

REPORT TO:	EXECUTIVE BOARD
DATE:	6 JULY 2022
SUBJECT:	TREE AND HEDGEROW STRATEGY
PURPOSE:	ADOPTION OF A TREE AND HEDGEROW STRATEGY FOR THE SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP SETTING OUT THE AMBITION AND HIGH LEVEL COMMITMENTS OF THE THREE COUNCILS.
KEY DECISION:	YES
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR GRAHAM MARSH
REPORT OF:	CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT MANAGER
REPORT AUTHOR:	SARAH BAKER
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	N/A
EXEMPT REPORT?	NO

SUMMARY

Trees and hedgerows are a vital part of the world around us bringing a sense of place to our local communities alongside a range of societal, environmental and economic benefits. Often the focus tends to be on planting new trees but this is only one part of a more complex picture and needs to be considered alongside the protection and management of existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands and as part of a coordinated engagement piece. A strategic approach is therefore required to ensure all the derived benefits are realised. This Tree and Hedgerow Strategy for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership is the start of that process to ensure a consistent approach to tree management and planting across the sub-region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the adoption of a Tree and Hedgerow Strategy be approved by Executive Board.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure a consistent approach to tree management and planting across the sub-region.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To not take forward a Tree and Hedgerow Strategy and continue to develop projects, policies and procedures in a piecemeal fashion across the sub-region.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Trees and hedgerows can contribute to a wide variety of benefits from helping to tackle climate change to increasing access to nature and improving health and wellbeing in our communities.
- 1.2** Focus is often on the planting of new trees, sometimes without giving full consideration to selecting the most appropriate locations or species or what the long term management implications will be.
- 1.3** Grant funds in particular have been heavily weighted in favour of new planting with money available for the initial purchase of trees and guards through a number of different initiatives such as the Urban Tree Challenge Fund or Trees for Climate in addition to existing grant schemes administered by the Forestry Commission or Woodland Trust.
- 1.4** In South and East Lincolnshire we are fortunate to have some fantastic existing resources across our landscape from woodlands that line the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds to the more recently established Boston Woods Trust and specimen trees in the grounds of rural estates such as Revesby Abbey.
- 1.5** The South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership provides an opportunity for the three Councils to work collectively to identify appropriate locations for the planting of new trees but importantly, to quantify and recognise the value of the existing resource and ensure that this too is properly maintained to benefit our communities into the future.

2. REPORT

- 2.1** The development of a Tree and Hedgerow Strategy for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership is detailed in the Annual Delivery Plan for 2022-23.
- 2.2** This Strategy has been based on a draft document produced in 2020 by East Lindsey District Council's arboricultural officer which has been adapted to meet the needs of the three Councils within the Partnership.
- 2.3** The proposed Strategy sets out the vision that *Our communities are richer in greener spaces to live, visit and invest through the sustainable presence of trees and hedgerows which help*

people and wildlife adapt to the future challenges of our changing environment. This is underpinned by a set of aims and objectives to provide the foundations for developing this work programme across the sub-region.

- 2.4** The three core objectives of the Strategy are Protect, Plant and Participate – recognising the need to manage and enhance existing resources, to ensure a carefully considered approach to new planting and to engage local communities and wider stakeholders in delivery of the Strategy going forward.
- 2.5** It also outlines some of the headline steps we intend to take to achieve the vision. In particular, to ensure we understand the current baseline in terms of existing habitat and resource and use that data to develop informed targets and commitments for the sub-region over the coming years.
- 2.6** It is important to recognise that some aspects of the strategy, such as new planting, often appear to be the ‘easy wins’ but that these take a lot of resource to plan successfully and crucially will require long-term resource commitments into the future to ensure they are successfully managed and maintained. It is therefore key that this Strategy is adequately resourced.
- 2.7** Trees and hedgerows are just one part of a much larger picture when it comes to considering how we interact with our natural environment and the opportunities it presents in terms of climate change and wider societal benefits. This Strategy is therefore intended to become part of a much wider Natural Environment Strategy for the sub-region which will be developed in due course.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1** Good tree management is about more than just new planting. It requires a considered approach to identifying suitable sites for new trees based on a Right Tree in the Right Place ethos, balanced against the need to ensure a best practice approach to the management of the existing resource is deployed.
- 3.2** Local authorities are well placed to act as community leaders and to coordinate this approach across the sub-region, particularly if this is embedded into local policy and procedures. Working in Partnership with local people and wider stakeholders will be key to successful delivery because the Councils themselves have limited land assets.
- 3.3** The Tree and Hedgerow Strategy is the start of this process and clearly sets out what the three Councils are seeking to achieve. It will enable a comprehensive approach to both tree planting and maintenance of the existing resource to be deployed across South and East Lincolnshire. An Action Plan will be developed in due course, once a more detailed evidence base has been obtained.

EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

This Strategy will contribute towards delivery of priorities within each Councils' own Corporate Plans both around Climate Change considerations and supporting local communities to have more active lifestyles through engagement with the natural environment.

The adoption of a Tree/Natural Environment Strategy is outlined in the agreed Annual Delivery Plan 2022-23 for the Partnership.

IMPLICATIONS

SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP

There is increasing pressure on local authorities to demonstrate how it is working to further the climate change agenda and tree planting is often highlighted as a key solution. This Tree and hedgerow strategy recognises that tree planting as well as good management of the existing resource has a role to play in this but that clear aims and objectives are needed to ensure we can deliver what is needed successfully. Adoption of this Tree and Hedgerow Strategy will demonstrate that the Councils have given this careful consideration and will take forward an ambitious approach based on data and evidence together with engagement with their local communities.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The Tree and Hedgerow Strategy will contribute towards achievement of corporate priorities across the three Councils.

STAFFING

There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report however it should be noted that implementation of the strategy will need to be given careful consideration in terms of long term resource implications of certain aspects.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

DATA PROTECTION

None.

FINANCIAL

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report however implementing organisations will need to ensure new planting alongside maintenance of existing resources is accompanied by asset management plans which will undoubtedly require a commensurate degree of financial support to resource the actions that are required. Some of this will be encompassed within existing budgets and staffing resources but additional funding may need to be secured for other aspects going forward.

RISK MANAGEMENT

There is a reputational risk to the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership of being seen to be doing nothing. Trees and hedgerows can be an emotive subject and there is increasing pressure on local authorities to be delivering new planting schemes in particular.

This Strategy will help to mitigate those risks by demonstrating we have a clear vision, underpinned by aims and objectives that set out what we are seeking to achieve.

STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES

Consultation has taken place with key officers. In particular, ELDC’s arboricultural officer who had drafted a strategy back in 2020 which has provided the bones of this document. Consultation has also taken place with portfolio holders.

REPUTATION

There are no reputational implications arising from this report. As outlined, any reputational risk is more likely to come from not having a Tree and Hedgerow Strategy in place and being unable to demonstrate any coordinated plan in terms of how the Councils tackle new and existing resource management.

CONTRACTS

None

CRIME AND DISORDER

None.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

There are no direct implications arising from this report however engagement with local communities and wider stakeholders will be key to successful implementation of this Tree and Hedgerow Strategy. That engagement will need to be as inclusive as possible to ensure it achieves the wider benefits that are likely to be derived from it.

HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Engagement with the natural environment is well linked to improved mental and physical wellbeing outcomes. This Tree and Hedgerow Strategy will not only seek to deliver new areas of green space through tree and hedgerow planting but it will also seek to ensure better management and protection of existing areas which will also improve sites for the benefit of those that use them.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

This Tree and Hedgerow Strategy will support the delivery of corporate priorities relating to Climate Change and the Environment across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership. It will also support Environment Policy outcomes of *Protecting and recovering our natural environment*. Trees and hedgerows also have the ability to act as carbon sinks, capturing carbon from the atmosphere and storing it.

LINKS TO 12 MISSIONS IN THE LEVELLING UP WHITE PAPER

(Use this section to highlight any links to the 12 missions contained in the Levelling Up White Paper set out below. Delete any which are not applicable. If none, insert the word ‘none’.)

MISSIONS	
This paper contributes to the follow Missions outlined in the Government’s Levelling Up White paper.	
Health	Delivering equal access to nature-rich greenspace will support the Government’s commitment to narrow the Health Life Expectancy across England.

Wellbeing	Engagement with the natural environment is proven to improve mental and physical health and wellbeing outcomes with higher quality environments leader to better outcomes.
Pride in Place	Investment in green space, leads to a greater sense of Pride in Place for local communities.

ACRONYMS

S&ELCP – South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.

APPENDICES	
Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -	
<i>APPENDIX A</i>	<i>Tree and Hedgerow Strategy</i>

BACKGROUND PAPERS
No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT
A report on this item has not been previously considered by a Council body.

REPORT APPROVAL	
Report author:	Sarah Baker Sarah.baker@e-lindsey.gov.uk 07917 337857
Signed off by:	John Leach Deputy Chief Executive – Communities
Approved for publication:	Councillor Graham Marsh