) 10-20-30 rule for species, genus and familyand Barker's benchmark of 5% per species are useful tools in assessing and providing targets for species diversity in the urban context. Ideally, the array and location of suitable tree species would be so diverse that no single species would represent more than 5% of the tree population across the District or more than 10% in any given parish (Barker, 1975). However these rules apply only to street tree populations.

For landscape scale approaches, Hubbell's dominance diversity curves can be a more useful aid to visualise species diversity. The longer and shallower the curve, the greater the diversity.
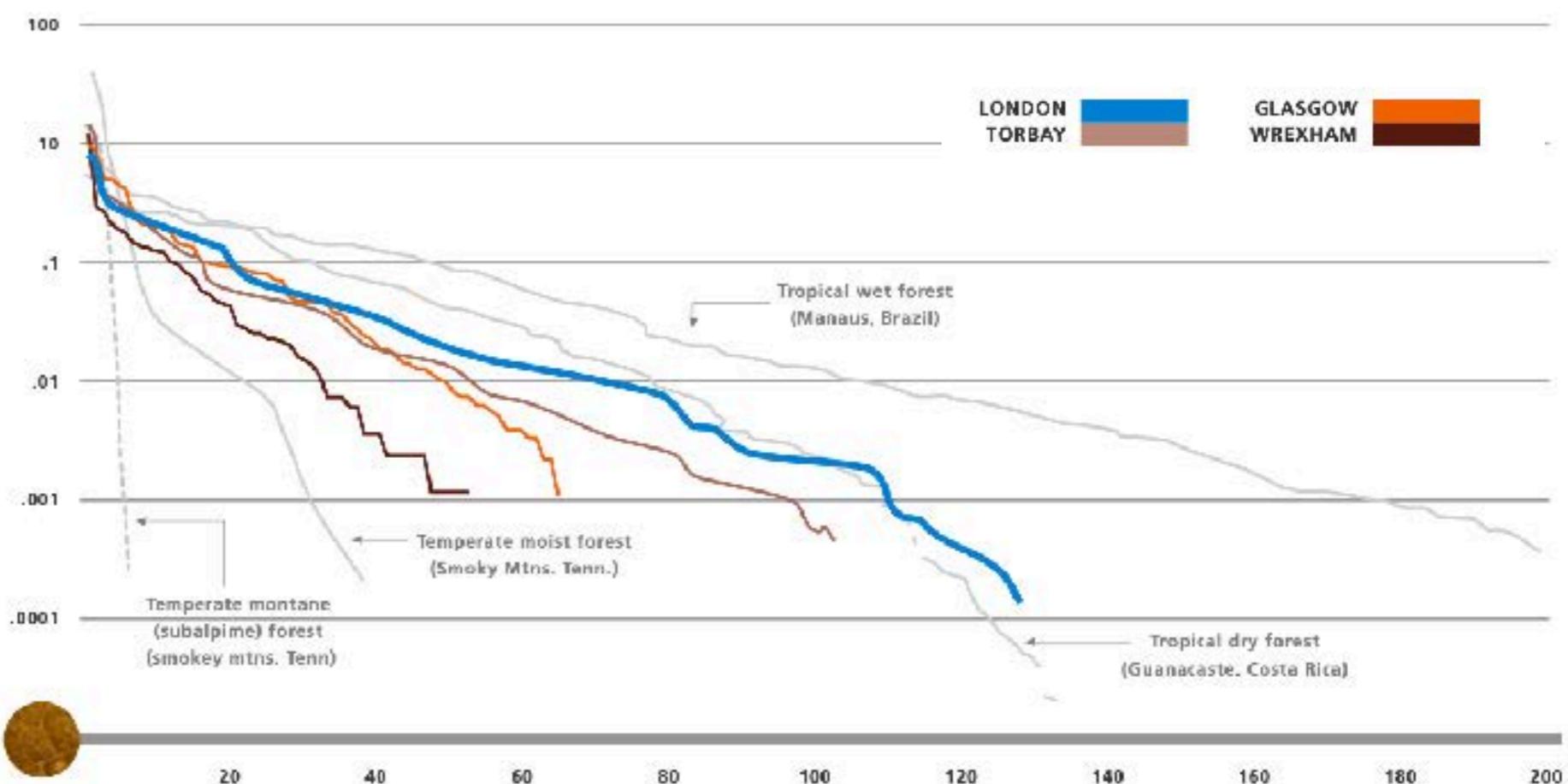
Figure 2: Dominance diversity curves for UK cities compared with example forest types

Sources and references:

Santamour, F.S. (1990) Trees for urban planting: Diversity, uniformity and common sense, in: Proceedings of the Conference Metropolitan Tree Improvement Alliance (METRIA). pp. 57–65.

Barker, P.A. (1975) Ordinance Control of Street Trees. Journal of Arboriculture. 1. pp. 121-215.

Beeauchamp, K. 2016 Measuring Forest Tree Species Diversity. Forest Research.

Link to relevant corporate policies:

- SKDC's Climate Action Strategy

T4   Species Suitability

Selecting a broad array of species which are well suited to their context, whether that is urban or rural, is fundamental to the concept of species suitability. Trees have unique needs; all tree species have different genetic characteristics and growth strategies which have been developed to maximise survival and growth in their natural habitats. Climate, soil and other environmental aspects can affect their ability to survive and thrive.

Urban contexts create greater external stresses than those trees experience in their natural habitat. This can limit their lifespan and increase vulnerability to pests and diseases. Securing species suitability means trees are less likely to be placed under those stresses and more likely to reach maturity.

That context is also going to change under the impact of climate change. Predictions form the UK Meteorological Office forecast warmer, wetter winters and hotter, dryer summers. Even that simplistic high level summary is enough to indicate that some species will struggle in the future. Such factors need to be taken into account today when making tree species selection decisions. Many of our native species will be closer to the edge of their suitability range under even the best case scenarios now being envisaged.

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"A greater chance of warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers"

A headline summary of UK Climate Projections from the Met Office, 2022

Link to relevant corporate policies:

- SKDC's Climate Action Strategy

T5   Publicly Owned Trees

Trees managed individually, such as street trees, are considered to be "managed intensively," according to arboricultural techniques – whereas trees in woodlands or other natural areas are typically "managed extensively," as a group. Park trees can fall into either category, depending on how they are managed.

Understanding how many trees are managed in this way and what this type of management entails will help provide a baseline for improving future 'intensive' practices. A tree inventory documenting these trees, their location, species, health, etc is invaluable for tree maintenance and risk management.

It can also form the basis of a detailed community engagement tool, enabling people to learn and understand more about the individual trees that they pass in the streets where they live and work. Such information has proved instrumental in improving care of trees by residents.

Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC's Local Plan

South Kesteven and Rutland Infrastructure Delivery Plan

SKDC Tree Guidelines

The Bandstand, Dysart Park in Grantham

Wyndham Park in Grantham

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T6   Trees on Other Land (Influence)

Trees on private property are more difficult to survey and manage than those on public land due to the extent and inaccessibility of these trees. It relies on land owners taking an active role in tree management.

Developing the tools to influence other land owners with trees on their property can become a significant factor within management of the totality of the trees and woodlands across the District.

This can simply mean understanding the extent of the tree estate that is outside public ownership. This is generally a mix of the gardens of private householders together with larger privately owned estates.

Notable large woodland areas outside of SKDC ownership include the following: Londonthorpe Woods managed by Woodland Trust, Bourne Woods managed by Forestry England and Dole Wood managed by Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

A full inventory of trees on private properties is difficult;many will fall into conservation areas, and many more will be on record with a tree preservation order (TPO). Fully collating the data already held on these trees may be useful in combination with an i-Tree Eco sample survey.
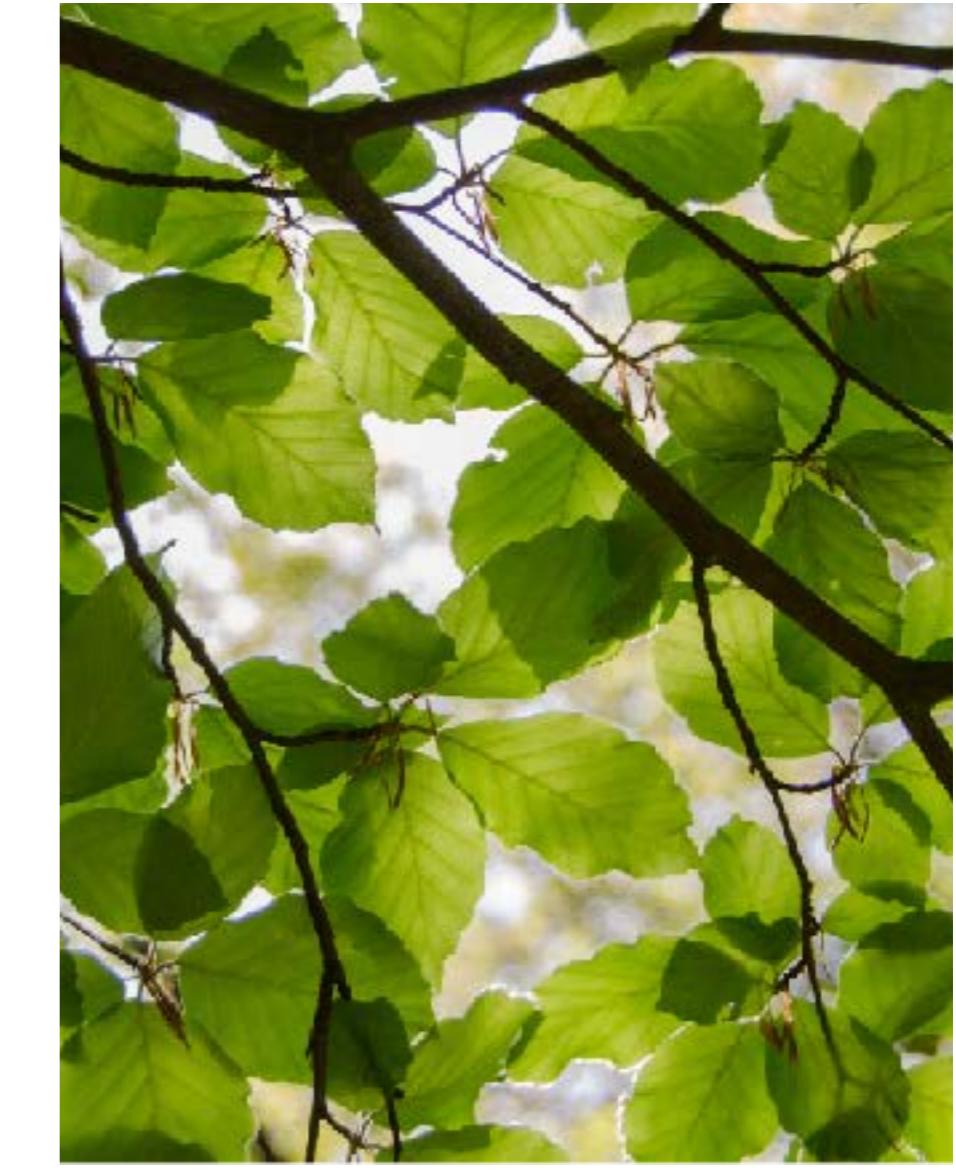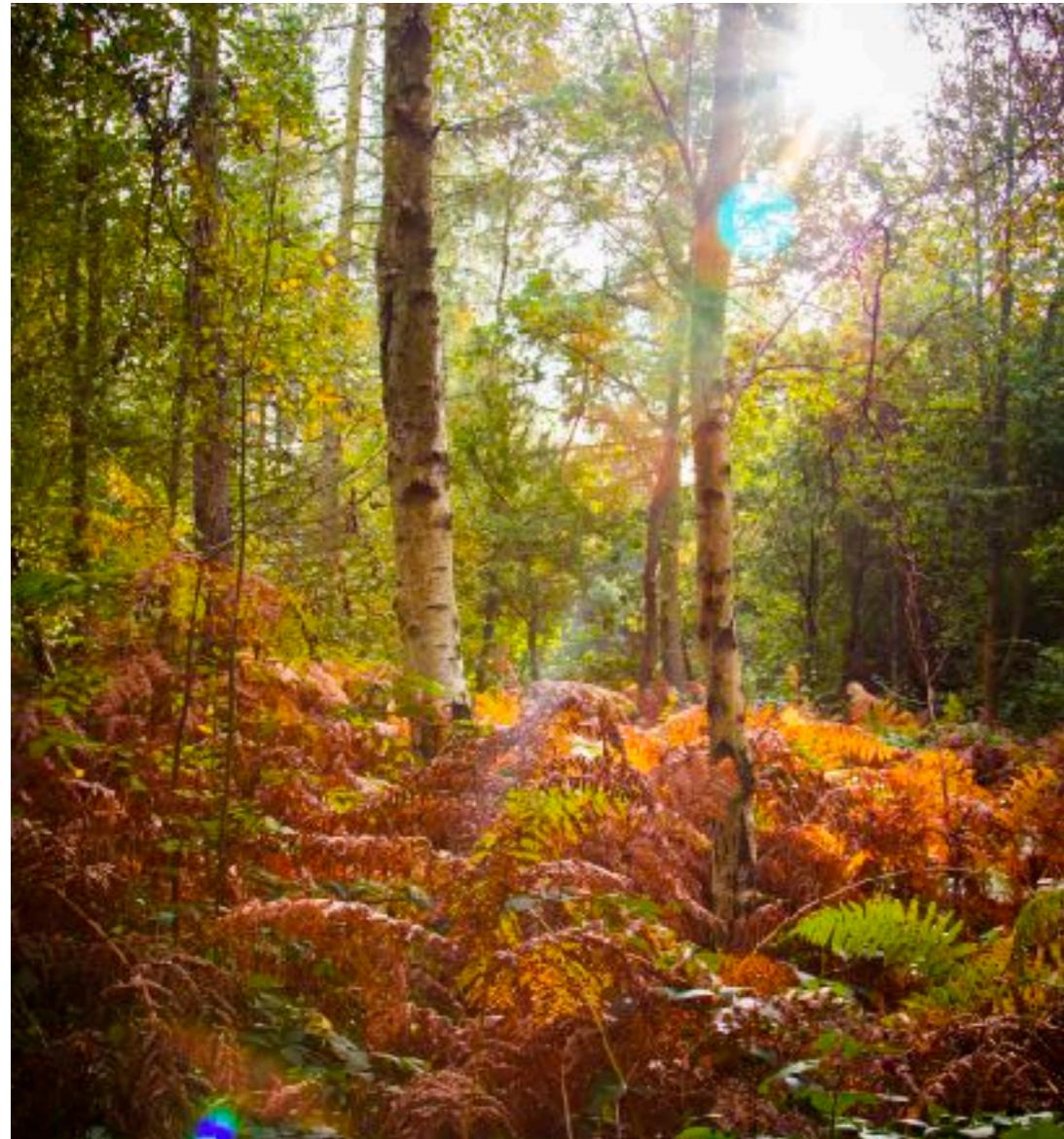
T7 Tree Benefits

Trees and woodlands bring with them both benefits and costs. Whilst many of the costs are well known, the benefits can be difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, a considerable and expanding body of research exists on the benefits that trees and woodlands provide to those who live and work nearby, to green infrastructure and to the wider ecosystem.

Trees provide a 'sense of place', moderate extremes of high temperature in urban areas, improve air quality, reduce rainwater runoff and act as a carbon sink. Yet, trees are often overlooked and undervalued.

Understanding and valuing these services allows us to make more informed planting and management decisions for the benefit of current and future generations. It can also help communicate the importance of trees to the public and to those in the planning and development sector, encouraging the protection and management of existing trees as well as new planting.

i-Tree Eco is a tool which can be used to quantify tree benefits or Ecosystem Services (ESS) whilst also giving an overview of the structure of the trees and woodlands.

About i-Tree:

i-Tree is a free to use, open-access suite of tools developed to assess the value of the urban forest and the ecosystem services provided:
- Quantifies the benefits and values of trees around the world.
- Aids in tree and forest management and advocacy.
- Shows potential risks to tree and forest health.
- Is based on peer-reviewed international research.

i-Tree Eco is an application designed to use field data from individual trees, complete inventories or randomly allocated plots across the sample area to analyse the forest structure and ecosystem services provided.
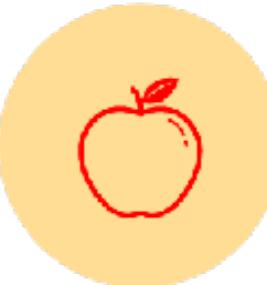
Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC's Local Plan

South Kesteven and Rutland Infrastructure Delivery Plan

SKDC Tree Guidelines

Design Guidelines for Rutland and South Kesteven

SKDC's Climate Action Strategy

The Charter for Trees, Woods and People

Lincolnshire County Councils' Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Carbon Sequestration

Pollution Removal

Foods

Urban Cooling

Rainwater Attenuation

Carbon Storage

Amenity Value

T8   Wider Environmental Considerations

South Kesteven's trees and woodlands have a vital part to play in the fight against climate change and can be part of both adaptation and mitigation strategies. Urban trees and woodlands are particularly important as a way of reducing the urban heat island effect and in removing air pollution from built up areas and highways. In certain situations, trees can also cool our built up areas in the heat of summer.

Biodiversity is a vital underpinning of a healthy environment. The myriad intricate connections between species all play a role in the creation of rich ecosystems where individual members, such as trees, can thrive.

With the UK target of carbon net neutrality by 2050, SKDC aims to Reduce emissions by 30% by 2030 and be completely net zero by 2050. To achieve these aims, the trees, woodlands and other elements of urban forests are key, alongside emission reductions.

Climate change poses a direct risk to the residents in South Kesteven; a warming climate increases risk of heatstroke, while increased rainfall will cause more frequent and more severe flooding. Biodiversity is also at risk, as species will struggle to adapt to warming climates, earlier springs and mild winters.

These considerations should be taken into account when managing trees and woodlands to ensure that the correct management practices are being enforced, tree and shrub species are as suitable to the future environment as possible and that biodiversity is protected and enhanced, with biodiversity net gain as a key drive.

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Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC's Local Plan

SKDC's Climate Action Strategy

SKDC's Sports and Physical Activity Strategy

Lincolnshire County Councils' Health and Wellbeing Strategy

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Targets and Priorities

3.2 Community Framework

This section considers the various communities that are required for a successful, long term approach to management of trees and woodland. This covers not only the local residents, but local government in all its forms, NGOs and commercial entities.

C1 South Kesteven District Council Departmental Co-operation

This target aims to encourage all departments within SKDC to consult and collaborate with the tree and woodland managers on issues relating to trees and woodland.

Regular communication across departments and agencies will be key to ensuring that trees and woodlands are considered to the fullest extent throughout the council. Key stakeholders to incorporate into this network are planning and development. Other key departments include Lincolnshire County Council and other district and parish councils, which although external to the council, still need to be involved in the process.

Opening communication channels and interdepartmental teams can help to coordinate tree and woodland management by providing knowledge and guidance to all council departments ,when required, in order to ensure that trees, woodland and green infrastructure are considered in full at all stages of decision making.

Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC's Local Plan

Colleagues from SKDC

C2 Community Involvement and Neighbourhood Action

At the neighbourhood level, communities and residents groups will be encouraged to participate and collaborate with SKDC and its partnering Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in tree and woodland management activities.

Collaborating with smaller community groups such as volunteers, schools and charity groups can encourage further community involvement with projects in small neighbourhoods and wider District areas, which would benefit the whole District. Neighbourhood activities often help the community members to connect more with their trees and woodlands, and encouraging communities to get involved will reduce the likelihood of conflict or opposition to tree planting.

Creating an interactive Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project (STEW-MAP) can be a useful tool for helping communities, organisations and individuals understand and manage their natural resources more effectively. It is a research methodology, community organising approach and partnership mapping tool developed by the USDA which shows who is responsible for the local environment. It could be an invaluable tool to engage local residents and establish a network of trees and woodlands capabilities across the district.

At a basic level, in order to create a STEW-MAP it is necessary to identify and involve stakeholders (local communities, environmental groups, governmental agencies, etc.), gather input on what data and features are important to them and identify the types of data needed (geographical, ecological, cultural, etc.). Appropriate GIS software for creating and managing the map must be chosen, with layers and visualisations developed to effectively represent the data. For a STEW-MAP and Assessment Project to be successful, it must engage and serve the needs of the community and stakeholders involved.

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Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC's Local Plan

The Charter for Trees, Woods and People

Volunteers supporting tree planting in Wyndham Park, Grantham

C3   General Appreciation of Trees as a Community Resource

In order for the strategy to be considered a true success, the most powerful legacy is that the residents of South Kesteven love, respect, appreciate and care for its trees.

Community initiatives could provide an invaluable opportunity to promote the progress made by the District in terms of urban greening and green infrastructure. School and youth involvement is a powerful tool, and volunteer tree wardens schemes have proven very successful all over the country.

Widely publicising events all year round - making good use of digital communications and social media - such as National Tree Week (usually in late November to early December), Arbor Day, planting days (winter time) and outdoor events, will bring focus onto South Kesteven's trees and woodlands, encouraging participation from those that live and work locally.

By engaging and encouraging the community in this way, trees and woodlands will be protected and enhanced for generations to come. Changing peoples' values can be difficult, but through education, celebration and engagement, the hope is that people will come to value the trees around them and the wider part which they play in the health of us all.

The same logic applies to us in our professional capacities as well as private, and also to the organisations that we belong to – private and public, commercial, nonprofit, governmental.

Sources and references:
Clark, J.R., Matheny, N.P., Cross, G. And Wake, V. (1997). A Model of Urban Forest Sustainability. Journal of Arboriculture. Volume: 23. Issue: 1

Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC's Local Plan

Design Guidelines for Rutland and South Kesteven

The Charter for Trees, Woods and People

National Tree Week

23 November – 1 December

"Having public agencies, private landholders, the green industry, and neighbourhood groups all share the same vision … is a crucial part of sustainability. This condition is not likely to result from legislation. It will only result from a shared understanding of … value to the community and commitment to dialogue and cooperation among the stakeholders."

Clark et al, 1997.

C4   Regional Collaboration

Regional collaboration means engagement with both Lincolnshire County Council and the other Districts that it comprises. It also manifests itself within the District at the level of the Parish Council.

Currently, Lincolnshire county is estimated to have just 4% canopy cover - LCC are working to improve this by planting 750,000 trees across the county (project start: 2021/22) - in an attempt to reach a goal of having one tree for each resident. Community planting days and highways projects have proven successful thus far. South Kesteven could benefit from this scheme by finding suitable space for new tree planting initiatives.

South Kesteven's trees and woodlands have an important role to play in the development of the network creating corridors and joining up habitat for wildlife. Individual woodlands and SSSIs can cross district boundaries; the species that depend upon them certainly do. Coordination on the management and public engagement regarding these vital green assets should provide better outcomes at lower costs.

South Kesteven District Council has worked closely with the Lincolnshire County Council in delivering the Local Authorities Treescapes Fund planting projects in 2021/2022.

Sources and references:
Linclonshire County Council - https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/news/article/1129/a-tree-for-every-resident-help-us-reach-our-tree-planting-target

Link to relevant corporate policies:

Lincolnshire District Councils' Health and Wellbeing Strategy

C5 Utilities Co-operation

C5 aims to ensure that all utilities – above and below ground – employ best management practices and cooperate with SKDC to advance goals and objectives related to urban forest issues and opportunities. This includes electric, gas, water, cable, telephone, fibre-optics, etc.

Utilities are required to follow certain standards for managing vegetation – including pruning branches, protecting roots, and performing overall management of trees and other vegetation that could impact their services, and District policies may also regulate certain utility management practices, such as overhead line clearance. Introducing and enforcing best practice standards which protect trees and other elements of the urban forest will be key, and collaboration with utilities could help advance the goals and objectives of the Tree and Woodlands Strategy.

Some utilities extend beyond the South Kesteven area. Figure 11 shows the water catchment areas which supply South Kesteven.

These areas are not constrained by political boundaries, and this should be taken into account when assessing how the urban forest and utilities interact. Water companies should also be encouraged to develop systems in which trees provide a vital role in water management.
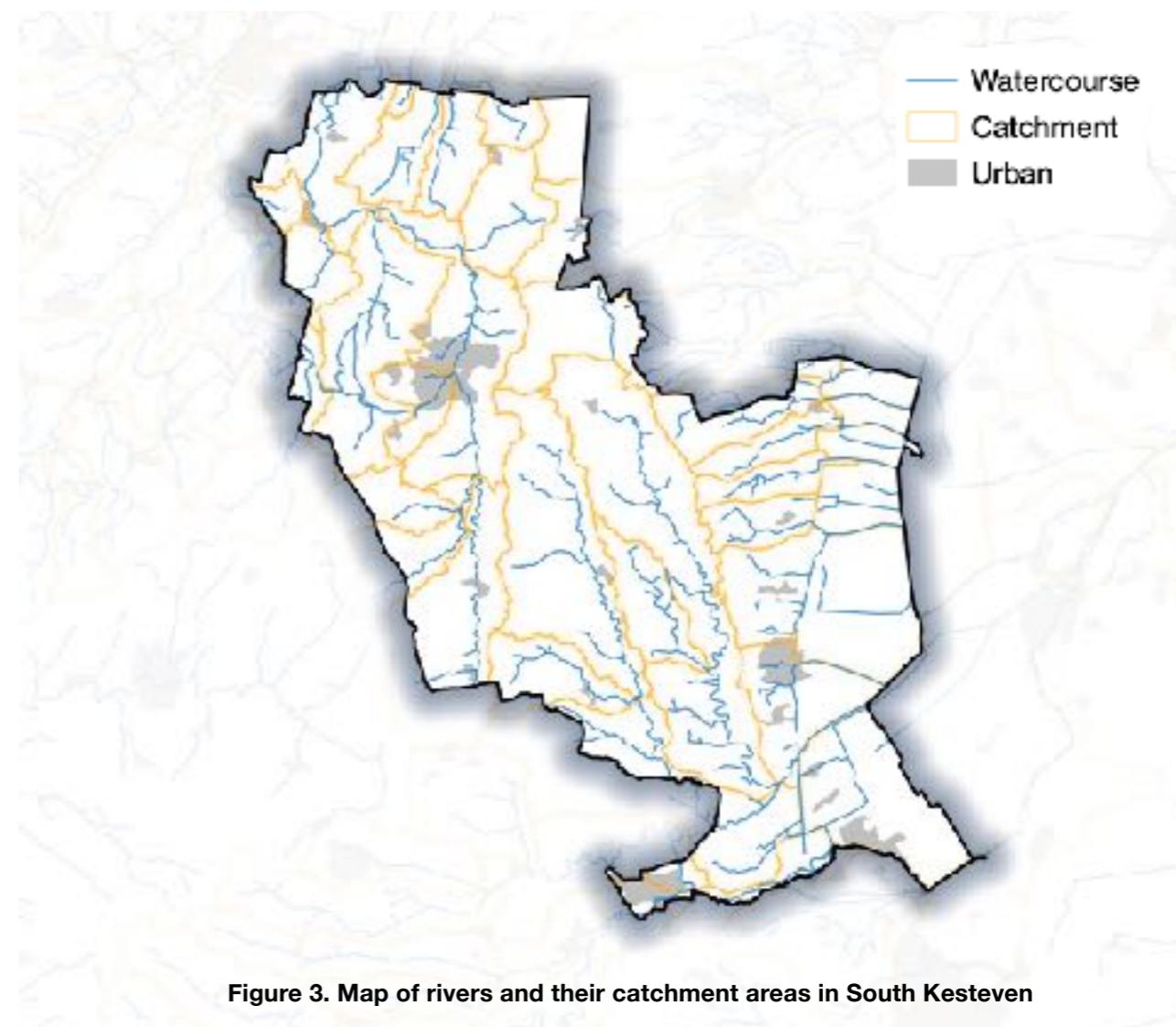

Figure 3. Map of rivers and their catchment areas in South Kesteven

View from the White Bridge in Wyndham Park, Grantham
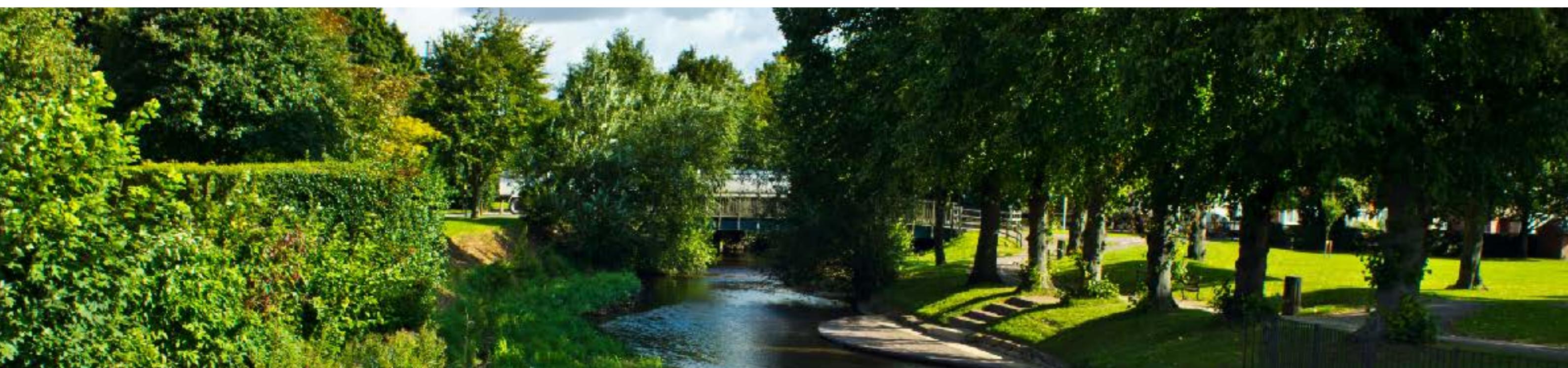
C6 Green Industry Co-operation

The "green industry" encompasses all professions and businesses that routinely support or engage in tree and vegetation management activities. Among others, these can include landscapers, nurseries, garden centres, contractors, maintenance professionals, tree care companies, landscape architects, foresters, plannersand developers.

SKDC will work together with green industries where relationships already exist to advance District-wide trees and woodlands goals and objectivesand adhere to high professional standards. Where appropriate, this will be done in conjunction with Lincolnshire CC and local parish councils.

Close co-operation with the green industry presents an excellent opportunity to influence management of the forest resource on private property.

South Kesteven is a large District, with the vast majority of the land area used for farming. Modern advancements and demands also mean that more open fields are being used for solar energy generation and wind farms.

Given land-holdings within South Kesteven include these key sectors for focused co-operation:

- Farming
- Renewable Energy (Wind & Solar)
- Forestry
- Tree Surgeons

Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC's Climate Action Strategy
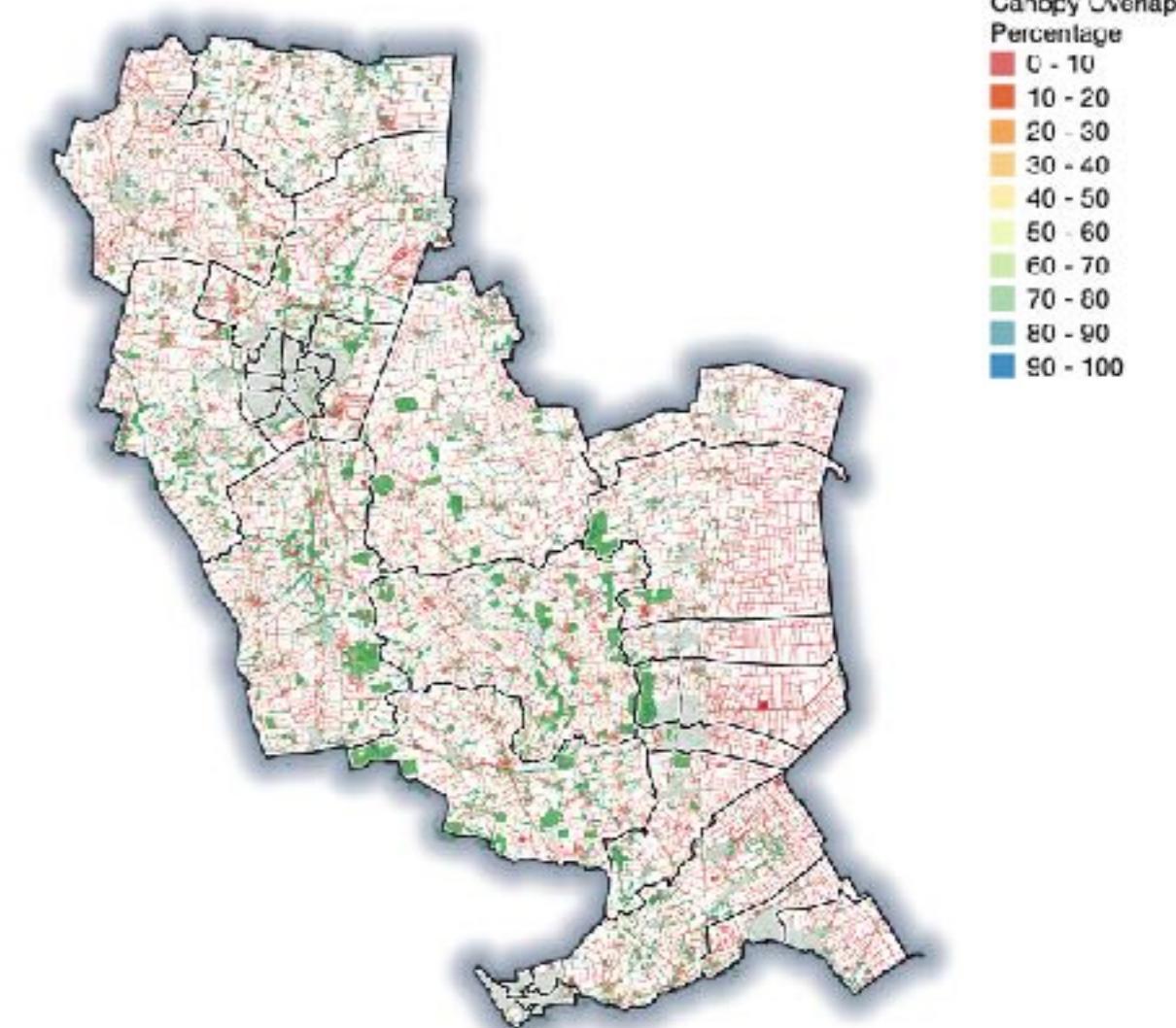
Figure 4. Map of hedgerows across South Kesteven coloured by the amount of tree canopy within them. Red indicates low tree cover, whilst green and blue indicates high tree cover.
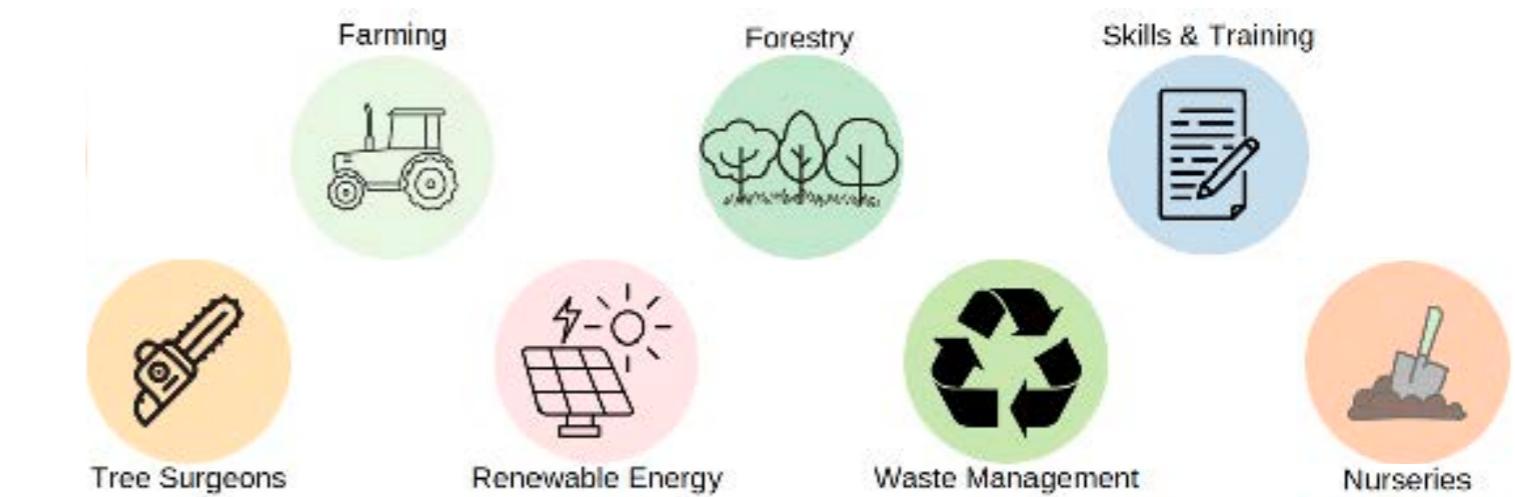
C7   Involvement of Private and Institutional Landholders

As a large proportion of land within the District is owned by private individuals, organisations and institutions, enlisting their help in enhancing and protecting trees and woodland is paramount. Outreach programmes, management plans and funding strategies will help to incorporate these landholders.

Communicating the benefits of trees will help inspire landholders and institutions to invest time and money in natural resources.

The goal is to help large private landholders embrace and advance District-wide tree and woodland goals and objectives by implementing specific resource management plans so that they can manage trees on their property in the most beneficial way.

There is also a also a suite of supplementary planning documents and Local Plan supporting documents for large developers such as:

- Design Guidelines for Rutland & South Kesteven SPD
- Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment)
- Habitat Regulations Assessment

The Local Plan is being reviewed. To inform the new Local Plan the following has been undertaken:

- Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping
- Green Infrastructure Mapping
- Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study

www.southkesteven.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning-policy-local-plans

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Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC's Local Plan

SKDC's Climate Action Strategy
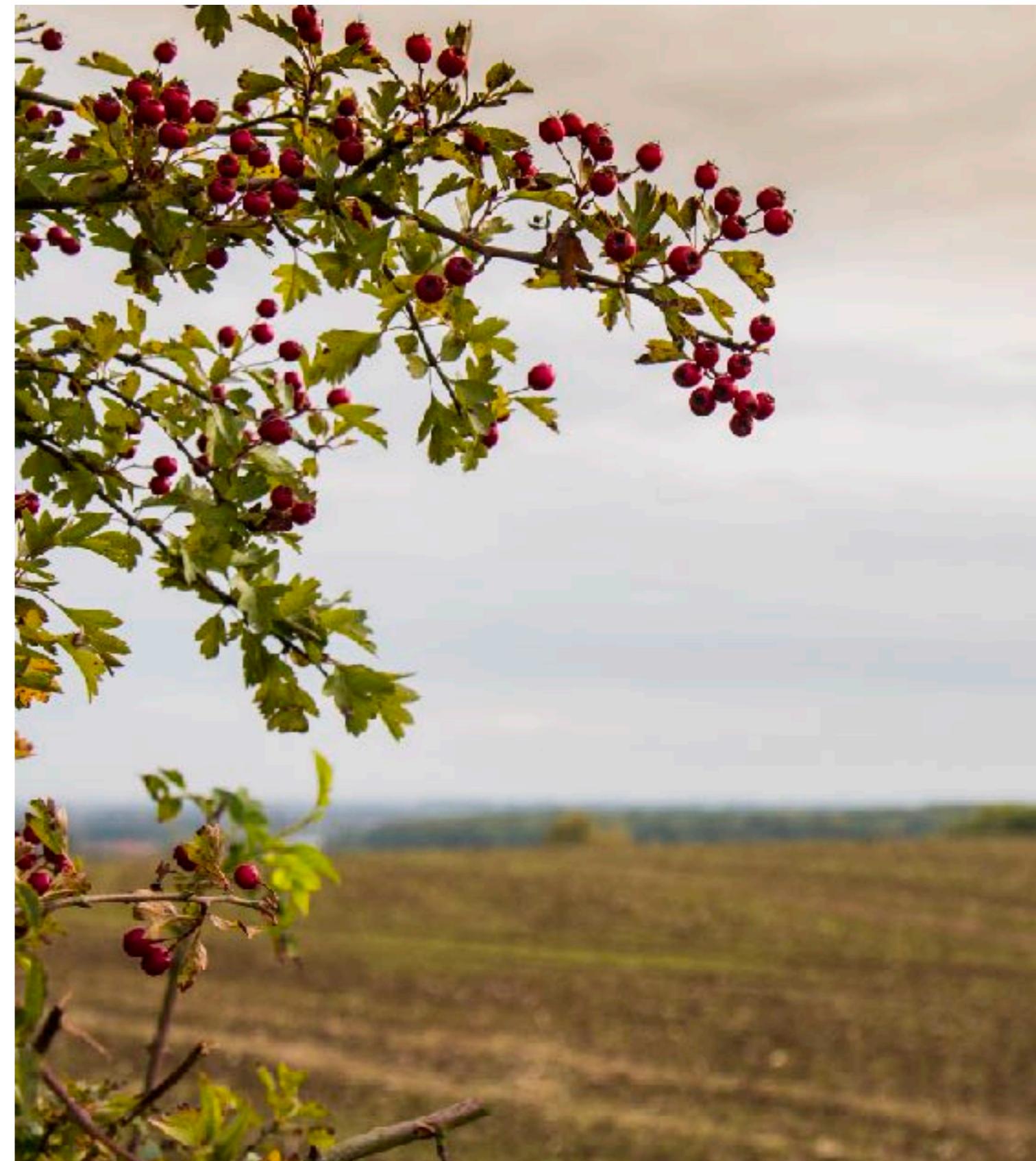
C8   Governance and Leadership

The aim of this target is to help all departments and agencies within SKDC to communicate and cooperate to advance goals and opportunities and address issues related to South Kesteven's treescape. Presently, SKDC work with other NGO's and agencies when necessary, however, building a focussed network of urban forest partners would be desirable. Following stakeholder workshops it was agreed that the creation of a South Kesteven Tree Board would benefit the District providing leadership and co-ordination in managing the District's treescape

As well as SKDC, a number of external partners will work with the council to manage and maintain the treescape. This includes, among others, Parish Councils, the Wildlife Trust, the Woodland Trust and the Local Nature Partnership.

Market Deeping

Targets and Priorities

3. Sustainable Resource Management Approach

This section considers deals with the practical management of the trees and woodland resource. For much of the trees and woodlands of South Kesteven District, this can mean seeking to engage and influence other land owners.

R1   Tree and Woodlands Inventory

A tree and woodland inventory is an exercise to take stock of the assets within the District as a whole. An understanding such as this is an essential starting point for establishing the structure of the trees and woodlands, including the number of trees, diversity of species and age distribution.

Inventory methodology needs to get the nature of the tree assets. Individual trees, often under a risk management protocol, or within a Tree Protection Order database, can be dealt with in detail in turn. Woodland trees and other large groups are more cost-effectively measured on a sample basis.

Sampling is also a very cost effective mechanism for establishing an understanding across all ownerships, where limited access to property is required, with remote sensing often allowing part of the task to be carried out without a site visit.

An inventory allows the setting of a baseline from which to monitor future progress and from which to manage the tree stock.

SKDC currently has an inventory of some publicly owned trees, however, a more comprehensive understanding of trees and woodlands across both public and private land is desirable.

Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC Tree Guidelines

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R2   Canopy Cover Assessment and Goals

Assessing canopy cover is vital, as this metric is used frequently as a figure which is clear and easy to compare with other areas. Whilst canopy cover is not a thorough study of the health and diversity and therefore overall benefit of tress and woodlands, it is an important aspect which should not be overlooked simply for its simplicity.

This target involves assessing the existing canopy cover in detail, and setting goals based on reasonable potential canopy cover and achievable steps to maximising cover. This leads into T1-'Relative Tree Canopy Cover'- and would provide the necessary baseline for achieving that target. It is important that any tree canopy target is achievable within a reasonable time frame, and considered within the wider context of the strategy.

The IUCN Urban Alliance suggest a 30% tree canopy cover target, which has been adopted by many cities around the world.

It should also be noted that tree planting does not necessarily provide an instant increase to canopy cover; in an urban setting trees are constantly being felled for any number of reasons, so insufficient planting can contribute to making up the deficit without actually increasing canopy cover.

Figure 1: Canopy Cover by Ward
Doick Et Al., 2017. England Canopy Cover Measured Over 283 Towns and Cities by Forest Research
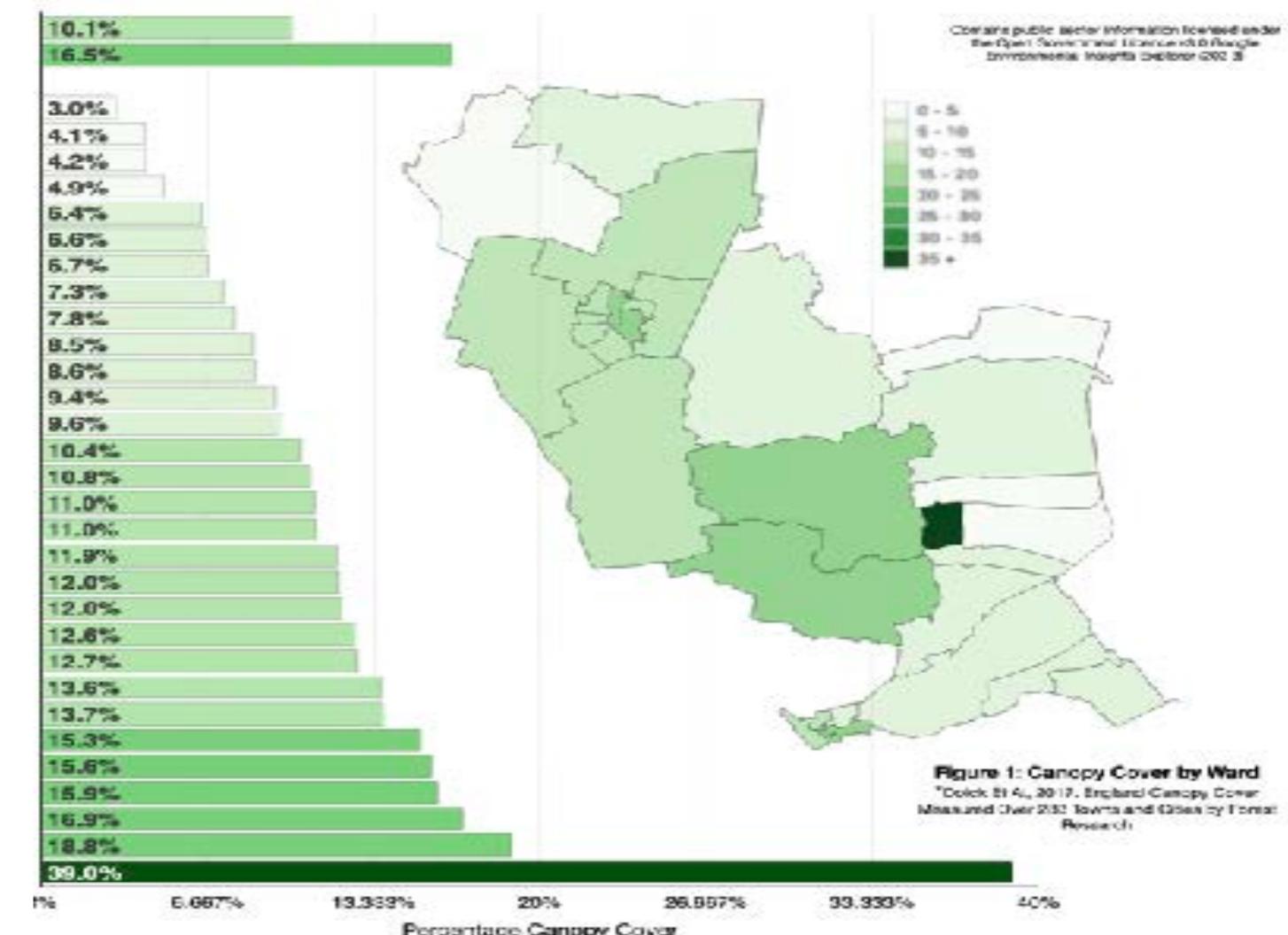
City	London	Bristol	Plymouth	Cambridge	Torbay
Existing Canopy Cover	21% (2015)	18% (2018)	18.5% (2017)	17% (2008)	12% (2011)
2050 Target	30%	30%	20%	19%	20%

Table 2: Other Canopy Cover Estimates and Goals

Link to relevant corporate policies:

Climate Action Strategy

R3   Tree Valuation and Asset Management Approach

Tree valuation is an important part of managing and promoting trees and woodlands. With the trees valued, local people can understand the value of trees beyond the material worth. With these figures to hand, advocating for trees becomes easier.

Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees (CAVAT) was developed by the London Tree Officers Association (LTOA) and others in 2008. It is one of the principal methods of tree valuation in the UK, and aims to provide a method for managing trees as assets rather than liabilities. It can be used for individual trees or for the tree stock as a whole. Documents related to CAVAT including a user guide and the spreadsheet calculator can be viewed online at: **https://ltoa.org.uk/documents-1/capital-asset-value-for-amenity-trees-cavat.**

The CAVAT system is only really appropriate when applied to trees that are visible to the public. Furthermore, SKDC's individual woodlands are currently not subject to an asset valuation. These knowledge gaps will be addressed in the future.

The various valuation systems all use tree measurements as their starting point, larger trees generally being worth more. This infers that any valuation of trees can only be done following the creation of a tree inventory or plot based sample study (R1).

Link to relevant corporate policies:

The Charter for Trees, Woods and People

Bourne Memorial Gardens

R4   Green Network Connectivity / Woodland Creation

Green network connectivity is vital for maintaining habitats at a scale suitable for our native species. A core principle in understanding such a network is to see it as a hub and spoke configuration. Hubs are those areas with the richest concentration of flora and fauna and usually the highest level of statutory protection. Good candidates to build a hub and spoke approach within South Kesteven are the towns and major road networks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), special areas of conservationand areas of ancient woodland.

South Kesteven has large areas of Grade 1 and Grade 2 agricultural land preventing large scale woodland creation. For this reason green network connectivity has focused on the Districts hedgerows. A mapping exercise was carried out to establish where hedgerow creation and enhancement may be used to improve connectivity. Datasets expressing the percentage field boundaries are overlapped by tree canopy, with a percentage figure of how much each hedge-line or boundary line is overlapped by canopy. This gives an indication as to the "gappyness" of hedges whether 100% covered in canopy or not at all.

Canopy Overlap Percentage
- 0 - 10
- 10 - 20
- 20 - 30
- 30 - 40
- 40 - 50
- 50 - 60
- 60 - 70
- 70 - 80
- 80 - 90
- 90 - 100

Map of hedgerows across South Kesteven coloured by the amount of tree canopy within them. Red indicates low tree cover, whilst green and blue indicates high tree cover.

Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC's Local Plan

South Kesteven and Rutland Infrastructure Delivery Plan

SKDC's Sports and Physical Activity Strategy
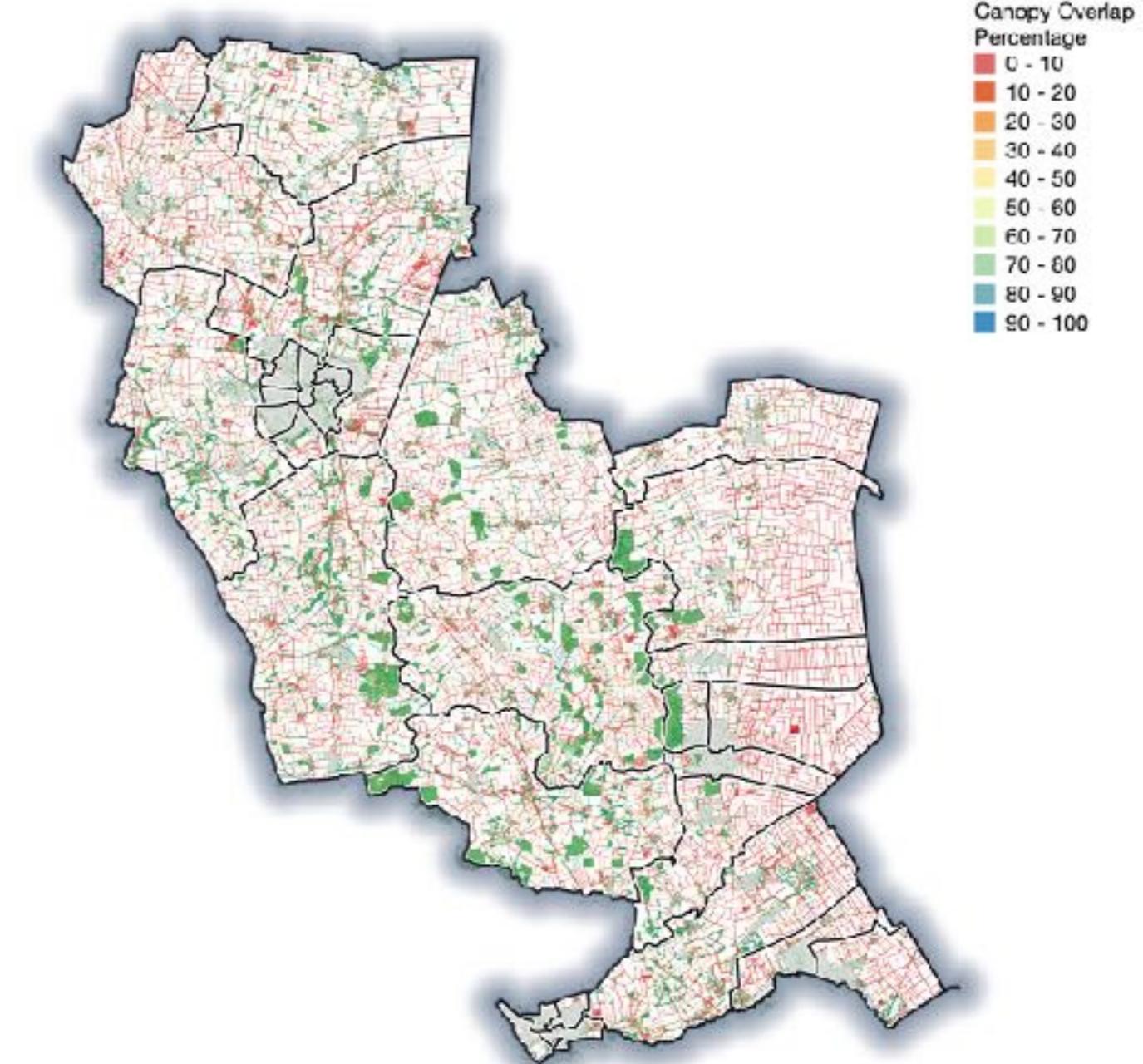
R5   Environmental Justice and Equity

South Kesteven District Council have declared a climate emergency, recognising the threat to people, animals and habitats worldwide. Within South Kesteven District, those threats are likely to arrive in the form of hotter drier summers and warmer wetter winters - more periods of drought, more heat and a greater risk of surface flooding.

Trees have a significant role to play in creating resilient places to live for both humans and wildlife. Their largest contribution is the through the active cooling created by evapotranspiration as the trees draw water up from the ground when actively photosynthesising. Combined with physical shade, this can lower temperatures to a point where it can still remain quite pleasant to be outdoors even in the heat of the day.

Trees also, by virtue of their expansive canopies, capture water before it gets to the ground, reducing surface water run off. In using water as part of their natural growing processes, they also create space in the soil for new water ingress to take place at the next rainfall.

Trees are one of the most important tools in the climate resilience toolbox. It is important that they are deployed on as wide a basis as possible, which will require identifying and then addressing ares with lower tree cover.

This target aims to ensure that the planting and management of trees can be focussed in the areas where it will most benefit the local people, by increasing planting in the areas with the lowest canopy cover. Tree management plans in these areas   include community engagement and neighbourhood outreach to maximise the benefits of trees in the area.

Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC's Local Plan

South Kesteven and Rutland Infrastructure Delivery Plan

SKDC's Sports and Physical Activity Strategy

Lincolnshire District Councils' Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Autumn in Market Deeping

R6 Funding

Securing sufficient funding on an annual basis is vital to not only secure and grow local municipal funding, but also to expand and diversify finances for tree and woodland funding.

There are several government schemes for funding tree planting of different types, from woodland establishment to urban forestry.

Whilst funding for tree planting is readily available, funding for management and monitoring of trees and woodland needs further investigation.

Private-sector funding as well as funding from one-off projects offer additional opportunities.

Three broad routes exist:

1. External funds from central government directed at different parties e.g.
    i. Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCF) for street trees
    ii. Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF) for other trees and replacement street trees
    iii. ELMS
2. External funds from major NGOs such as the Woodland Trust Emergency Tree Fund
3. Levies and agreements within the planning system- best practice directs funds within developments to make good / surpass any tree loss on a fully funded basis using a more appropriate metric than tree numbers, which do not reflect the impact on ecosystem services from the loss of large trees.

Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC's Local Plan

Wyndham Park, Grantham

R7   Capacity and Staffing

Adequate staffing means there are enough staff with the correct training and experience to carry out all necessary tasks relating to the implementation and day-to-day running of the tree and woodland programme. This may mean hiring new staff or arranging further training for current staff.

This includes anyone involved in the delivery of tree management and implementation, e.g., Tree Wardens and other volunteers, Tree Officers, Parks and Countryside staff, etc.
One of the key limiters of this target is money, therefore fully costing the Tree Strategy and establishing a dedicated and coordinated budget is the first step.

A fully costed budget to deliver this plan can be used to help obtain the necessary funding to deliver the plan. This funding would then allow for the important longer term work.

One approach may be to encourage SKDC and LCC to promote future employment training for school leavers. If there is capacity within the team and budget, develop a work experience programme to encourage the next generation to be highly skilled in land based industries (Grow your own).

Tree planting initiatives

# R8   Tree Establishment - Planning and Implementation

Tree planting is more complex than most people realise; it is more than simply sticking trees in the ground. In order to ensure the trees survive, thrive and reach their full potential, the right tree species must be selected, be planted in the right place, be planted for the right reasons and be planted and maintained in the right way. This way, the trees are given the best chance to survive and avoid being removed again further down the line.

Right reason- Tree planting should focus not just on quantity, but also quality. Trees can benefit future generations by mitigating climate change, improving biodiversity and enhancing health and well-being.

Right place- Location is key when planting, particularly where conditions can be less than ideal. Trees require space to grow, both above ground and below, of a scale appropriate to its size when fully grown. Potential conflicts should be understood early before deciding to plant.

Right tree- The benefits and drawbacks of different species must be considered, including site suitability, climate tolerance, size, rooting characteristics, aesthetics (canopy, leaves, flowers, etc.), ecosystem service provision, biodiversity and more.

Right way- How the tree should be planted may vary depending on where the tree is, but all trees need the same essentials: good soil volume for root establishment, water, particularly for young trees and trees in urban areas which may struggle, air and support to keep it upright whilst its roots establish, protection from damage, and maintenance. In urban areas, hard paved impermeable surfaces present challenges which trees are not adapted to deal with, such as soil compaction, nutrient recycling and reduced water infiltration. These issues should be considered to help establish a healthy, long-lasting urban forest.

Source: Young tree aftercare: https://www.trees.org.uk/Trees.org.uk/media/Trees-org.uk/Documents/Tree%20Aftercare/Young-Tree-Aftercare-A3-web.pdf

Link to relevant corporate policies:

Design Guidelines for Rutland and South Kesteven

R9   Growing Site Suitability

This target links to the R9 target, specifically on choosing the right tree. Often trees are selected purely for their aesthetic attributes, however this can mean that the tree suffers if the site conditions have not been taken into account.

Site suitability should be investigated from the ground up, starting with soil. Urban soils are often very poor or non existent, so it is vital to know what is there and what the tree will need before it is planted. Other site considerations include the amount of light, ie if the tree will be in permanent shade from buildings or not, the amount of impermeable service surrounding the site which would limit the amount of water infiltrating through to the roots, and the amount of space both above ground and below ground to facilitate tree growth. Once these things have been assessed, the right tree can be planted in the space.

Guidelines should be put into place for all tree planting, to ensure that trees can fulfil their maximum potential and provide the maximum benefit for the District. Any planning relating to trees should adhere to BS 8545 (Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape) and BS 5837 (Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction). In particular, trees must be a priority in planning and development rather than an afterthought to ensure they are given enough space to mature. This should be extended for both public and private development and consistently enforced. This links to R10-'Tree Protection Policy Development and Enforcement'.

Link to relevant corporate policies:

Design Guidelines for Rutland and South Kesteven
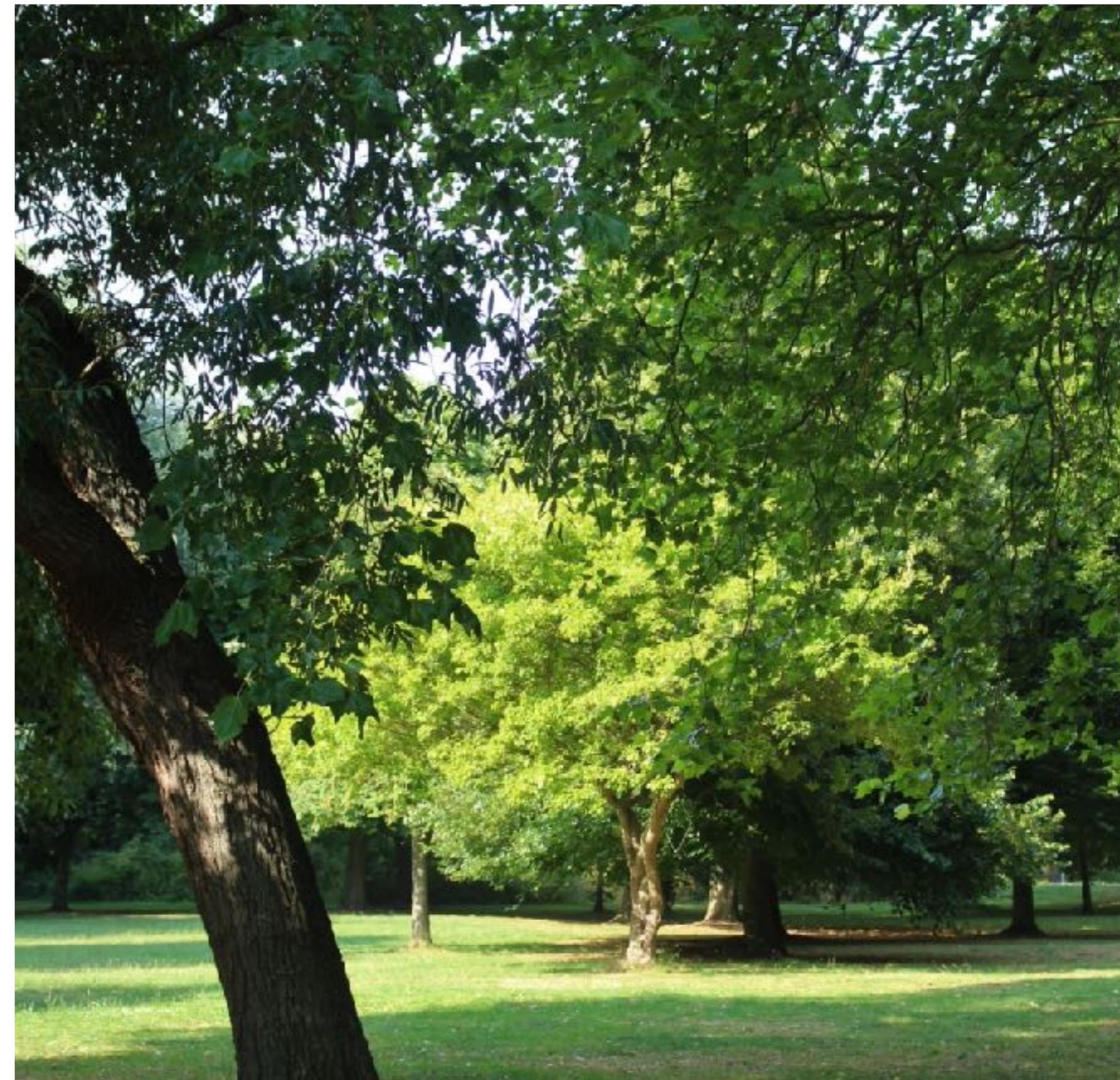
Tree cover in Queen Elizabeth Park, Grantham

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R10   Tree Protection Policy Development and Enforcement

Urban trees are sometimes viewed as irritating and costly, dropping leaves on lawns, causing blocked drains, and damaging foundations and pipes with their roots. They may also be considered dangerous as branches can fall seemingly without warning, if they are not managed. For all these reasons and more, people may want to remove trees from public land or private properties.

Trees can and should be protected, and most councils have guidance in place; South Kesteven have conservation areas and Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's). Trees may also be protected as part of planning conditions associated with planning approval. To carry out works to a tree protected by a TPO consent from the Local Planning Authority is needed through submitting a tree works application.

To carry out works to a tree in a conservation area a six-week notice of intention must be submitted to the Local Planning Authority. This is known as a 'Section 211' notice. The Local Planning Authority can either accept the notice or make a TPO.

Polices and guidelines must be enforced in both public and private sectors. The public must be made aware of these policies to ensure they are kept up to date with the best practice guidance and ensure they know where and how to find further information before undertaking any work.

Under the Town and Country Planning legislation the local planning authority may protect important trees in the District by making Tree Preservation Orders. Any unauthorised works to such protected trees is a criminal offence. Trees in Conservation Areas are also afforded a degree of protection under the planning legislation. Unauthorised work to and/or removal of trees in a Conservation Area also constitutes a criminal offence.

The Council has powers to prosecute offenders and/or require replacement trees to be provided. In circumstances where it is a first offence, the Council may offer the defendant a caution and ask for a contribution towards their costs instead of a formal prosecution. If there is a repeat offence, the caution will be presented to the courts in any subsequent prosecution.

Link to relevant corporate policies:

SKDC's Local Plan

SKDC's Tree Guidelines
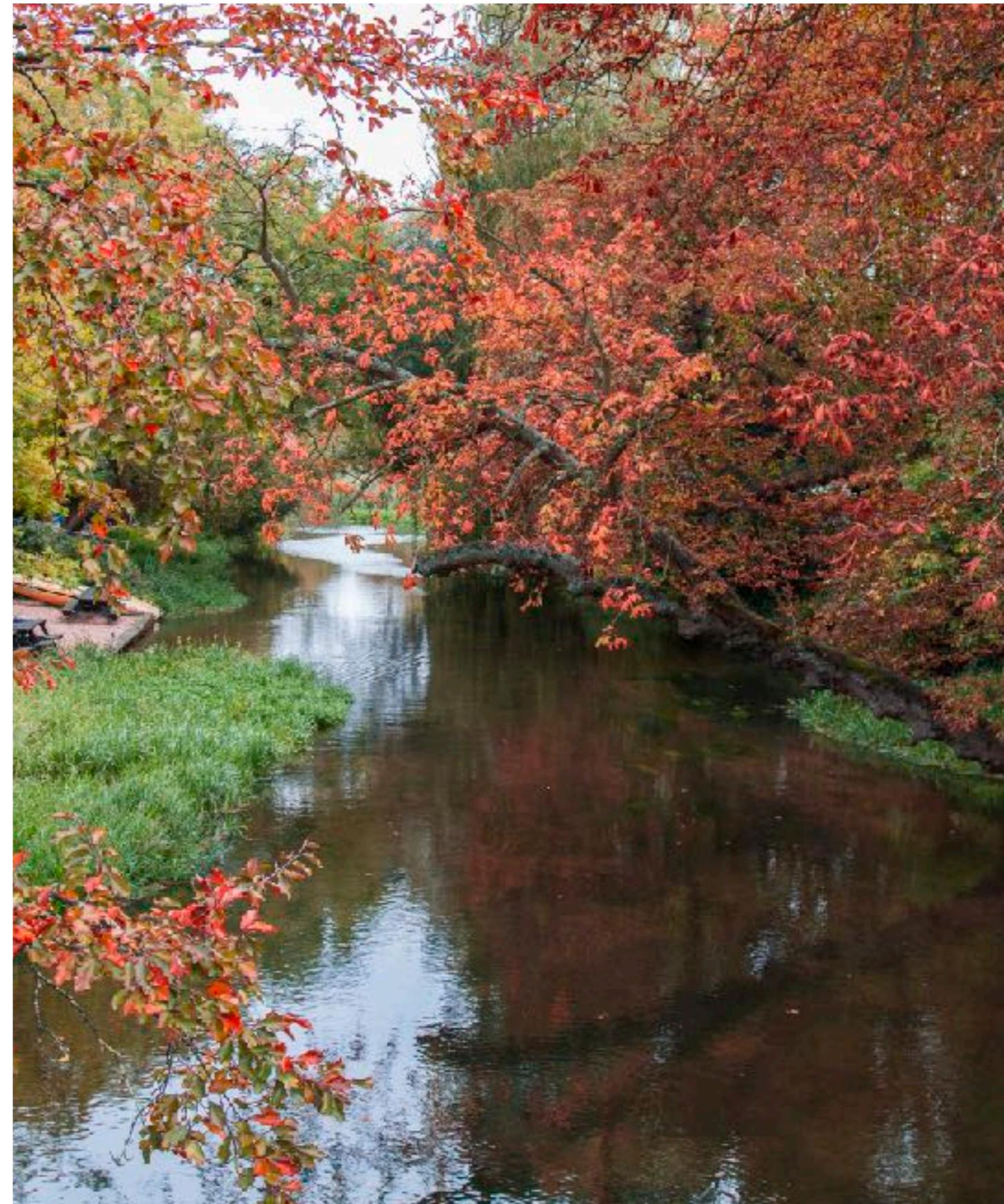
Autumn in Market Deeping

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R11 Trees, Woodland and Green Waste Utilisation

Trees are a resource in many ways, from providing ecosystem services like carbon storage and pollution removal to bearing fruits and supporting wildlife. Often when a tree is felled the branches are chipped and used for mulch or compost, with larger timber being used for firewood or biomass energy.

However a tree's value as a resource does not necessarily end when the tree dies or requires felling.

Although much green waste is used for composting there is potential to generate income through the by-products of tree and woodland management. Trees can be processed into various wood products like timber for construction, furniture, or artisan crafts.

R12   Tree Risk Management

Existing tree management policy covering South Kesteven DC owned trees is not under review within this trees and woodland strategy. However, these are its principal components :

- tree/woodland maintenance
- tree protection policy
- risk management

Existing practice for risk management and associated tree maintenance is considered to serve South Kesteven District well and is in keeping with its scale in terms of both numbers of residents and budgets.

Tree preservation orders (TPOs), intended to protect significant/important trees irrespective of ownership is an area where improved communication (see section 3.2) combined with more consistent enforcement could have substantial impact.

Sources and references:
National Tree Safety Group. (2011). Common sense risk management of trees. Forestry Commission

Link to relevant corporate policies:

South Kesteven and Rutland Infrastructure Delivery Plan
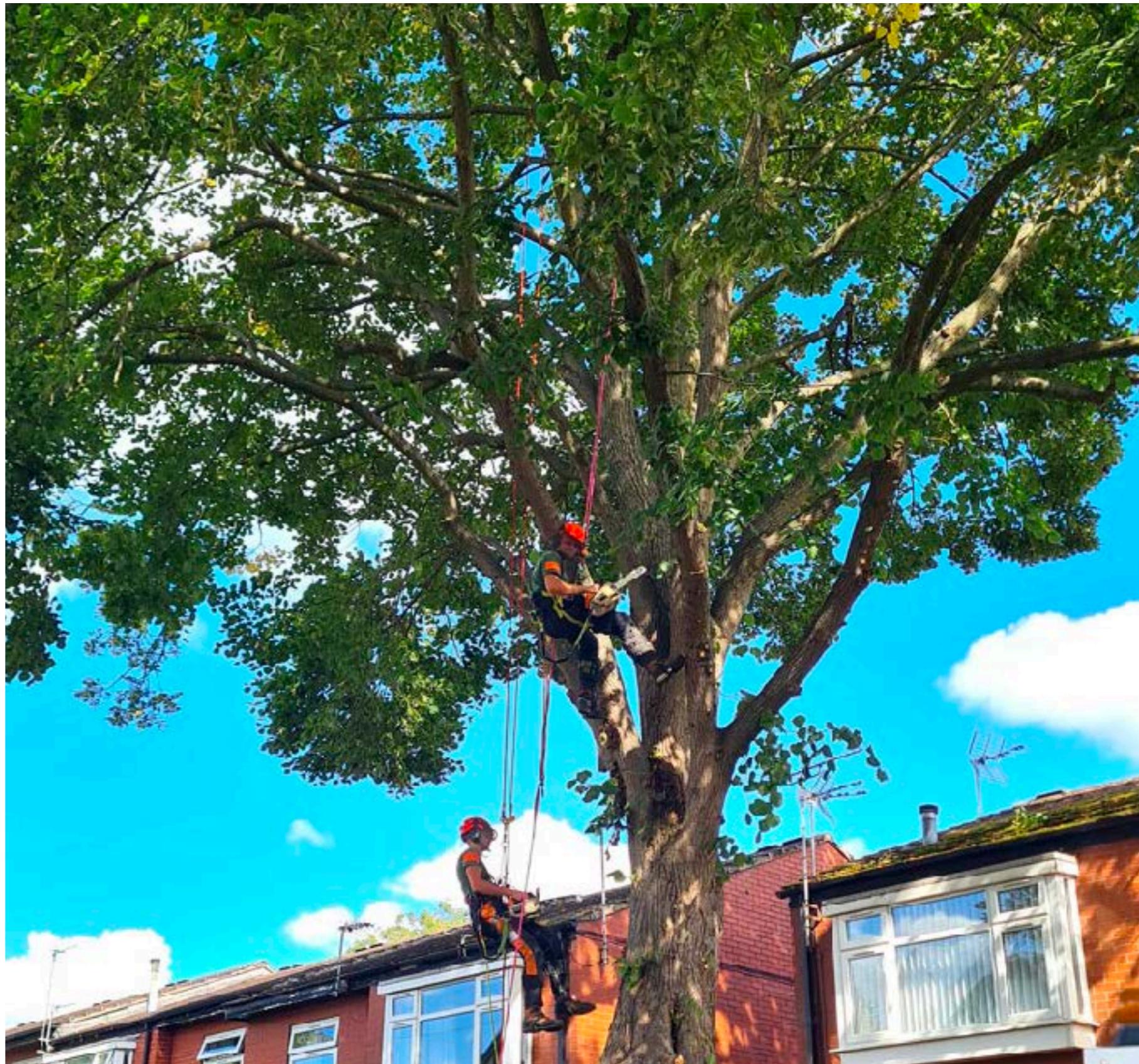
SKDC's Tree Guidelines

R13   Biosecurity

Biosecurity refers to the need to prevent new pests and diseases being introduced into the UK from abroad. This measure is necessary to stop the spread of potentially devastating organisms and protect forestry, agriculture and horticulture. In recent history, the introduction of Dutch Elm Disease (*Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*) killed 20 million mature English elm trees between its introduction in the late 1960's and 1980. By 1990, this figure had risen to 25 million- over 85% of the British population. Now, Ash Dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is sweeping through the country and will likely kill off 80% of ash trees across the UK.

These diseases and others will continue to have a profound effect on trees and woodlands. Native tree species provide vital habitat for many other species and without them there would be a huge ecological deficit.

The importation of trees, particularly large landscape trees, from across Europe and elsewhere can increase the risk of diseases being introduced to the UK.

South Kesteven District Council must take responsibility for the sourcing of its trees, and actively work to eliminate pests and diseases from its trees and woodlands and prevent new diseases becoming prolific.
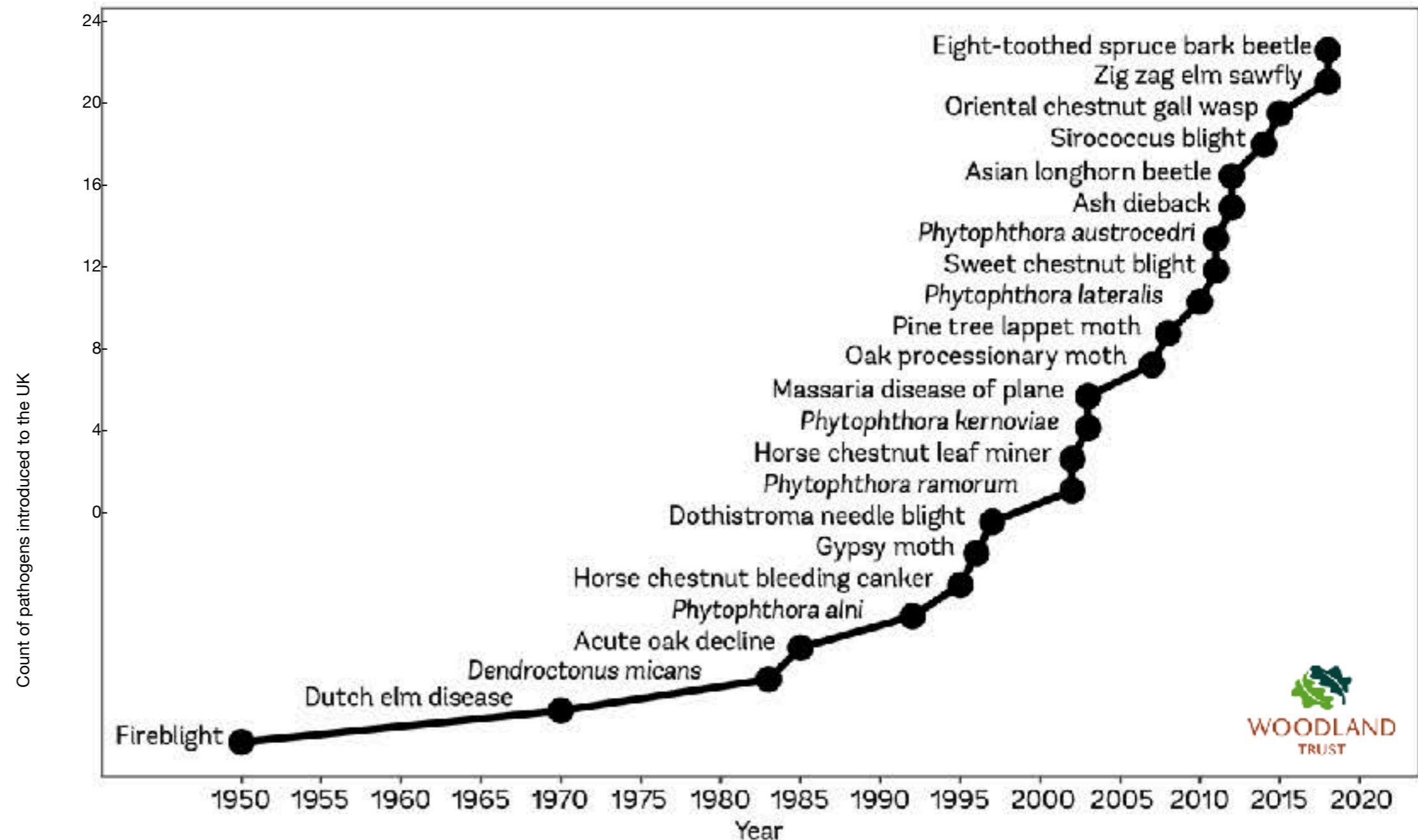
Figure 6: Tree pest and disease introduction in the UK

R14   Native and Non-native Trees

Trees and woodlands are a diverse place, consisting of a range of trees and plants from all over the world. Whilst diversity is key to a healthy treescape, native plants should be selected above non-native species whenever appropriate. Native species of trees, shrubs, fungi, ferns, insects, mammals, birds and more have evolved together in the UK, each finding and filling an ecological niche in which to thrive.

The balance between species in an ecosystem is delicate: just one missing link could tip the system out of balance.

Trees provide habitats for a whole range of species. In the UK, English oak (*Quercus robur*) supports more organisms than any other tree; more than 1,000 insect species have been identified to date on oaks in central Europe, with at total of 2,300 different species relying on oak in the UK. Without native trees, other native species may struggle to find suitable habitats and therefore suffer.

Sources and references:
PuRpOsE: Protect Oak Ecosystems, 2019. https://protectouroaks.wordpress.com/work-packages/wp4/purpose-impact-event/
https://herbaria.plants.ox.ac.uk/bol/ancientoaksofengland/distribution
The Woodland Trust. (2022) Ancient Tree Inventory -
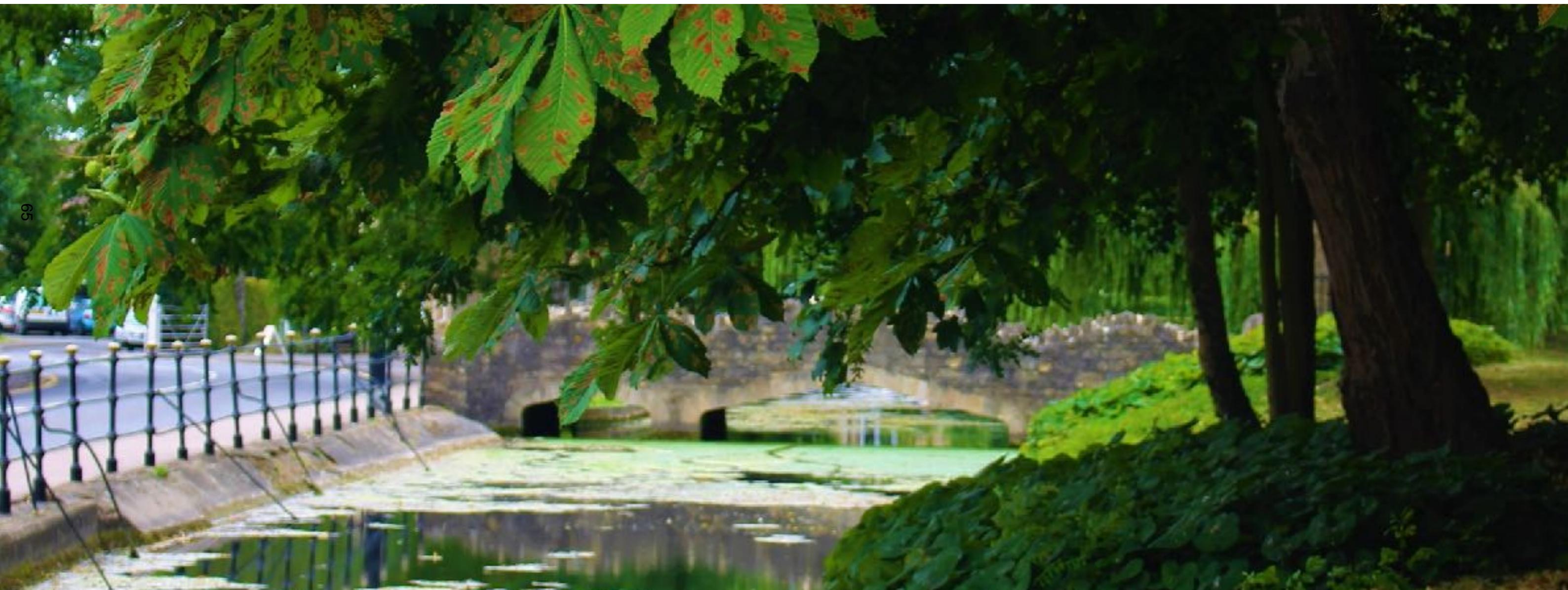
R15   Open Data and Web-map (Management and Assessment Tools)

Management and assessment tools are fundamental and indispensable when considering a resource as vast as the urban forest. Being able to clearly see tree data would help the trees and woodland management team keep track of the trees, and make the public aware of them and their value.

A web-map is an interactive tool for displaying information to the public about trees and woodlands, and data can be broken down by parish and ward. They can display a range of things including tree benefits such as canopy cover, annual ecosystem benefits (avoided runoff, carbon sequestration, air pollution removal), and tree condition, to name a few. They are an excellent way to engage with the public and communicate benefits of trees.

In creating a public web-map, tree data could be easily communicated and compared. Ideally the tool will be accessible, easy to use and comprehensive for all the trees and woodlands of SKDC. The data should be kept up to date with the most recent reviews of the urban forest.

Implicit in the creation of a web map is the collection of the data that underpins it - see R1
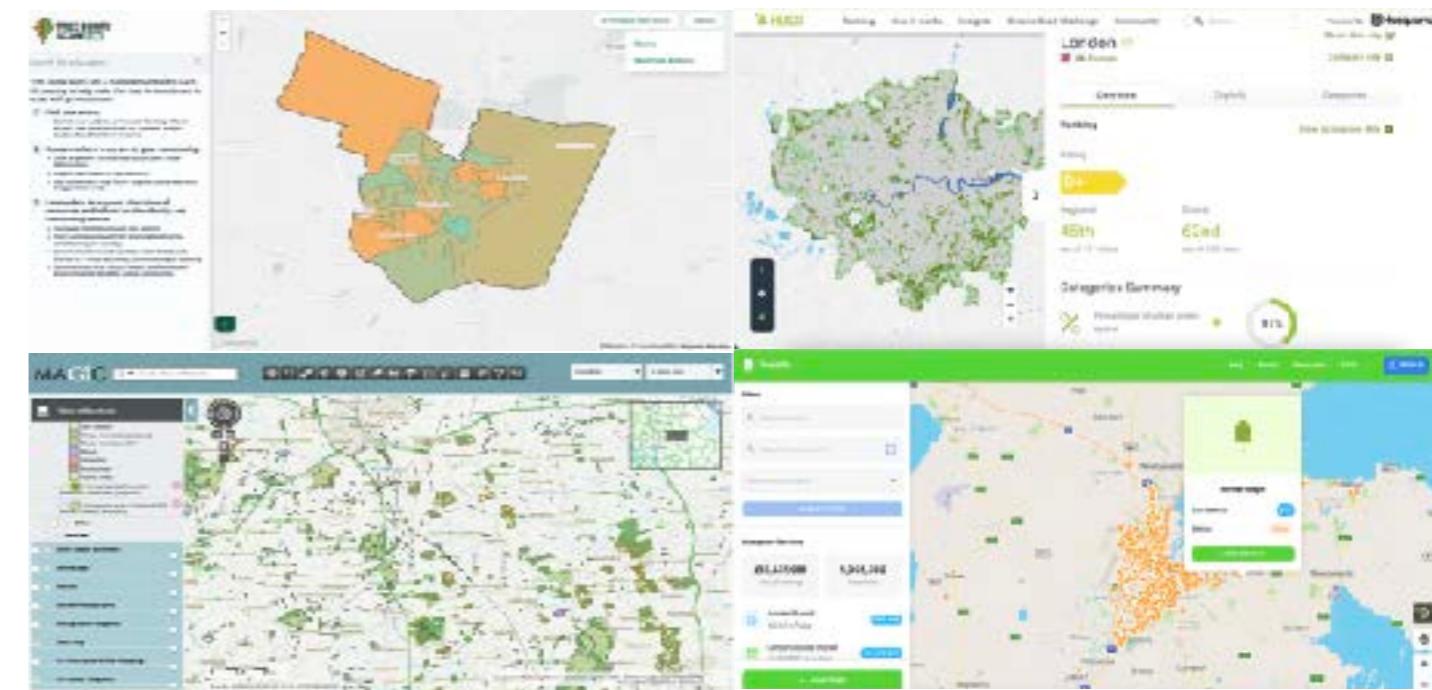
Figure 7: A selection of online mapping tools.
Top right - Hugsi (https://www.hugsi.green/city/?London)
Top left - Tree Equity Score UK (https://uk.treeequityscore.org/map#11.72/52.9204/-0.626)
Bottom Left - DEFRA's Magic Map (https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx)
Bottom right - Treezilla (https://treezilla.org)

R16   Reviewing and Improving the Strategy

South Kesteven District Council is taking a strategic approach to its trees and woodlands. It follows an action based model more widely used in countries like the US and Canada. The Plan will help South Kesteven District Council set and work towards a vision for its trees that is sustainable well into the future.

The Trees and Woodlands Strategy outlines a vision for the development of the urban and rural tree resource. It provides a long-term framework in which strategic plans can be developed.

Tree-planting programmes are just one element of tree and woodland management, and long-term management plans are just as important. With a tree and woodland management plan in place, tree planting programmes can be focused and strategised, as well as better guiding the achievement of a long-term vision.

With agreement on an ambitious vision, the Tree Strategy can be divided into management periods, with goals and targets clearly outlined. A series of performance indicators will then be put into place to monitor performance and help progress towards the achievement of goals and the wider vision.

It is important that progress is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis, and actions modified as necessary. This way, SKDC can focus on the most relevant and urgent areas going forward.

The Tree Strategy is an ongoing piece of work and this document represents the first step and will be subject to ongoing improvement and updating. For each and every target within the plan, further detail will be added and projects will be planned and actioned to take SKDC towards its vision.

South Kesteven District Council
Trees & Woodland Strategy
2024 - 2034

Treeconomics

SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Alternative formats are available on request: audio, large print and braille

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SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

South Kesteven District Council
Trees & Woodland Strategy 2024 - 2034

Action Plan

3.1 Trees and Woodland Structure

Target	Actions	Responsibility	Review	Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (▢) and Target (■,▢) positions			
					Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
T1 - Relative Tree Canopy Cover	1. Protect existing trees 2. Right tree right place 3. Work with private landowners (poss tree give aways etc). Parish agreements 4. Identify planting opportunities. Planting opportunity mapping (LCC). BNG - Developer LNRS	SKDC – From parish level up	2026	High	The existing canopy cover equals 0–25% of the potential.	The existing canopy cover equals 25-50% of the potential.	The existing canopy cover equals 50–75% of the potential.	The existing canopy cover equals 75–100% of the potential.
T2 - Size (Age) Diversity	1. Ancient woodland mapped and ATI (wood pasture) recording completed across district 2. Review quality of SKDC Tree inventory data	SKDC	2026	Medium	Even age distribution or highly skewed toward a single age class.	Some uneven distribution, but most of the tree population falls into a single age class.	Total tree population across district approaches an ideal age distribution of 40% juvenile, 30% semi-mature, 20% mature, and 10% senescent.	Total population approaches that ideal distribution borough-wide as well as at the ward level.
T3 Species Diversity	1. Create a tree planting strategy and diversity index	SKDC	2026	Medium	Five or fewer species dominate the entire tree population across the district.	No single species represents more than 10% of total tree population; no genus more than 20%; and no family more than 30%.	No single species represents more than 5% of total tree population; no genus more than 10%; and no family more than 15%.	At least as diverse as "Good" rating (5/10/15) district-wide – and at least as diverse as "Moderate" (10/20/30) at the neighbourhood level.
T4 Species Suitability	1. Create a supplementary document on species suitability	SKDC	2026	Medium	Fewer than 50% of all trees are from species considered suitable for the area.	>50%-75% of trees are from species suitable for the area.	More than 75% of trees are suitable for the area.	Virtually all trees are suitable for the area.
T5 Publicly Owned Trees	1. Review quality of SKDC Tree Inventory data SKDC		2026	Low	Condition of urban forest is unknown.	Sample-based tree inventory indicating tree condition and risk level.	Complete tree inventory that includes detailed tree condition ratings.	Complete tree inventory that is GIS-based and includes detailed tree condition as well as risk ratings.

Target	Actions	Responsibility	Review	Priority	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
T6 Trees on Other Land (Influence)	1. Ancient woodland mapping & ATI recording 2. Engage with private land owners to share inventories and increase understanding of privately owned trees & woodlands 3. Orchard creation initiatives and tree give aways	SKDC	2026	Medium	No information about privately owned trees.	Aerial, point-based assessment of trees on private property, capturing overall extent and location.	Bottom-up, sample-based assessment of trees on private property, as well as basic aerial view (as described in "Moderate" rating).	Bottom-up, sample-based assessment on private property, as well as detailed Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) analysis of entire urban forest, integrated into district-wide GIS system.
T7 Tree Benefits	1. Explore the use of i-Tree tools to establish ecosystem services provided by the districts tree	SKDC	2026	Medium	No comprehensive information available about tree benefits in the district.	Some information available on key tree benefits, such as biodiversity.	Sound information available on a key set of tree benefits, such as biodiversity, recreation, environmental services (see below).	Comprehensive information available on all tree benefits across the district.
T8 Wider Environmental Considerations	1. Priority zones to be identified where specific benefits can have the highest impact. (Shade, storm water, pollution etc.) with species choice related to species ability to deliver required benefits	SKDC		Medium	No consideration/ information that relates urban trees to climate change, air quality, water.	Some consideration of environmental aspects in relation to urban trees, e.g. looking at climate change.	Consideration of at least major environmental aspects in relation to urban trees.	Full consideration of environmental aspects in relation to trees, based on comprehensive, state-of-the-art information.

3.2 Community Framework

Target	Actions	Responsibility	Review	Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current ( ) and Target (,) positions			
					Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
C1 SKDC Departmental Co-operation	1. Identify policy areas across all departments where trees and woodlands can contribute or are potentially impacted 2. Ensure enforcement is followed, where in the public interest to do so, for any unapproved works to protected trees 3. Review best practice for local plan policies on tree protection (retain trees and a requirement for greater than 1:1 replacement)	SKDC	2026	High	Departments/ agencies take actions impacting urban forest with no cross-departmental coordination, consultation or consideration of the urban forest resource.	Departments/ agencies recognise potential conflicts and reach out to urban forest managers on an ad hoc basis – and vice versa.	Informal teams among departments and agencies communicate regularly and collaborate on a project-specific basis.	UF policy implemented by formal interdepartmental/ interagency working teams on all projects.

C2 Community Involvement and Neighbourhood Action	1. Share tree information publicly - web based. 2. Enable participation / decision-making at parish level 3. Create community group mapping / contact hub (STEW-MAP)	SKDC	2026	Medium	Little or no citizen involvement or neighbourhood action.	Some neighbourhood groups engaged in advancing treescape goals, but with little or no overall coordination with or direction by district or its partnering NGOs.		Many active neighbourhood groups engaged across the community, with actions coordinated or led by SKDC and/or its partnering NGOs.
C3 General Appeciation of Trees as a Community Resource	1. Share tree information publicly - web/app based 2. Develop local communication programmes built around national initiatives in conjunction with sector NGOs	SKDC	2026	Medium	General ambivalence or negative attitudes about trees, which are perceived as neutral at best or as the source of problems. Actions harmful to trees may be taken deliberately.	Trees generally recognised as important and beneficial.	Trees widely acknowledged as providing environmental, social, and economic services – resulting in some action or advocacy in support of the urban forest.	Urban forest recognised as vital to the community's environmental, social, and economic well-being. Widespread public and political support and advocacy for trees, resulting in strong policies and plans that advance the viability and sustainability of the entire urban forest.
C4 Regional Collaboration	1. Ensure participation of all significant groups within South Kesteven District 2. Seek collective approach across District on carbon sequestration measurement	SKDC	2026	Medium	Const. and Wards have no interaction with each other or the broader region. No regional planning or coordination on urban forestry.	Some neighbouring authorities and regional agencies share similar policies and plans related to trees and urban forest.	Some urban forest planning and cooperation across authorities and regional agencies.	Widespread regional cooperation resulting in development and implementation of regional urban forest strategy.

				Priority				
C5 Utilities Co-operation	1. List the utilities companies and get contact details for each utility 2. Strengthen communication usually through planning 3. Active coordination by the Tree Board	SKDC		High	Utilities take actions impacting urban forest with no council coordination or consideration of the urban forest resource.	Utilities employ best management practices, recognise potential municipal conflicts, and reach out to urban forest managers on an ad hoc basis – and vice versa.	Utilities are included in informal council teams that communicate regularly and collaborate on a project-specific basis.	Utilities help advance urban forestry goals and objectives by participating in formal interdepartmental/interagency working teams on all municipal projects.
C6 Green Industry Co-operation	1. Establish list of organisations and relevant individuals in green industries operating within SKDC 2. Communicate South Kesteven DC Tree Strategy directly 3. Engage to shape a coherent approach across the District 4. Active coordination by the Tree Board	SKDC		High	Little or no cooperation among segments of green industry or awareness of district-wide urban forest goals and objectives.	Some cooperation among green industry as well as general awareness and acceptance of district-wide goals and objectives.	Specific collaborative arrangements across segments of green industry in support of district-wide goals and objectives.	Shared vision and goals and extensive committed partnerships in place. Solid adherence to high professional standards.
C7 Involvement of Private and Institutional Landholders	1. Establish list of major landholders and key individuals 2. Communicate SKDC Tree Strategy directly & engage 3. Integrate Trees & Woodland Strategy as appropriate planning documents - timescales to align with the emerging Local Plan	SKDC	2026	Medium	Large private landholders are generally uninformed about urban forest issues and opportunities.	South Kesteven DC conducts outreach directly to landholders with educational materials and technical assistance, providing clear goals and incentives for managing their tree resource.	Landholders develop comprehensive tree management plans (including funding strategies) that advance district-wide treescape goals.	As described in "Good" rating, plus active community engagement and access to the property's forest resource.
C8 Governance and Leadership	1. Form a Tree Board 2. Establish list of major landholders and key individuals 3. Communicate South Kesteven DC Tree Strategy directly & engage 4. Integrate Trees & Woodland Strategy into Supplementary Planning Document	SKDC, Woodland Trust, LNP	2026	Medium	Agencies take actions impacting the treescape with no cross-departmental coordination, consultation or consideration of the urban forest resource. Leadership for tree & woodland management is fragmented.	SKDC works with other NGO's and Agencies on ad-hoc projects as and when they arise.	SKDC regularly and frequently works with other NGO's and Agencies to establish projects and plans. There is a cultural champion in place.	Integrated tree & woodland governance and leadership provided by a Tree Board and is measured to plan and reflects local and international policies.

3.3 Sustainable Resource Management Approach

Target	Actions	Responsibility	Review	Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current ( ) and Target (,)positions			
					Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
R1 Tree & Woodlands Inventory	1. Conduct Tree inventory Study (SKDC trees) 2. Consider conducting and i-Tree Eco Sample Study (all trees in District) in collaboration with Lincolnshire County Council and partner Districts and Parishes			Low	No inventory.	Complete or sample-based inventory of publicly owned trees.	Complete inventory of publicly owned trees and sample-based privately owned trees that is guiding management decisions.	Systematic comprehensive inventory system of entire treescape – with information tailored to users and supported by mapping in district-wide GIS system.
R2 Canopy Cover Assessment and Goals	1. Agree canopy cover goals appropriate to broader aims of connectivity and tree equity 2. Determine planting and management programme to meet aims	SKDC	2026	Med	No assessment or goals.	Low-resolution and/or point-based sampling of canopy cover using aerial photographs or satellite imagery – and limited or no goal-setting.	Complete, detailed, and spatially explicit, high-resolution Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) assessment based on enhanced data (such as LiDAR) – accompanied by comprehensive set of goals by land use and other parameters.	As described for "Good" rating – and all utilised effectively to drive urban forest policy and practice district-wide and at neighbourhood or smaller management level.
R3 Tree Valuation and Asset Management Approach	1. Determine appropriate mechanism for valuing SKDC trees and woodlands	SKDC			Tree valuation nor assessment management are in place.	Some form of tree valuation is used, at least for key projects involving public trees.	Tree valuation and asset management are implemented across the district, for most public trees.	Tree valuation and asset management are implemented for all public trees - and in some cases also private trees.

Ref / Theme	Actions	Lead	Date	Priority				
R4 Green Network Connectivity / Woodland Creation	1. Determine target biodiversity connectivity corridors across the District, both broad (woodlands). and narrow (hedgerows, linear tree corridors). 2. Drive stakeholder engagement programme via parish councils to bring local landowners on board. 3. Engage private landowners to increase/improve hedgerow connectivity across district	SKDC		Low	No consideration given to green connectivity or habitat fragmentation	Mapping of woodland pockets and opportunities for connectivity, but limited intervention.	Complete, detailed understanding of green connectivity / habitat fragmentation challenge. Dialogue open with other major land owners.	Adoption of an ongoing landscape-scale approach to effectively conserve biodiversity and combat fragmentation using best practive tools in collaboration with all major land owners
R5 Environmental Justice and Equity	1. Establish current levels of tree canopy distribution across the District 2. Determine a minimum floor for performance across the District (e.g. 3.30.300) 3. Identify options for targeting resources to areas with lower tree cover	SKDC/LCC		Med	Tree planting and outreach is not determined equitably by canopy cover or need for benefits.	Planting and outreach includes attention to low canopy neighbourhoods or areas.	Planting and outreach targets neighbourhoods with low canopy and a high need for tree benefits.	Equitable planting and outreach at the neighbourhood level is guided by strong citizen engagement in those low-canopy/high-need areas.
R6 Funding	1. Consider funding for trees, taking into account Biodiversity Net Gain, through developer contributions, either through the review of the Council's Developer Contributions policy, or through the government's introduction of the national infrastructure levy 2. Identify all major external funding streams for SKDC and other landholders for trees and woodlands and the best route to securing them	SKDC		High	Little or no dedicated funding.	Funding only for emergency, reactive management.	Funding sufficient for some proactive management based on Tree & Woodland Strategy	Sustained funding from public and private sources to fully implement comprehensive Tree & Woodland Strategy.
R7 Capacity and Staffing	1. Increase capacity to ensure there is appropriate staffing to carry out the actions of this Strategy. 2. Explore volunteer schemes such as Tree Wardens to increase capacity	SKDC	2026	High	Team severely limited by lack of personnel and/or access to adequate equipment. Unable to perform adequate maintenance, let alone implement new goals.	Team limited by lack of trained staff and/or access to adequate equipment.	Team able to implement many of the goals and objectives of the Tree & Woodland Strategy.	Team able to implement all of the goals and objectives of the Tree & Woodland Strategy.

R8 Tree Establishment – Planning and Implementation	1. Ensure right tree, right place philosophy is embedded in all future SKDC tree planting programmes	SKDC		High	Little or no tree planting; tree establishment is ad hoc.	Some tree planting and establishment occurs, but with limited overall district-wide planning and post-planting care.	Tree planting plan is guided by district-wide goals, with some post-planting establishment care.	Comprehensive tree establishment plan is guided by needs derived from canopy and other assessments, maintains species and age diversity, includes both planting and young tree care, and is sufficient to make progress toward canopy cover objectives.
R9 Growing Site Suitability	1. Ensure right tree, right place philosophy is embedded in all future SKDC tree planting programmes	SKDC		High	Trees selected and planted without consideration of site conditions.	Appropriate tree species are considered in site selection.	District-wide guidelines in place for the improvement of planting site conditions and selection of suitable species.	All trees planted in sites with adequate soil quality and quantity, and with sufficient growing space and overall site conditions to achieve their genetic potential and thus provide maximum ecosystem services.
R10 Tree Protection Policy Development and Enforcement	1. Ensure SKDC planning team are appropriately resourced with qualified tree advice, enforcement officers and conservation officers 2. Review all confirmed SKDC Tree Preservation Orders	SKDC		Med	No tree protection policy.	Policies in place to protect public trees and employ industry best management practices, but inconsistently enforced.	Policies and practices in place to protect public and private trees, generally enforced.	Integrated district-wide policies and practices to protect public and private trees, consistently enforced and supported by significant deterrents.

Recommendation	Actions	Lead	Timescale	Priority	No focus	Limited	Good	Best
R11 Trees, Woodland and Green Waste Utilisation	1. Maintain good practice by reviewing SKDC's protocols with sector leading advice. 2. Identify potential end uses for green waste and industries/contractors capable of utilising SKDC's green waste	SKDC		Low	No utilisation plan; wood and other green waste goes to landfill with little or no recycling and reuse.	While most green waste does not go to landfill, uses are limited to chips or mulch.	The majority of green waste is reused or recycled – for energy, products, and other purposes beyond chips or mulch.	Comprehensive plan and processes in place to utilise all green waste one way or another, to the fullest extent possible.
R12 Tree Risk Management	1. Maintain current practices for risk management and maintenance 2. Explore the adoption of the Trees & Woodland Strategy through the development of appropriate planning documents - timescales to align with the emerging Local Plan (2026) 3. Seek better communication and enforcements on TPOs	SKDC	2026	Med	No tree risk assessment or risk management program. Response is on a reactive basis only.	Level I (limited visual assessment) inspection and follow-up conducted periodically.	Level II (basic assessment) conducted periodically, resulting in scheduled follow-ups.	Level II (basic assessment) conducted routinely, according to defined cycle and intensive follow-up (i.e., priorities and timelines for mitigation established based on the characterisation of risk).
R13 Biosecurity	1. Establish South Kesteven DC protocols for tree-sourcing 2. Take a citizen science approach to early warning / monitoring for pests and diseases (Observatree) 3. Engage with other major landowners on the topic to disseminate best practice	SKDC		Low	No biosecurity strategy nor actions in place for urban trees.	Some consideration of biosecurity aspects, e.g., through pest management.	Biosecurity management actions are integrated in urban forestry.	Biosecurity strategy developed and implemented, with emphasis on urban trees. Integration of this into day-to-day urban forest management.
R14 Native and Non-native Trees	1. Articulate a balanced policy for native and non-native vegetation in SKDC's tree and woodland management.	SKDC		Low	No coordinated focus on native vegetation.	Voluntary use of native species on publicly and privately owned lands; invasive species are recognised.	Use of native species is encouraged on a project-appropriate basis in all areas; invasive species are recognised and discouraged on public and private lands.	Native species are widely used on a project-appropriate basis.

R15 Open Data and Web-map (Management and Assessment Tools)	1. Present a basic webmap of woodlands 2. Present an interactive map of tree inventory		2026 2027	Low	No specialist UF management software.	Information on some elements of the urban forest is available through a web map.	Large parts of the district's urban forest are presented through web maps.	South Kesteven DC has a clear and openly accessible tree management portal for all tree data.
R16 Reviewing and Improving the Strategy	1. Review the Tree and Woodland Strategy after 5 years.	SKDC	2029	Low	No plan.	Existing plan limited in scope and implementation.	Recent comprehensive plan developed and implemented for publicly owned forest resources, including trees managed intensively (or individually) and those managed extensively, as a population (e.g., trees in natural areas).	Strategic, multi-tiered plan with built-in adaptive management mechanisms developed and implemented for public and private forest resources.

Appendices

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Glossary

Abbreviations

BSI - British Standards Institution
CAVAT - Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees
ISA - International Society of Arboriculture
LPA - Local Planning Authority
NFI - National Forest Inventory
NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation
NTSG - National Tree Safety Group
NTM - National Tree Map
RTC - Relative Tree Canopy
SKDC - South Kesteven District Council
SSSI - Site of Special Scientific Interest
TB - Tree Board
TPO - Tree Preservation Order
TDAG - Trees and Design Action Group
USDA - United States Department of Agriculture

Glossary of terms

Arboriculture- The selection, production, planting, maintenance, and removal of all woody plants for amenity purposes.

Biodiversity- A measure of biological variation, whether represented by gene, species, habitats or ecosystems.

Biosecurity- A set of precautions to reduce the risk of accidentally introducing or spreading alien invasive species, including potential pests and pathogens.

Canopy Cover- A 2-dimensional metric quantifying the area of ground covered by tree canopy when viewed from above, where tree canopy is the collective branches and foliage of the tree.

Carbon sequestration- Processes that remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Carbon storage - The amount of carbon bound up in the above-ground and below- ground parts of woody vegetation.

Community forestry- Addresses the social benefits of the urban forest: community pride, community planting and care projects, reduction of violent crimes and a sense of safety.

Conservation- Use, management and protection of natural resources that insures use and enjoyment for future generations

Ecosystem Services- The ways in which humanity relies on ecosystems for the continued provision of clean air, drinking water, an equitable climate, the productivity of agriculture, forestry and oceans, control of flooding, soil erosion, coastal erosion, carbon sequestration etc.

Ecosystem- A unit of ecology consisting of a more or less discrete community of species, interacting with each other and their physical environment.

Environment- The prevailing conditions which reflect the combined influence of climate, soil, topography and biology (other plants and animals) present in an area.

GIS (Geographic information system)- A collection of computer hardware, software, and geographic data for capturing, storing, updating, manipulating, analysing and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information.

Green infrastructure (GI)- An interconnected network of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, greenways, parks, forests and other open spaces that support native species, maintain natural ecological processes, sustain air and water resources and contribute to health and quality of life. Includes parks, parkways, riparian buffers, residential landscaping, street trees, rain gardens, green roofs, and window boxes.

Green roof- A specially designed roof that incorporates plants. Depending on the structural capacity of the building, depth and type of soil and desired maintenance. Green roofs can be planted with anything from sedums to trees.

Green space- Any vegetated land or water within an urban area that serves as recreation or open space. This includes neighbourhood and regional parks, gardens, cemeteries, playing fields, bike and walking paths and urban landscaping.

Greenway/green corridor- Corridor composed of natural vegetation. Greenways can be used to create connected networks of open space that include traditional parks and natural areas.

Habitat- Food, water, shelter and space that supports plant or animal life.

Impervious surface- A hard surface (such as a car park or rooftop) that prevents infiltration of water into the ground, causing water to run off the surface.

Infiltration- The downward movement of water from the land surface into the soil.

Inventory, Tree- Gathering of accurate information on the health and diversity of the community forest which can include the following: listing and description of trees and planting sites.

Microclimate- The climate of a site as modified by local site factors.

Native Species- Species present in a defined region for a certain amount of time without having been brought by humans (cf. exotic), for instance in Britain since the English Channel was flooded around 6,000 years ago.

Non-native species- A species that due to direct or indirect human activity occurs in locations beyond its known historical or potential natural range. Refers to species from another continent, region, ecosystem or habitat.

Pollution- Substances introduced into the environment by human actions that contaminate the environment.

Stormwater runoff- Precipitation that falls on impervious surfaces (such as roofs and roads). Because it is not absorbed by soil and vegetation, it flows into storm drains.

Subsidence- In relation to soil or structures resting in or on soil, a sinking due to shrinkage when certain clay soils dry out, sometimes due to the extraction of moisture by tree roots.

TDAG - The Trees Design Action Group

Tree Protection Order (TPO)- A legally enforceable document made by the local planning authority to protect trees and woodland in the interests of public amenity. While trees in conservation areas are automatically protected, individual trees outside these areas may be protected with a Tree Preservation Order.

Urban Forest- Trees, woody shrubs, hedges, herbaceous plants, waterways, wildlife, grasses, and other green infrastructure (including green roofs, green walls etc.) within the built environment, considered collectively over an extensive area.

Urban heat island effect- A phenomenon where air temperatures in urban areas are 2-10°F hotter than surrounding rural areas due to the high concentrations of buildings and pavement in urban areas.

Stem Diameter- The diameter of a tree at around 1.5 metres above ground level.

Alternative formats are available on request: audio, large print and braille

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Trees and Woodland Strategy Report
Consultation Results
March 2024
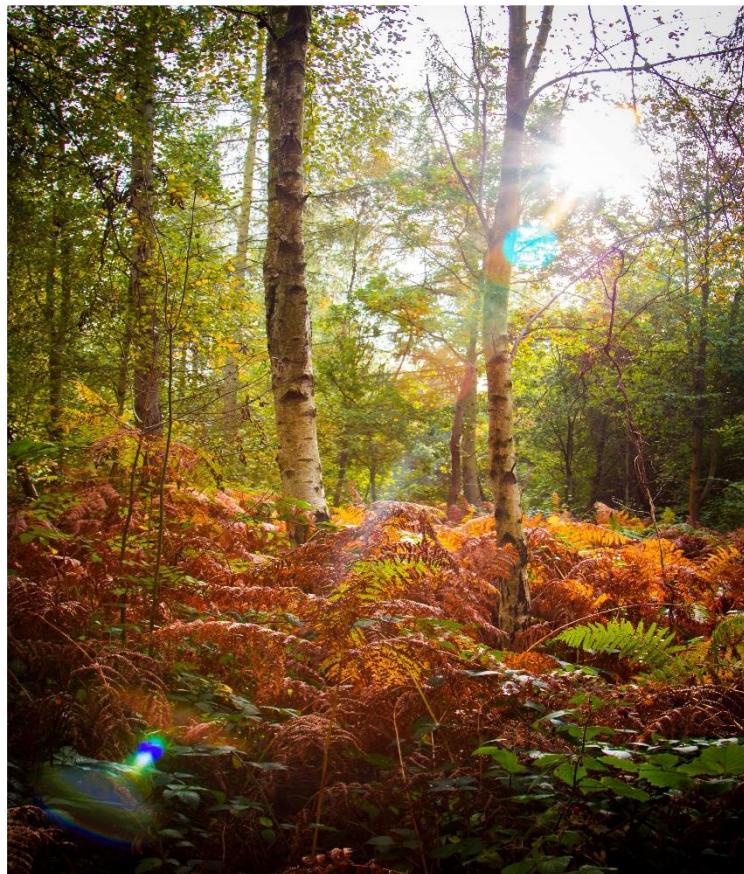
Deborah Wyles

March 2024

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BACKGROUND

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the results of a consultation undertaken with a variety of stakeholders on the founding principles of South Kesteven District Council's draft Trees and Woodland Strategy. The consultation was undertaken to:
    - Assess public attitudes around trees and woodlands
    - Assess public attitudes for increasing tree canopy cover within the district
    - Establish what people think the Council should be doing and the role it should play – particularly in relation to schemes which support wider tree planting across the district

Scope

2. The scope of this consultation was focused on three main areas. These were to:
    - Inform the approach SKDC should take regarding trees and woodland in South Kesteven
    - Gauge the degree of support for the emerging Tree and Woodland Strategy
    - Enable stakeholders to state opportunities for how the Council can support wider tree planting, and the extent to which both they and SKDC should get involved

Objectives

3. The objectives of the consultation were identified as follows. To:
    - Measure the level of public support for existing trees and woodlands in the district
    - Measure the level of public support for the provision of additional trees and woodlands in the district over the next ten years
    - Understand which areas of activity supporting trees and woodlands are those where the Council can or should contribute, and how this should be achieved

Timescales

4. The timescales of this consultation were as follows:

    Two workshops were held on the morning and afternoon of 18 January 2024, to which district councillors and various external stakeholders were invited. Cabinet members Cllrs Patsy Ellis and Rhys Baker were updated on the approach, the proposed questions for the public consultation etc prior to the consultation going live. The survey was launched on 31 January 2024. Open for 3 weeks, it closed on 21 February 2024. Results were then analysed, and a report prepared for presentation to Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee alongside the final draft version of the Tree and Woodland Strategy on 19 March.

Stakeholders

5. The stakeholders were identified as:

- Cabinet members for Environment and waste – Cllrs Patsy Ellis and Rhys Baker
- Chair and Vice Chair of SKDC'S Environment OSC – Cllrs Ian Selby and Emma Baker
- Residents of South Kesteven
- District Councillors for South Kesteven
- Town and Parish Councils in South Kesteven
- Lincolnshire County Council
- Large landowners within the district
- Other organisations with a focus on the natural environment
- Voluntary and Community Groups with a focus on the natural environment
- The Woodland Trust
- The Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership
- Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust
- Grantham Rivercare
- The Environment Agency
- East Mercia Rivers Trust
- Park Groups
- Forestry Commission (as they own and manage Bourne Wood)
- Planning section in SKDC

Methodology

6. The table below identifies the method(s) that were used to contact the stakeholders:

Stakeholders	Method(s)	Details
Cabinet members for Environment and Waste	Discussion took place with portfolio holders Approval sought for approach and content of consultation.	Cllr Rhys Baker Cllr Patsy Ellis
Chair and Vice Chair of Environment OSC	Invited and attended the stakeholder workshops on 18 March.	Cllr Ian Selby Cllr Emma Baker
Residents of South Kesteven	Members of the public were made aware of the consultation through the following channels: Press release to the local press SKDC Social Media Channels	Potential respondents referred to survey monkey to participate in the consultation. Alternatively, if necessary, they were able to email the Climate Change officer who would have sent them a printed copy of the survey. No requests were received. Press release prepared promoting the consultation to district. Release included the link to survey. Consultation promoted on social media channels - Facebook and Twitter. Posts included a link to the survey.

	SKDC website	Webpage of consultations updated to include information about the consultation.
District Councillors	District Councillors informed of the consultation via members email. Also invited to stakeholder workshop.	
Town/Parish Councils in South Kesteven	Town/parish clerks contacted and asked to participate. Also invited to stakeholder workshop.	Climate Change Officer / Projects Officer contacted town and parish councils with link to consultation.
Landowners within district	Landowners which own significant areas of land contacted by SKDC's Climate Change/ Project Officer. They included:	National Trust Buckminster Estates
Voluntary and Community Groups (with an environmental focus)	Contacted by email and asked to comment	CD and VH contacted voluntary and community groups
Organisations with an environmental focus	Organisations contacted by SKDC's Climate Change / Projects Officers included: The Woodland Trust	enquiries@woodlandtrust.org.uk
	The Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership	https://glnp.org.uk/contact-us
	Lincolnshire Rivers Trust	lincsrivers@gmail.com
	Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust	info@lincstrust.co.uk
	Grantham Rivercare	Rivercare Grantham David Martin sustransranger@hotmail.com Ian Simmons iansimmons@icloud.com
	Lincolnshire County Council	https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/comments-feedback/contact-us and then chose environment and planning
	The Environment Agency	enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

DETAILS

7. To assess attitudes in relation to the founding principles of SKDC's Trees and Woodland Strategy, the consultation officer was asked to support the consultation undertaken during February 2024. Actions undertaken by the consultation officer, the Sustainability and Climate Change Officer and the Projects Officer included:
   - Preparation of a press release to promote the consultation in the local press
   - Drafting of Facebook posts and Tweets to promote the consultation on the Council's social media channels Facebook and X (Twitter)
   - Setting up a webpage to host the document
   - Emailing all parish councils, voluntary and community groups and organisations with an environmental focus
   - Preparing, designing and setting up the on-line survey
   - Analysing feedback from 919 respondents
   - Preparing a report

8. The survey[1] included the following sections:
   - An introduction to the consultation. This included information on SKDC's Tree and Woodland Strategy, setting out the Council's position regarding existing trees and woodlands in the district as well as proposals for SKDC to action, including proactively managing trees and woodlands; and working in partnership with other stakeholders to support wider tree planting. It emphasized how those participating in the consultation can help the Council to turn their ambitions into actions.
   - Section 1 contained questions designed to measure the degree of support for the principles of the Trees and Woodlands strategy including how best to protect and manage existing trees within the district
   - Section 2 contained questions designed to determine the extent of support for SKDC's proposed actions. These included supporting tree planting across a wide remit and improving tree management within the district
   - Section 3 asked respondents to supply some demographic information

9. The opportunity to participate in the consultation was promoted both in the local media and on the Council's social media channels and website during the consultation period. The consultation was promoted three times on the Council's Facebook account, and three times on its Twitter (X) account. The first Facebook post on 1 February had a reach of 6,500. 94 people clicked on the link and there were 455 engagements. The second post on 8 February had a reach of 5,765. 35 people clicked on the link and there were 279 engagements. The final Facebook post on 17 February had a reach of 2,738. 19 people clicked on the link, and it had 64 engagements.

   The first post on X (formerly Twitter) had 218 impressions. 2 people clicked on the link and there were 5 engagements. The second post had 253 impressions, 2 people clicked on the link and there were 4 engagements. The final post had 374 impressions, 12 engagements and 8 link clicks.

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[1] Copy of survey attached at appendix one

10. 2,800 residents who have signed up to receive an online edition of SKToday (and had given their permission to be contacted by the Council about other issues) were also contacted directly and asked to participate.

11. Various stakeholders including parish councils and organisations with an environmental focus, were contacted at the start of the consultation. Other statutory bodies including Lincolnshire County Council and the Environment Agency were also asked for their feedback.

12. The consultation opened on 31 January 2024. It closed three weeks later, on 21 February 2024. 919 responses were received. The margin of error for this number of responses is 3.22%. This means it is possible to be 95% sure that the results of this consultation are statistically representative of the district's population +/- 3.22%. (Based on a district population estimate of 146,359[2], at a 95% confidence level).

RESULTS

13. The purpose of the first section of the survey was to find out how much support there is for trees and woodlands within South Kesteven, as this forms the basis of the Council's Trees and Woodland Strategy. Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- Trees and Woodlands are a valuable natural asset
- Trees and Woodlands make an important contribution towards biodiversity
- Trees and Woodlands are really important to me

14. An overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with each of these statements. 99% of respondents (911) thought that trees and woodlands are a valuable natural asset as illustrated in the graph below:

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[2] Population estimate for South Kesteven for 2024 from ONS 2018
Population projections for local authorities: Table 2 - Office for National Statistics

Q1. Trees and Woodlands are a valuable natural asset

Agree, 37, 4%
Neither agree nor disagree, 6, 1%
Disagree, 0, 0%
Strongly disagree, 1, 0%
Strongly agree, 874, 95%
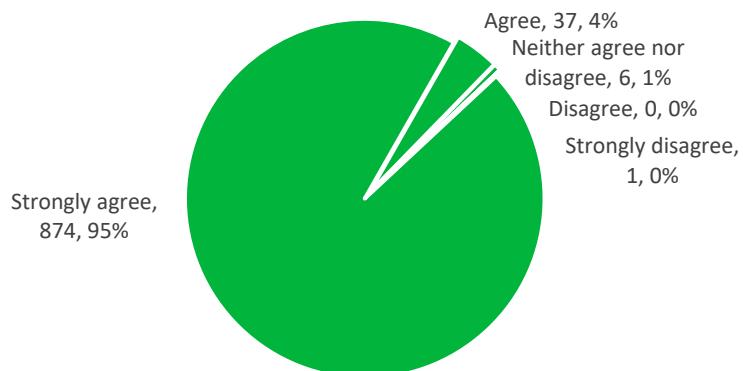
15. A similar proportion (905 or 98.7%) thought that trees make an important contribution towards biodiversity. Two respondents (0.2%) didn't agree.

Q2. Trees and woodlands make an important contribution to biodiversity

Agree, 47, 5%
Neither agree nor disagree, 10, 1%
Disagree, 0, 0%
Strongly disagree, 2, 0%
Strongly agree, 858, 94%
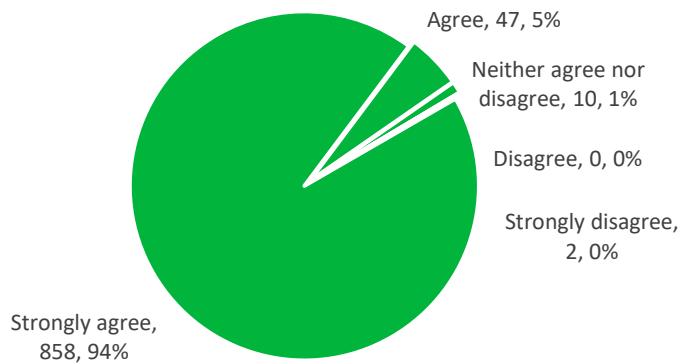
16. Trees and Woodlands are very important to people. Nearly all respondents (894 or 97.8%) agreed with this statement as illustrated in the pie chart below. Four respondents (0.4%) didn't agree.

Q3. Trees and Woodlands are really important to me

Agree, 105, 12%

Neither agree nor disagree, 16, 2%

Disagree, 2, 0%

Strongly disagree, 2, 0%

Strongly agree, 789, 86%
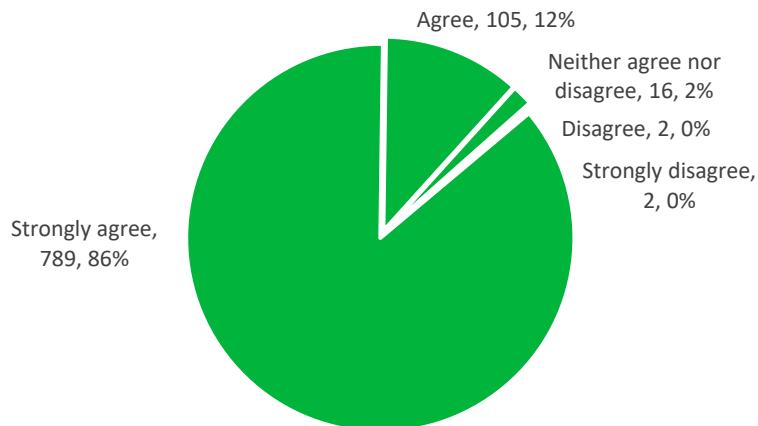
17. When asked why they had chosen to answer in this way, over 700 respondents took the time to comment. Trees are viewed as a valuable natural resource for a wide variety of reasons – their contribution towards biodiversity, their role in tackling climate change, the physical barrier they provide (to mitigate noise, help prevent flooding and provide shade) and the wildlife habitats they host. The quotes below provide a flavour of peoples' motivations:

"Trees and woodland are nature's green lungs. Essential to wildlife and air quality."

"Trees help the environment and people's mental health. We need to plant more to help with pollution"

"Natural woodland is a precious habitat for so much wildlife, trees store carbon, clean and cool our air, are good for our mental health. We need to protect our trees and plant more for future generations to enjoy."

18. To help inform the focus and direction of the strategy, respondents were then provided with some of the benefits of trees and woodlands. These included providing habitats and corridors for wildlife, reducing noise from noisy roads and helping to tackle climate change through carbon sequestration (the capturing, removal and storage of carbon dioxide (CO_2) from the earth's atmosphere). When asked to choose up to four reasons why trees are important, respondents' priorities became clear. Providing wildlife habitats and corridors was the most popular choice, chosen by 830 (92.5%) respondents. Helping to mitigate the impact of climate change and improving air quality by reducing air pollution were also popular choices – chosen by two thirds (66.4%) and three fifths (61.5%) of respondents respectively. The number of respondents choosing each of these benefits is illustrated in the graph below:

Q5. The trees and areas of woodland in South Kesteven are important because they ....

Category	No of respondents
Provide wildlife habitats and corridors	830
Help to mitigate the impact of climate change	596
Improve air quality (by reducing air pollution)	552
Reduce flooding/stormwater run off	469
Help to make the place beautiful	468
Improve my mental and physical health	459
Reduce noise from noisy roads and highways	216
Screen and provide privacy and/or shade	173
Help to prevent the district from becoming a hotter place	115
Other, please specify	41
Increase my property value	19

No of respondents

An analysis of the responses received under other, please specify revealed the following common threads:

- Some respondents found it difficult to choose four. They wanted to tick them all

  "I actually struggled to only select four as every statement was relevant"

- Trees and areas of woodland provide opportunities for nature-based leisure activities including walking and mountain biking

  "Provide important leisure opportunities"

- They are a good source of micronutrients and provide important ecosystems

  "Good source of micronutrients from leaf carpet in autumn"

19. The second section of the survey concentrated on support for tree and woodland planting, management, and protection within South Kesteven – specifically focusing on the role of the Council. To establish the extent to which there was an expectation that SKDC would be involved, and the role it should play, respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:
    - Planting, maintaining and protecting trees and woodlands in South Kesteven is an important function
    - Planting, maintaining and protecting trees in South Kesteven is a worthwhile investment and something the Council should be involved in/contribute towards
    - The Council should focus on planting, maintaining and protecting trees and woodlands in South Kesteven

20. There was very strong support for planting, maintaining and protecting trees and woodlands in South Kesteven. Nearly all those responding (877 or 98.5%) agreed with this approach, as illustrated here:

Q6. Planting, maintaining and protecting trees and woodlands in South Kesteven is an important function

Agree, 82, 9%

Neither agree nor disagree, 11, 1%

Disagree, 1, 0%

Strongly disagree, 1, 0%

Strongly agree, 795, 90%
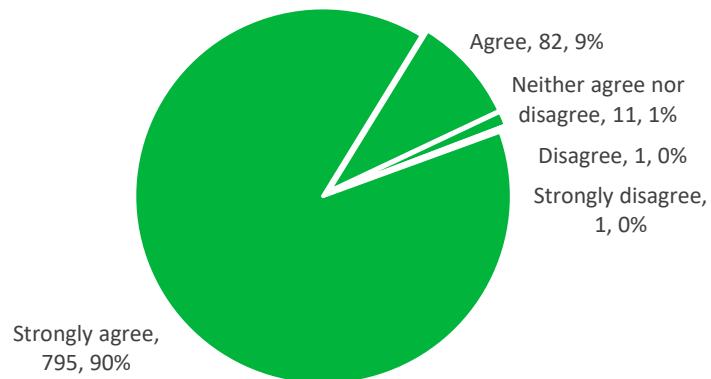
21. When asked if they thought planting, maintaining and protecting trees and woodland in South Kesteven was a worthwhile investment and something the Council should get involved with/contribute towards, the majority of respondents 861 (96.5%) were in agreement, as shown overleaf:

Q7. Planting, maintaining and protecting trees in South Kesteven is a worthwhile investment, and something the Council should be involved in/contribute towards

Agree, 138, 16%

Neither agree nor disagree, 26, 3%

Disagree, 4, 0%

Strongly disagree, 1, 0%

Strongly agree, 723, 81%
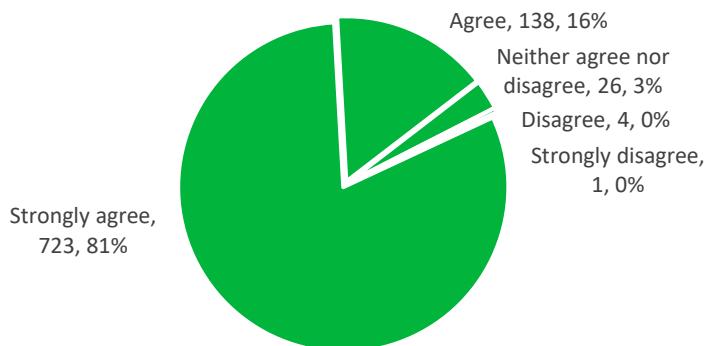
22. Respondents were also asked if they thought this was something the Council should be focusing on. More than nine out of ten respondents (830 or 93.6%) agreed with this statement, as illustrated here:

Q8. The Council should focus on planting,maintaining and protecting trees and woodlands in South Kesteven

Agree, 170, 19%

Neither agree nor disagree, 47, 5%

Disagree, 6, 1%

Strongly disagree, 4, 1%

Strongly agree, 660, 74%
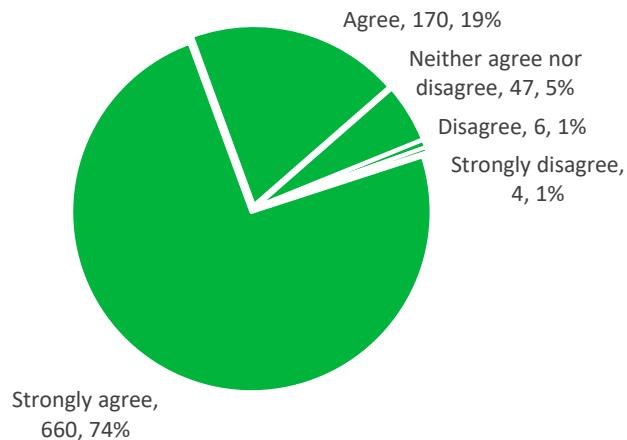
23. These questions were asked to help define and measure peoples' expectations as to the role the Council should fulfil in this area. Their feedback will inform the content and direction of the strategy, and underpin the action plan.

24. To enable a better understanding of respondents' priorities, they were asked to identify the areas where they thought the Council should concentrate its efforts. They were asked to choose no more than three options. Their choices are illustrated in the graph overleaf:

Q9. If you think SKDC's role is to focus on planting,managing and protecting trees and woodlands, which of the following locations do you think they should concentrate on?

	% of respondents
Privately owned gardens	4.0
Other, please specify	6.2
Privately owned open space	9.2
Parish Council managed open space	41.8
Roadsides and verges	48.7
Existing parks in the area	53.6
Across the whole district	57.6
South Kesteven managed open space	76.6
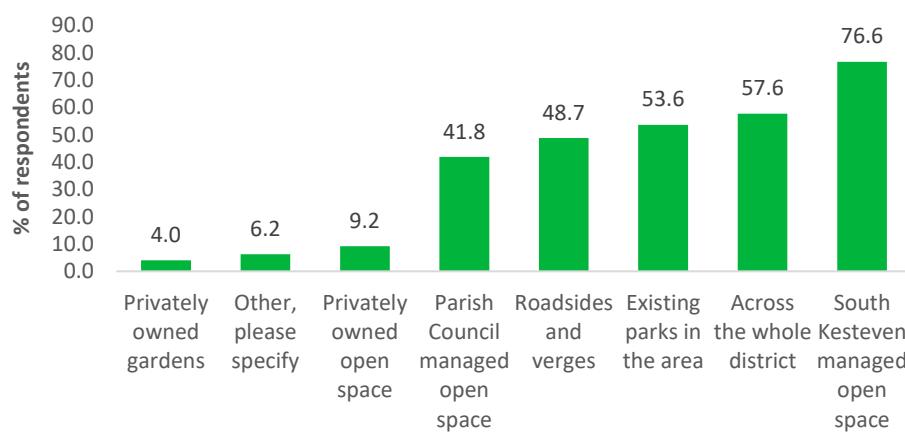
25. Respondents thought that the Council should concentrate its efforts in respect of tree and woodland planting, protection and management on areas it already owns. Parks and areas of open space were popular choices, identified by 53.6% and 76.6% of respondents respectively, as were roadsides and verges, which, although maintained by Lincolnshire County Council, not SKDC, were chosen by just

under half of those taking part in the consultation. Perhaps not surprisingly, "across the whole district" was the second most popular choice – chosen by just under three fifths of those responding to the survey (57.6%).

26. Other suggestions included but were not limited to:

- Closed Churchyards which the Council has responsibility for
- All areas of public land
- Ensuring new developments protect existing trees as well as include tree planting schemes
- School sites
- Unused farming land

27. When given a list of actions the Council should undertake to achieve this, and asked to pick three, the top choices were a combination of actions focused on sustainability and protection of existing areas of woodland, as well as attracting funding for additional provision and highlighting opportunities for community involvement. This is illustrated overleaf:

Q10. The Council should do this through ....

Action	Value
Ensuring both existing and new trees and woodland remain sustainable through appropriate age and species diversity	473
Improving the levels of tree protection and policy enforcement for existing trees and areas of woodland	459
Increasing community involvement opportunities for tree and woodland planting and care	374
Attracting additional funding for the provision of trees and woodland	361
Highlighting the opportunities to increase the number of trees and areas of woodland	330
Undertaking an audit of trees and woodland across the district to establish the current level of tree canopy cover	289
Improving partnership working for tree planting and care	197
Ensuring site suitability for tree planting	169
Providing advice to households on tree planting and sustainability	77
Other (please specify)	48

An analysis of the responses received under "other, please specify" included several suggestions. A few stressed the importance of working with other partners and organisations – particularly The Woodland Trust – as it's HQ is in Grantham. Others were just keen for the work to commence. The importance of the planning process as a means of increasing the amounts of trees planted was also mentioned.

"Liaison with the Woodland Trust on your doorstep"
"Get on with planting"

"Enforce developers' tree planting"

28. The next question on the survey asked respondents if they would be interested in volunteering - either to look after existing trees or by helping to plant new ones. A significant proportion (349 or 41%) said that they would.

28. When asked if they had any questions or would like to comment on anything else in relation to the development of SKDC's Trees and Woodland Strategy, over 150 comments were received. The importance of forging closer relationships with partner organisations that are specialists in this area including the Woodland Trust and The Forestry Commission, was mentioned by several respondents. This is illustrated in the quotes below:

"Please partner with experts like The Woodland Trust so we get the right type of trees in the right places."

"There is a need to establish stronger relationships with woodland management organisations including Forest England/the Forestry Commission to provide a coherent strategy…."

The role the planning/development process can play in protecting existing trees and encouraging more provision was also popular, as shown here:

"Ensure that property developers are not permitted to destroy established trees and hedges!!!"

"Do not lose existing planting to urban development."

"There should be more tree planting on new housing schemes including private gardens."

Demographics

29. To enable the authority to assess if responses had been received from across the district, those participating in the consultation process were asked to supply their postcode. Responses were received from across the district as illustrated below:

Postcode sector	Number of responses	% of responses
NG23	26	3.0
NG31	224	26.2
NG32	87	10.2
NG33	67	7.8
NG34	32	3.7
PE6	92	10.8
PE9	162	18.9
PE10	151	17.7
Prefer not to say	3	0.4
Other	11	1.3
Total	855	100.0

An analysis of the responses received from other postcode sectors revealed most were actually from areas in the district. One response was received from someone who had an LE15 postcode, and two responses were received from people with a PE11 postcode – both of which are postcode sectors for areas adjacent to the district of South Kesteven (Rutland and Spalding)

30. The final question on the survey asked respondents to identify if they had answered the survey as a resident, a landowner, a voluntary group or organisation, a parish or district councillor or on behalf of another organisation in the public sector. Most responses were from people living in the district. 819 responses (95.7%) were from residents, with responses from parish and district councillors forming the next largest group. 17 responses were received from individuals representing a group with an environmental focus.

Conclusion

31. Respondents were really keen to protect trees and woodland and were very supportive of the founding principles of SKDC's Trees and Woodlands Strategy. Many of the responses were indicative of a strong environmental focus- with wildlife, nature, air pollution and climate change emerging as dominant themes.

32. There is a significant expectation that the Council should play an active role in protecting, maintaining and planting trees and areas of woodland – and that they should be involved/ contribute towards activities and actions in this area.

33. When asked where they thought SKDC should concentrate its efforts, respondents thought it prudent to focus on areas already owned by the Council. They were also keen however to see progress and delivery of initiatives across the district.

34. A significant minority of those responding (around two fifths) stated that they would be interested in helping to plant trees or look after those already in situ. Some thought will have to be given to how best to harness and make the most of this willingness to help.

35. Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

Prepared by:

Deb Wyles

Communications and Consultation

11 March 2024

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SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet

14 May 2024

Report of Councillor Ashley Baxter, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development

Cessation of the Hello SK App

Report Author

Jade Newby, Tourism and Visitor Economy Officer

✉ Jade.newby@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To provide an update regarding the Hello SK app and to make a decision regarding the cessation of its use.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. **Approves the cessation of the use of the Hello SK app.**
2. **Encourages officers to work in partnership with Destination Lincolnshire on some of the features of the app to offset their loss.**

Decision Information

Is this a Key Decision?	No
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Enabling economic opportunities Effective council

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

1.1 Any costs associated with the development and continuation of the HelloSK app have not been included in the approved general budget for 2024/2025 so savings would need to be identified if the Council opted to continue to use the app.

Completed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Deputy Director (Finance & ICT) and Deputy S151 Officer

Legal and Governance

1.2 The contract was from 7 March to 31 March 2022 unless terminated earlier or extended and if not extended, the Agreement automatically expires. In the circumstances the Agreement has expired, and no legal implications are identified in cessation of the use of the App.

1.3 The other option open to the Council is set out in section 2 of this report and this would require a new contract in accordance with the Council's contract procedure rules and financial regulations.

Completed by: Mandy Braithwaite, Legal Executive

2. Background to the Report

2.1 A key priority within South Kesteven District Council's Corporate Plan (2024-2027) is enabling economic opportunity. The Council is committed to continuing to promote and develop South Kesteven as an attractive visitor destination, focusing on the areas cultural and heritage strengths.

2.2 This report begins with an update on the Hello SK app, followed by an introduction to the work of the Destination Management Organisations.

Hello SK APP

2.3 The Hello SK app was acquired for a one-off payment of £50,000 via the Government's Welcome Back Fund. This payment included the development, management, and maintenance of the app on the basis it would become self-sustaining through revenue derived from e-commerce sales. These sales were based on the developer's forecast usage of the app across South Kesteven, based on their experiences in other locations across the United Kingdom.

2.4   The app belongs to a third-party partner, Bubltown, who are responsible for its development, day-to-day management and business and customer engagement.

2.5   The Hello SK app was launched in August 2022, via a joint promotion campaign with the Council. This sought to promote the app to local businesses who were encouraged to upload offers for residents and visitors. This campaign was coupled with an increased advertising presence, including banners and engagement at events across South Kesteven. The campaign period saw an uptake in consumer downloads and offers uploaded by businesses. Similar campaigns were replicated for events such as Valentine's Day and Christmas in 2023. These resulted in a further downloads and usage.

2.6   On 5 September 2023, the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report which provided information on the progress and future promotional plans for the Hello SK app (see **Background papers**). Members agreed three actions:

- To make any suggestions of additions or amendments which should be reflected in the Hello SK app
- Endorse the proposal to release a survey over the coming months to encourage feedback from businesses and consumers who use the Hello SK app
- To receive a quarterly update on the Hello SK app.

2.7   In seeking user feedback, one Member had conducted a mini consultation on Facebook and shared the results with the Economic Development Team.

2.8   Despite the attempts to invigorate the use and functionality of the app, as of January 2024), the Hello SK app had been downloaded by 1,436 consumers and contains 211 business profiles from across South Kesteven. These numbers are insufficient to generate sufficient revenue.

2.9   At its meeting on 26 March 2024, the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered whether the use of the Hello SK App should continue. The committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet that the use of the app should cease, and officers should initiate partnership activities with Destination Lincolnshire.

Destination Management Organisations

2.10   Destination Management Organisations (DMO) contribute to the management and marketing of destinations, maintaining close contacts with tourism businesses. A Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) is the name of a DMO. VisitEngland are the British Tourist Authority (BTA) operating under the brand names VisitBritain and VisitEngland (VE). VE is responsible for marketing England to domestic and established overseas markets and for improving England's tourism product.

2.11   Destination Lincolnshire has recently been awarded LVEP accreditation by VE. Destination Lincolnshire are currently writing the Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Lincolnshire to include the planning, development, and marketing of

Lincolnshire as a destination, as well as how it is managed physically, financially, operationally and in other ways.

2.12   The   VE   website   (https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/developing-destination-management-plan-or-tourism-growth-plan) confirms the DMP should cover all the fundamental aspects of destination management, including:

- Tourism, performance, and impacts
- Working structures and communication
- Overall appeal and appearance, access, infrastructure, and visitor services
- Destination image, branding, and promotion (marketing)
- Product mix – development needs and opportunities.

2.13   The DMP typically sets a strategic direction for the destination over a period of up to five years and contains prioritised actions within an annual rolling programme and identification of stakeholders responsible for their delivery.

2.14   Working with Destination Lincolnshire will support the Council's tourism offer and it is anticipated this will offset the loss of some of the features of the Hello SK App.

3.   Key Considerations

3.1   Whilst the app provided a focus of activity and a boost to the local economy in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, Bubltown have been unable to meet forecast projections made in their initial business case and by consequence have insufficient revenue to maintain their activity. Bubltown are now seeking to end their commitment to the Council unless further funding is provided.

Bubltown has recently offered two options for future provision and development of the app:

a) Continuation of the existing business plan, where revenue is generated from e-commerce sales
b) A revised approach where the emphasis is shifted away from e-commerce activity towards driving footfall and changing spending habits on the high street

3.2   Both of these options would require a similar approach including further financial commitment from South Kesteven District Council and a period of intense marketing. Bubltown would then manage and promote the app for up to six months free of charge, after which the Council would be required to commit to a monthly retainer of between £2,000 and £4,000 (excluding VAT) to continue the services. This would enable:
- Hosting on App and Play Stores
- A business joining page, hosting, and maintenance.
- Technical assistance for businesses and users.
- Rollout of planned upgrades and advancements to the technology.

- Business onboarding and assistance.
- Extra resource allocation for the creation and provision of new promotional templates (and amendments to existing materials).
- Direct communication with businesses and active promotional campaign support for the Council.
- Uncapped businesses licenses.

3.3 Officers have considered Bubltown's proposals and concluded there is not a sustainable business case to generate sufficient users, sales, and revenue to ensure the app can operate without further subsidy by the Council in the years to come. This conclusion is based upon the relatively low uptake of the app and a lack of tangible demand from businesses and residents across South Kesteven.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1 The initial set up of the Hello SK app was fully funded through the Government's 'Welcome Back Fund' to support the re-opening of the high street in the aftermath of the pandemic, however, has proven to not be self-sustaining. Therefore the 'do nothing' option has been discounted.

4.2 The DMO will have an impact upon the Council's planned Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy. Members may wish to consider supporting Officers in developing areas to replace some of the Hello SK app activity.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

5.1 Despite the initial opportunities offered in the aftermath of the pandemic, it is difficult to justify the continued use of, or further investment in, the Hello SK app because it no longer provides an appropriate Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR).

5.2 If the Council ceases the use of Hello SK app, a strategy to replace this activity should be developed through the creation of a Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy in the context of the newly formed Destination Lincolnshire LVEP.

5.3 It is also recommended that, Officers initiate partnership activities with Destination Lincolnshire to offset some of the features of the Hello SK app. Working with Destination Lincolnshire will help offset the loss of some of the features of the Hello SK app.

6. Background papers

6.1 *Review of the HelloSK app and draft Discover South Kesteven website* – Report to Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee, published 5 September 2023 and available online at:
https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s38879/Report.pdf

6.2   *Update on HelloSK App* - Report to the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny
         Committee, 26 March 2024; Update on HelloSK App.pdf (southkesteven.gov.uk)

CABINET FORWARD PLAN
Notice of decisions to be made by Cabinet
3 May 2024 to 2 May 2025

At its meetings, the Cabinet may make Key Decisions and Non-Key Decisions. It may also make recommendations to Council on matters relating to the Council's budget or its policy framework.

A Key Decision is a Cabinet decision that is likely:

1. To result in the District Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the District Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (for these purposes, South Kesteven District Council has agreed £200,000 as the threshold at which a decision will be considered significant); or

2. To be significant in terms of its effects on communities that live or work in an area comprising two or more wards.

The Forward Plan

The Cabinet Forward Plan is a rolling, 12-month plan that will be updated on a regular basis. It includes those Key Decisions and Non-Key Decisions that are scheduled to be considered by Cabinet during the plan period.

Notice of future Cabinet decisions and recommendations to Council

Summary	Date	Action	Contact
Trees and Woodland Strategy for South Kesteven – Non Key Decision			
To seek the support of Cabinet for the South Kesteven District Council Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2024 - 2034.	14 May 2024	Recommend to Cabinet to approve the new South Kesteven District Council Trees and Woodlands Strategy 2024 - 2034	Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste (Councillor Rhys Baker) Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer **E-mail:** serena.brown@southkesteven.gov.uk
Removal of the HelloSK App – Non Key Decision			
To get a decision from cabinet after the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 26th March 2024, endorsed the recommendation of the cessation of use of the Hello SK app.	14 May 2024	Approval for the cessation of use of the Hello SK app.	The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development (Councillor Ashley Baxter) Jade Newby, Tourism and Visitor Economy Officer **E-mail:** jade.newby@southkesteven.gov.uk
Contract Award for Stock Condition Surveys - Key Decision			
To award the contract for Stock Condition Surveys	14 May 2024	To agree the contract.	Cabinet Member for Housing & Planning (Councillor Phil Dilks) Andy Winch, Improvements Manager - Technical Services **E-mail:** andrew.winch@southkesteven.gov.uk

Summary	Date	Action	Contact
Animal Welfare Policy – Non-Key Decision			
A new Animal Welfare Policy for approval by Cabinet, following the 4-week consultation with the public, local businesses, partner agencies and other organisations.	11 Jun 2024	To approve the policy	Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance and Licensing (Councillor Philip Knowles) Heather Green, Licensing Team Leader **E-mail:** heather.green@southkesteven.gov.uk
Lease to Grantham Town Football Club – Non-Key Decision			
The granting of a lease and delegation of authority to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure to enter into it	11 Jun 2024	To agree to enter into the lease.	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture (Councillor Paul Stokes) Karen Whitfield, Assistant Director – Leisure, Culture and Place **E-mail:** karen.whitfield@southkesteven.gov.uk
Review of Public Space Protection Orders - Key Decision			
To review the existing Public Space Protection Orders in force across the District.	11 Jun 2024	To agree a course of action for PSPOs in the District.	Cabinet Member for People & Communities (Councillor Rhea Rayside) Ayeisha Kirkham, Head of Public Protection **E-mail:** ayeisha.kirkham@southkesteven.gov.uk
South Kesteven District Council Car Parking Order – Tariff Changes - Key Decision			
The amendment to the existing South Kesteven District Council Car Parking Order Tariffs - amendment to the Car Parking Order needs to be done by way of modification Order – this has the effect to modify/amend the original Order.	11 Jun 2024	To consider the modification Order.	The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development (Councillor Ashley Baxter) Gyles Teasdale, Head of Property and ICT **E-mail:** g.teasdale@southkesteven.gov.uk

Summary	Date	Action	Contact
Larch Close (21 New Build Units) - Contract Award - Key Decision			
Larch Close (21 New Build Units) - Contract Award	11 Jun 2024	To award the contract.	Cabinet Member for Housing & Planning (Councillor Phil Dilks) Suniel Pillai, New Build Project Officer **E-mail:** suniel.pillai@southkesteven.gov.uk
Provisional Outturn Report 2023/24 - Key Decision			
This report provides the Cabinet with the details of the Council's provisional outturn position for the financial year 2022/23. The report covers the following areas: • General Fund Revenue Budget • Housing Revenue Account Budget • Capital Programmes – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account • Reserves overview – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account	9 Jul 2024	Cabinet is asked to: 1. Review and recommend for approval to Governance and Audit Committee the provisional Revenue and Capital Outturn position for the financial year 2023/24. 2. Review and approve the budget carry forwards (appendices D and H). 3. Review and recommend to Governance and Audit Committee the following reserve movements in respect of the General Fund:	The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development (Councillor Ashley Baxter) Paul Sutton, Assistant Director of Finance/Deputy Section 151 Officer **E-mail:** paul.sutton@southkesteven.gov.uk

Summary	Date	Action	Contact
Finance Update Report: April – TBC - Non-Key Decision			
To present the Council's forecast 2024/25 financial position. The report covers the following areas: • General Fund Revenue Budget • Housing Revenue Account Budget • Capital Programmes – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account • Reserves overview – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account	10 Sep 2024	That Cabinet 1. Reviews and notes the forecast 2024/25 outturn position for the General Fund, HRA Revenue and Capital budgets and identifies any variances that might require action or investigation	The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development (Councillor Ashley Baxter) Paul Sutton, Assistant Director of Finance/Deputy Section 151 Officer **E-mail:** paul.sutton@southkesteven.gov.uk
Vehicle Procurement - Key Decision			
To approve the Capital spend of over £200,000 for 2024/25 for street cleaning, refuse vehicles and vans, and other assorted vehicles.	8 Oct 2024	To approve the spend.	Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste (Councillor Rhys Baker) Kay Boasman, Head of Waste Management and Market Services **E-mail:** kayleigh.boasman@southkesteven.gov.uk
Finance Update Report: April - September 2024 - Non-Key Decision			
To present the Council's forecast 2024/25 financial position as at end of September 2024. The report covers the following areas: • General Fund Revenue Budget • Housing Revenue Account Budget • Capital Programmes – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account • Reserves overview – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account	3 Dec 2024	That Cabinet 1. Reviews and notes the forecast 2024/25 outturn position for the General Fund, HRA Revenue and Capital budgets as at the end of September 2024 and identifies any variances that might require action or investigation	The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development (Councillor Ashley Baxter) Paul Sutton, Assistant Director of Finance/Deputy Section 151 Officer **E-mail:** paul.sutton@southkesteven.gov.uk

Summary	Date	Action	Contact
Council Tax Base 2025/2026 - Key Decision			
To determine the Council Tax Base to form the basis of the 2025/2026 budget proposals to be recommend to Full Council.	3 Dec 2024	To recommend the Tax Base to Full Council.	The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development (Councillor Ashley Baxter) Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits Customer and Community) **E-mail:** claire.moses@southkesteven.gov.uk
Local Council Tax Support Scheme - Key Decision			
To consider the Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme for the 2025/2026 financial year.	3 Dec 2024	To recommend the Scheme to Full Council.	The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development (Councillor Ashley Baxter) Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits Customer and Community) **E-mail:** claire.moses@southkesteven.gov.uk
Draft Budget Proposals for 2025/2026 and Indicative Budgets for 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 - Non-Key Decision			
To consider the draft Budget Proposals for 2025/2026.	16 Jan 2025	To agree the draft proposals.	The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development (Councillor Ashley Baxter) Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer **E-mail:** r.wyles@southkesteven.gov.uk

Summary	Date	Action	Contact
Budget Update Report: April to December 2024 - Non-Key Decision			
To present the Council's forecast 2024/25 financial position as at end of December 2024. The report covers the following areas: • General Fund Revenue Budget • Housing Revenue Account Budget • Capital Programmes – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account • Reserves overview – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account	11 Feb 2025	That Cabinet 1. Reviews and notes the forecast 2024/25 outturn position for the General Fund, HRA Revenue and Capital budgets as at the end of December 2024 and identifies any variances that might require action or investigation	The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development (Councillor Ashley Baxter) Paul Sutton, Assistant Director of Finance/Deputy Section 151 Officer **E-mail:** paul.sutton@southkesteven.gov.uk
Budget Proposals for 2025/2026 and Indicative Budgets for 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 - Key Decision			
To consider the proposed Budget.	11 Feb 2025	To recommend the Budget to Full Council.	The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development (Councillor Ashley Baxter) Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer **E-mail:** r.wyles@southkesteven.gov.uk

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