Huntingdonshire Tree Action Plan

Part of the Huntingdonshire Tree Strategy 2020 – 2030

Background.

The Huntingdonshire Tree Strategy 2020-2030 sets the Council's approach to arboricultural administration over the next 10 years with the aim of managing our districts trees in a sustainable way to ensure that their benefits are experienced by current and future generations. To fulfil this vision, we have set 7 key objectives:

I. To promote sustainable management of the Council's trees through effective use of our resources.
II. To maximise the environmental, economic and health benefits of trees across the district;
III. To fulfil the Council's duty of care in respect of the management of its tree stock;
IV. To create a legacy of tree planting across the district;
V. To promote community engagement in all aspects of tree planting and management, realising the maximum benefits they can provide;
VI. Make efficient and strategic use of the Council's regulatory powers for the protection of trees of current and future value.

The work required to fulfil these objectives not only involves the management of trees owned by the Council, but also those which are privately owned or are managed by a third-party organisation.

This Action Plan sets out our approach to fulfilling these objectives. It also highlights the key projects we aim to complete over the life of the strategy and sets out our priorities for our day to day arboricultural management. The objectives listed are categorised to indicate their priority. This priority system is based on the following:

Green	Long term projects which will either evolve over the course of the Action Plan or form part of our core day to day operations
Amber	Tasks that have already commenced or are less time and resource sensitive that those categorised as "red".
Red	Projects that require immediate attention and additional resources

Key Aim 1: To promote sustainable management of the Council's trees through effective use of our resources				
Objective	Expected outcomes	Likely resources required	Reason	Target Timescale
1. Developing a tree population that is healthy, varied in age and diverse in species.	1. A healthy and diverse tree managed to be "As Low as 2. Creation of a tracible record		To meet the Council's legal duty of care and maximise the environmental, social and community and economic benefits to of trees in Huntingdonshire To allow for savings & budget	
2.			To ensure sufficient funding is in place to allow tree management issues to be addressed as and	
3.		Officer time (Operations) and in-house Tree Surgery Staff	To allow a value for money service that efficiently delivers services to To allow thorough management of the Councils tree stock and meet our duty of care.	progress – view to
4.	under HDC ownership to be a user-friendly data base of all trees that can be used to	providers (HDC currently use Ezytreev as an asset recording & survey its trees) with service area which manage	To allow a value for money service that efficiently delivers services to be developed Legal duty of care. To ensure a robust and traceable system of management is in place To allow for accurate resource	

5. Staff Training & Development	1. Creation of an internal training and development programme for Council staff involved with managing arboricultural matters across all services.	Collaboration with external professional training bodies, recognised national organisations (The Woodland Trust and Ancient Tree Forum etc) and Cambridgeshire Tree Officers Group. Officers time across service areas.	To inspire staff involved with tree management, increase staff retention and invest in people. To meet the Councils duty of care, ensure accountability of decision making. Growth of collaborative working across services.	Training programme in place by end 2021

Key Aim 2: To maximise the environmental, economic and health benefits of trees across the district.

Objectives	Expected outcomes	Resource required	Reason	Target Timescale
1. Promote excellence in arboriculture		Officers time Training & development of staff involved with managing trees within the district		On-going over the duration of the Action Plan
2. Tree retention & evaluation	1. Evidencing the importance of tree retention and investment	Officers time External organisation involvement; Woodland Trust / LTOG / Ancient Tree Forum. Evaluation software systems Arboricultural consultants	• Health & wellbeing • Social & community • Environmental & ecology • Reduce the Councils Carbon footprint • Monetary value of HDC tree population	Undertake project scoping exercise by 2024
3. Developing a monetary value of Council trees.	1. Development of a monetary evaluation report of HDC trees within towns.			Undertake project scoping exercise by 2024

4. **Develop and promote tree biosecurity policy that reflects future environmental challenges**	1. Development and adoption of HDC Biosecurity Strategy which promotes the creation of a sustainable tree stock and the protection of our existing trees and woodlands. 2. Biosecurity policies and actions put in place to ensure we protect our tree stock across all services that interact with trees.	Collaboration of officers to set out scope for a strategy (Operations, Countryside Services, Planning and those involved in landscape management). Possible resources required to implement any changes to working practices as a result of the strategy.	Protecting our current and future tree stock from pests and disease. Management of a sustainable tree population. The creation of a cross departmental strategy will assist with all those involved with arboricultural management in ensuring our everyday activities do not result in outbreaks and we are able to act appropriately if an outbreak occurs.	Undertake project scoping exercise by end 2021.
5. **Engage with Tree Warden Groups and Parish / Town Councils on industry changes.**	1. Provision of information surrounding current industry issues where necessary to the local Tree Wardens Network and Parish/Town Councils.	Officer time (Operations and Development Management) Officer collaboration with Cambridgeshire Tree Officers Group	Tree Warden Groups and Parish / Town Council specialised members are an important part of managing local tree populations across the district. Promoting engagement with these groups is important as changes in the industry occur	Ongoing engagement over the life of the strategy.

Key Aim 3: To fulfil the Council's duty of care in respect of the management of its tree stock				
Objectives	**Expected outcomes**	**Resource required**	**Reason**	**Target Timescale**
1. Develop the Council's current tree surveying system	1 2 3	Officers time 3C ICT External asset management software company Staff training & development		Undertake project scoping exercise by end 2021.
2. Investigate and develop HDC "*Trees in relation to buildings Subsidence*" policy	1 2 3			Undertake project scoping by end 2021 and report options by end 1st Q 2022.

3. Investigate and develop a tree risk management system (TRMS)	1. Adoption of a TRMS. 2. Creation of an accessible and tree risk report or data base.	Officers time Arboricultural consultant's appointment where required to develop strategy External asset management software company Staff training & development	To fulfil the Councils duty of care and measure and reduce risk To guide resources on delivering an annual tree maintenance program. To create a value for money service Reduce insurance claims	Undertake project scoping by end 2021 and report options by end 1st Q 2022.
4. Encompass all trees owned or managed by HDC under one central management regime.	1. Creation and adoption of one central management regimen for all service areas with a responsibility of tree management.	Councils departments that have trees on their sites: • Countryside • Estates • One Leisure • Any other Officers time	To effectively manage the Councils duty of care	Ongoing project with the view to be completed by 2025
5. Update the Public tree maintenance requests system	1. Develop a clear concise guidance document that is available for; public / Council officers / customer services. Contains information on how HDC maintains its trees and processes involved	Officer Time	Improve public relations and allow effective management and allocation of resources. Public information.	On-going over the duration of the Action Plan

Key Aim 4: To create a legacy of tree planting across the district

Objectives	Expected outcomes	Resources required	Reason	Target Timescale
1. **Continued development of the tree planting program**	1. Continuation of the annual tree planting program 2. Increase of canopy cover within the district			On-going over the duration of the Action Plan
2. **Celebratory tree planting programme – revamp memorial tree program**	1. Review the current planting scheme and propose changes 2. Promote planting programme	Officers time Internal services investigation Press & Comms		On-going over the duration of the Action Plan
		External Arboricultural Consultant to undertake canopy cover assessment. Review by HDC Departments to develop recommendations of assessment into actions.	-	Canopy Cover Assessment complete by mid-2021. Canopy cover action plan complete by mid-2022.

4. Take part in and support national tree planting events.	1. Participation in planting events in line with Tree Week and other national initiatives.	Arboricultural Officers in Operations / Development. Support of Countryside Services Promotion by elected members.	To publicise and promote the benefits of tree planting to community groups and individuals' residents and businesses across Huntingdonshire.	Annual participation in national tree week and other events when possible.
5. Understand and improve establishment rates of new trees on development sites.	1. Monitoring of tree establishment rates planted as part of landscape schemes.	Officer input to review the potential to monitor tree establishment rates. Resources required to implement or support any monitoring function. Possible involvement with outside voluntary organisations and/or Parish/Town Councils.	New green infrastructure is a key part of site development and has the potential to significantly contribute to the districts tree population. However, information on establishment rates for new planting is not currently known.	Undertake project scoping by end 2021 and report options by end 1st Q 2022.

Key Aim 5: To promote community engagement in all aspects of tree planting and management, realising the maximum benefits they can provide

Objectives	Expected outcomes	Resource required	Reason	Target Timescale
1. **Promote voluntary working parties (young trees in your area – ownership) and promote education events.**	1. Development of collaborative community tree planting projects	Officers time and collaborative working across service areas.	Community engagement projects enhance community ownership and promote health & wellbeing. To maximise the benefits of trees.	As and when opportunities arise.
2. **Engage with national tree planting events**	As above	Officers time and collaborative working across service areas.	As above	Follow annual organised events and national planting / management schemes. As and when opportunities arise.

Key Aim 6: Make efficient and strategic use of the Council s regulatory powers for the protection of trees of current and future value				
Objectives	**Expected outcomes**	**Resources required**	**Reason**	**Target Timescale**
1. **Implement a rolling review programme for all existing Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)**	1. Completion of a review of existing TPOs over the life of the strategy. 2. A rolling review programme implemented for all existing and future TPOs.	Officer time to provide funding options for the project. Financial implications expected to include: 1. Appointment of additional Officer. OR 2. Outsourcing to a consultancy to undertake the review.	Good practice under the scope of the Town and Country Planning (Trees) Regulations 2012. HDC administers approx. 900 TPOs with 20% being made before 1970. These dated orders are resource intensive to administer, difficult to interpret by the public and reflect land uses that are no longer present.	Project plan to set by April 2022 and resourcing options presented.
2. **To digitise the Councils data in relation to Tree Preservation Orders.**	1. Digitised TPO files for existing and historic orders.	Officer time to manage the project (Customer Services, Development Management, Transformation, and ICT) Appointment of document management service to digitise existing TPO data	Improved access to TPO information to officers, regardless of working location. To preserve important information contained in deteriorating files.	Scanning and digitising information by end 2021 (Current funding bid dependant)
3. **Utilise the Council's website as a source of information in relation to protected trees.**	1. Electronic copies of all existing TPOs available on the HDC website. 2. Improved GIS mapping for public inspection of TPOd trees, including address search and key information.	Officer time to manage the project (Customer Services, Development Management, Transformation, and ICT) Appointment of document management service to digitise existing TPO data	Improved customer experience when trying to ascertain information To decrease costs of providing TPO documents	Options for project scope and resourcing developed and presented by mid-2021

4.	To keep methods for assessment of protected trees and applications for works under review in line with emerging industry best practice.	1. Updated working and assessment methods when required	Officer review on a rolling basis. No additional project or resources required.	To ensure the Council are working to current industry best practice and can provide information based on current arboricultural thinking.	Reviews undertaken in line with industry changes and publication of new guidance.
5.	Review standard conditions used for tree works applications.	1. Review of all tree related conditions used for tree works applications.	Officer time (Development Management and Planning Enforcement)	The enforceability of conditions used in relation to tree works applications is essential to allow certain aspects (such as replanting) to be managed.	Review complete by end 2021.

Key Aim 7: To recognise, promote and protect important tree populations within Huntingdonshire

Objectives	Expected outcomes	Resource required	Reason	Target Timescale
1. Locate important tree species populations and ancient / vet trees in HDC Ownership.		Assessment of resourcing options required with consideration to the use of external consultants to undertake work or resourcing internally.		Options for project resourcing developed and presented by 2026
2. Promote the recording of ancient and veteran trees on the National Ancient Tree Inventory.	1. Recording of ancient and veteran trees across the district and population of the National Tree Inventory website data.	Assessment of resourcing options required with the potential to engage with Parish Tree Wardens.	As above	Options for project resourcing developed and presented by 2026
3. Locate and record orchards in the ownership / management of HDC.	1 2 3	Assessment of resourcing options required with consideration to the use of external consultants to undertake work or resourcing internally.		Options for project resourcing developed and presented by 2026