

**TREE AND WOODLAND
STRATEGY**

EXETER CITY COUNCIL 2008

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VISION

To protect, care for and enhance our trees, hedges and woodlands for the benefit of our people our wildlife our city and future generations

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of Trees

Trees are one of the most important and impressive features of the English landscape, and here in Exeter our topography and climate encourage a wide range of species.

Views into and out of the city are dominated by this rich treescape, and it makes the City a green and pleasant environment in which to live and work.

Trees and woodland bring many benefits to urban environments. In addition to the visual splendour provided, trees form the basis of many food chains, providing vital habitat for many bird, insect, fungal and lichen populations. Trees and woodland moderate climate. Research has shown that the urban forests of the world absorb more atmospheric CO₂ than the Amazon rainforest, and trees filter many other pollutants and irritants that can exacerbate conditions such as Asthma and Eczema. They really are the green lungs of our city. Other research (Appendix XX) highlights the positive effect of trees and woodland on local and regional prosperity, reductions in stress and anti-social behaviour, and increases in property values.

However, growing trees and woodland in urban areas is becoming increasingly difficult. The life-span of an average urban tree is probably less than 50 years. Trees need space above ground, and good soil and irrigation below. Increasing development and re-development means that the available treespace above ground has declined, while urban soils can often be compacted, contaminated, excessively free-draining or even non-existent. Add to this the stresses of pollution, salt, vandalism, root damage resulting from groundworks and it becomes evident why in some areas trees fare poorly, or are completely absent.

These physical problems have been further compounded by a historic lack of planning for trees and woodland when developing new areas, and a lack of financing and expertise to manage existing treescapes.

The people of Exeter want more trees and woodland in the city, and better management of all our trees. The challenge facing Exeter today is to provide the right space and conditions for successful growth and establishment of new

trees, care and protection for all trees, and to ensure the continuation of tree and woodland cover in perpetuity.

Sustainability

In 1994 the Government published “Sustainable Development – the UK Strategy”, it’s response to the 1992 UN Conference Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Arising from this was “Agenda 21”, which encourages Local Authorities to produce action plans in consultation with local communities. In recent years government departments have encouraged LAs to develop specific Tree Strategies

Trees are one of the most sustainable and long-lived aspects of the landscape. However, the suitability of a tree to its location can be compromised by changes to its immediate environment by actions such as drainage, construction, or long term changes to the climate. The choice of species of tree needs to be matched to the need or function, whether it be for forestry, where non-native mono-cultures meet commercial demands, or amenity planting of individual trees in streets or parks.

Trees do require an adequate amount of investment in purchasing, planting and aftercare. This aspect has frequently been overlooked in the past, where large numbers of small, bare root trees can be planted for a few pounds each. This approach is the only practical way to plant forests, but in urban locations the survival rate is extremely low. It is better to plant fewer, high quality trees, with a high probability of survival. For a relatively low initial investment, trees will provide a very long-term resource.

Biodiversity

Trees and woodlands support highly diverse environments for a wide range of flora and fauna. Even a notionally monoculture commercial forest provides valuable habitats. In the urban setting the importance of trees is magnified. The average back garden is now recognised as providing the most valuable habitats for birds. Biodiversity audits of Parks and Open Spaces consistently show the high value of their biodiversity, and trees form the largest component of habitat provision.

BACKGROUND

History

- The geological structure of the Exe valley
 - Locally native species and habitats
 - Development of the landscape from farming to urban use
- (To follow)

Scope

The City Council is one of the largest tree owners in Exeter, and the one body that the public see as the guardian of the treescape, both in its role as landowner and through planning controls. As such it is the key organisation in seeking a framework to protect and sustain the city's trees. To develop a meaningful long-term plan, it is essential that other major stakeholders are involved in the strategy development. As the influence of the City's trees extends beyond the city boundaries, so the city is influenced by trees outside its boundaries. The relative strategic importance of woodlands and green corridors is vitally important. It is not intended that this strategy controls tree management throughout the area of its influence, but provides guidance on how the actions of various designated stakeholders will influence their landscape and that of their neighbours.

Why a strategy?

Nick Eden, director of the Arboricultural Association explains why it is important to develop a tree strategy.

"Trees. Almost everyone has something to say about them. Perhaps more than ever before, we recognise how essential they are to our survival. But what a challenge: living things as big as houses that can't be moved. They can't speak. They are sensitive to their environment. They have the potential to outlive us – and the potential to be a source of trouble. A strategy this attempts to recognize the complex technical, scientific and human issues that arise when trees and people inhabit the same area. It provides a framework for managing these issues and this huge living resource to bring about the best possible solutions for all."

A planned approach to tree and woodland management will support Exeter's Vision and contribute significantly to strategic objectives. As Exeter moves towards unitary status a comprehensive tree strategy should be seen as a key part of management planning for the wider environment. To ensure that trees remain a defining feature of the city there needs to be a clear understanding of their value and a commitment from all the many landowners to retain and enhance sustainable tree cover in and around the city. A strategy that promotes and expresses that commitment and provides sound practical direction is therefore fundamental in achieving this goal.

Furthermore, in order to demonstrate that we are responsive to the needs of the community, a strategy provides a means of involving the community directly in setting the framework of the strategy, and being a part of its implementation and continuing development. A tree strategy will also benefit the "Customer First" approach adopted by the City Council, in providing easily disseminated information on management standards, events and tree and woodland projects.

The aim of the strategy should be to determine a long-term programme to deliver specific goals. In more detail, a strategy

- provides a framework for the management of all trees within the city and the surrounding areas.
- lists the key strengths and weakness of the present tree stock.
- recognizes the differing needs of the various stakeholders.
- provides a vision for the future
- and sets out how this can be achieved through the Action Plan.

To achieve this, we need to determine

- Where we are now
- Where we want to be
- How we are going to get there
- How do we know when we get there

What do we get out of it?

- An agreed and co-ordinated approach to tree management
- High quality, efficient tree management, with work undertaken to the highest standards of planning, planting and tree care
- A community with a greater understanding, awareness and empathy leading to a greater involvement with tree management in their locality.
- A tree population that is surveyed and mapped to improve our knowledge and ability to manage issues such as biodiversity, changing and conflicting demands, and social and economic benefits
- Improved health of the tree population resulting in a more sustainable tree stock.

The Status of the strategy

The strategy will have differing levels of status for the various stakeholders. Clearly for the Council it will have significant importance as it will be the framework for all aspects of tree management. For others, especially if tree management is ancillary to their main aims and objectives, eg business plans, the strategy will not have the same importance. However the value of the strategy will not be diminished.

Consultation

Last year the Council consulted the general public and major stakeholders about trees and woodlands in Exeter, how they would like to see trees and woodland develop in Exeter, and the Council's role in this development.

The detailed results of the consultation can be found in Appendix XX, and are summarised here. In general, the people of Exeter

1. Would like to see more trees and woodland in Exeter;

2. Would particularly like to see more trees on streets, in industrial areas, and on public open space,
3. Would like the Council to play an active role in encouraging others to plant and carefully-manage their trees,
4. Would support the Council acquiring land in order to plant woodland,
5. Would like the Council to invest resources to ensure successful tree establishment on difficult sites,
6. Would like to the Council to invest in sustainably re-using timber and other arisings from tree maintenance.

AIMS

(STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES & OBJECTIVES)

The Council has four key aims in producing this strategy:

A: To enhance the city's natural environment

B: To achieve a better co-ordinated approach to the management of trees, woodlands and hedgerows

C: To improve the overall standard of tree care and create a healthier, safer tree population

D: To inform and involve local people

E: To increase the number of street trees in line with the Exeter Vision

OBJECTIVES

(these could be policies/policy statements)

These inform the action plan

1. Influence the wider landscape in strategic terms
2. Improve management of trees in council care
3. Provide advice and education for residents and other stakeholders ("Protection through advice")
4. Clearly defined role of the Council in the management and protection of trees,
5. Recognise the differences, and the common ground, between the urban landscape and the rural landscape
- 6 Provide a long-term structure plan for the retention and enhancement of trees, woodlands and hedgerows in and around the city

STRATEGY MAP

	Question	Task	Action by
Where we are now	What is the extent of the Council's tree stock	Council tree survey	Parks and Open Spaces (POS), Countryside Services (CS),
	Where/what are the important tree areas outside council ownership	Assessment of green corridors and other significant influences (woodlands etc)	POS, CS, Planning Services (PS)
	Who are the main stakeholders (see above)	Identify key stakeholders and invite participation	Working Party (WP) [includes Members, POS, CS, PS, others]
	What tools and measures are available to us now	Assessment of existing control and management processes within ECC	WP
	What are our strengths and weaknesses, where are the threats and opportunities	Assessment from ECC perspective, and from stakeholder group perspective	WP
Where do we want to be	How do we identify our needs	Stakeholder consultation Public consultation data	WP
	Do we agree with our vision	Discussion	WP
	How do we achieve our vision	Set policies	WP
How we are going to get there	How do we build on our strengths	Tree management guidelines	POS, CS,PS
	How do we overcome our weaknesses	Use of the action plan Timetabling	WP
	How are threats and opportunities dealt with	Set out responses in the action plan	WP

	Question	Task	Action by
	How do we achieve objectives	Identify resources required	WP
How do we know when we get there	How do we know if we are successful	Stakeholder consultation and review	WP et al
	How do we measure success or failure	Set a framework of measurable outcomes	WP

ACHIEVING OUR GOALS

Having agreed the aims and objectives of the strategy, the outcomes are delivered by means of an Action Plan, reviewed annually over the five year lifespan of the strategy.

Clearly some objectives will take longer than others to achieve, and may be very long term in their implementation. The Action Plan will allow achievements and performance to be measured, and an annual review will chart progress and allow evolution of the strategy should circumstances require.

APPENDICES

Details will follow the outcome of decisions by the working group

ACTION PLAN

A published document with targets, dates and measurable outcomes.

TREE MANAGEMENT

General Principles, Protection, Standards of work, etc

OWNERSHIP & RESPONSIBILITY

The Responsibility for Trees by location and classification

CONSULTATION EXERCISE

Results and outcomes of the Public Consultation undertaken in Autumn 2007

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

An explanation of terminology and meaning

LEGISLATION AND POLICY GUIDANCE

All the relevant legislation and policy guidance with a brief description

TREE SPECIFIC POLICIES

A summary of policies arising from the strategy

REFERENCES

ECC strategies

- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2005
- Biodiversity Action Plan 2005
- Environmental Strategy 2007

Arboricultural Association

CABE Space

Newcastle City Council Tree Strategy

Norwich City Council Tree Strategy

East Devon and Exeter Fringe Green Infrastructure Strategy – Draft
Methodology 2008

Countryside in and Around Towns. Natural England. 2008

Management of the Risk from Falling Trees. HSE Enforcement Liaison
Committee Sept 2007

CONTACTS

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