

Summary of recommendations to the executive and executive responses
Scrutiny Committee: Environment and Sustainability
Date: 18-11-2024

Agenda item title: Tree and Hedgerow Management

Herefordshire Council to:

Recommendation 1	Set out a percentage target (akin to biodiversity gain) for an increase in tree coverage on council land by 2030.				
Executive Response	<p>Agreed. The Council will in the first instance identify the existing percentage of canopy coverage upon its own estate. Once undertaken it will be necessary to establish the land available for tree planting – as certain land such as Highways is likely to be constrained.</p> <p>From this figure a proportionate target can be established, quantifying the number of trees this would approximately equate to. In this instance it may be more appropriate to quantify number of trees given that Ash Die Back is necessitating removal and reinstatement of new planting the percentage of canopy coverage may show a deficit in the early years.</p>				
Action –	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Agreed	Natural Environment & Parks and Open Space Manager.	June 2025	Agree potential percentage and number of trees.	Calculate existing percentage. Teams to meet to agree a proposed target for 2030.	

Recommendation 2	Ensure that the strategy on local nature recovery and biodiversity gain be joined up with and become key drivers of the council's policy on tree and hedgerow management				
Executive Response	<p>Agreed. The Natural Environment team are leading on the delivery of both strategies, internal consultation and discussion between officers is ongoing to ensure these documents are aligned. Wider internal consultation on the overarching Nature Recovery Strategy is also underway with Property Services, Highways and Natural Flood Management.</p>				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	

Agreed	Natural Environment team	Between Jan to December 2025	Publication of a tree and hedgerow strategy aligned with adopted LNRS.	The Tree and Hedgerow Strategy has been shared internally for comment. The Nature Recovery Strategy opportunities mapping has also been published for feedback. The draft written strategy will be shared internally as progressed and externally in Autumn 2025 for formal consultation.

Recommendation 3	Set out clearly in planning guidance that all new development should meet the requirements of our biodiversity net gain and green infrastructure in terms of tree and hedgerow planting in the development.			
Executive Response	Agreed. Biodiversity Net Gain is a requirement of the Environment Act and the 10% minimum is already implemented through planning. Policy LD3 of the existing Local Plan is in place to ensure Green Infrastructure is a requirement of all new development. Both Biodiversity Net Gain and Green and Blue Infrastructure will be considerations of the new Local Plan. A newly drafted Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy forms part of the suite of updated documents within the evidence base of the plan and the Natural Environment team are being consulted on proposed policy.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Agreed	Natural Environment & Forward Plan	Adoption of new local plan	New policy on BNG and GBI included in new Local Plan	Policy LD3 in place. GBI strategy for evidence base in place. New policy under development.

Recommendation 4	Develop our own tree hedgerow nurseries, in collaboration with local seed gathering initiatives, to provide a source of future material to support the Herefordshire tree, hedgerow and woodland strategy.			
Executive Response	Identification of parcels of land for plant nurseries is required with Property Services Consultation with Parks and Open Space Manager to consider cultivation and management requirements and budgetary requirements.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Partially Agreed.	Natural Environment team/ Open Space and Parks Manager/ Property Services	August 2025	Parcels of land identified for plant nurseries. Budget identified and project scoped.	A meeting to agree potential sites. A business case drafted and budget requirements identified.

Recommendation 5	Support local communities in the planting of trees on council owned land (bordering green field sites).			
Executive Response	Meet with Parks and Open space manager to establish requirements to enable local communities to undertake tree planting. Including licence if required, cultivation and ongoing maintenance.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Partially agreed.	Natural Environment Team and Parks & Open Space Manager	August 2025	Agreement of a mapped flow chart setting out process with guidance for publication.	A meeting to discuss existing limitations and agree a process.

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Recommendation 6	Provide advice and guidance on planting trees and promote hedgerow management best practice.			
Executive Response	A new Tree and Hedgerow Code of Practice for the Council and its public realm partners has been produced and shared in 2024 with the Highways Team and the Council's public realm partners to ensure best practice is applied consistently. This advice and guidance is aligned with the countywide Tree and Hedgerow Strategy.			
Action Agreed and in place	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
	Natural Environment Team	In place	Published Code of Practice and Tree and Hedgerow Strategy.	Completed Code of Practice. Tree and Hedgerow Strategy completed in draft.

Recommendation 7	Review the planning contributions for Biodiversity Net Gain to include monitoring fees to incorporate monitoring and enforcement where appropriate.			
Executive Response	Monitoring fees for Biodiversity Net Gain have been drafted and are currently being reviewed. These fees incorporate on site monitoring by Ecologists. Enforcement funding has been considered but it is noted this is not included in wider monitoring fees by other local planning authorities.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Agreed	ED and YC	May 2025	Published fee scale	Completed in draft and being reviewed.

Recommendation 8	Take more enforcement action where it is clearly warranted in all areas of activity.			
Executive Response	Each potential tree or hedgerow enforcement case is considered on its own merits. Whilst the Natural Environment team will offer technical expertise the decision in regard to taking further action rests with the Planning Enforcement team. The Natural Environment team will liaise with Enforcement to develop agreed guidelines as to where it is appropriate to take action, and the nature of action to be agreed.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Partially Agreed	Natural Environment & Enforcement Team	August 2025	Flow diagram and guidance setting out process	A meeting with Natural Environment and Enforcement to develop a flow diagram and supporting guidance.

Recommendation 9	Strengthen the current Tree and Hedgerow Council Code of Practice (specifically nos. 19, 26 and 29) to include ancient woodlands and traditional orchards.			
Executive Response	The Tree and Hedgerow Code of practice will be reviewed by the Natural Environment Team and the Parks and Open Space Manager to ensure ancient woodlands and traditional orchards are recognised and prioritised within the document.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Partially Agreed	Natural Environment & Open Space Manager	June 2025	Review complete. Amendments made if required.	The teams will meet to review and consider where there is opportunity to strengthen reference to traditional orchards and ancient woodland.

Recommendation 10	Ensure the tree and hedgerow management strategy incorporates opportunities in applying tree protection orders and strengthens tree management in conservation areas.			
Executive Response	The Tree and Hedgerow Management Strategy will be reviewed to ensure protection of trees within Conservation Areas and those protected by Tree Preservation Orders is clarified and strengthened within the parameters of the legislation.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Partially agreed	Natural Environment Team	June 2025	Review of strategy, amendments made if required.	The team will review the draft strategy to ensure it incorporates mechanisms for tree protection.