



Committee Report

PURPOSE: Final Decision Report

KEY OR NON-KEY DECISION: Non-key decision

COMMITTEE: Environment and Sustainability Committee

DATE: 26 September 2024

TITLE: Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy

Ward(s): All wards (city strategy)

Officer presenting the report: Richard Ennion **Job title:** Parks Development Manager

Committee Chair: Councillor Martin Fodor

Executive Director lead: John Smith: Executive Director for Growth & Regeneration

Proposal origin: Committee Chair

Purpose of Report:

1. The Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy (BTWS) was approved by the One City Environment Board in February 2024. It sets out city ambitions to increase tree canopy and to bring existing trees and woodland into good management. It identifies a collaborative approach and the role of key partners in taking actions forward including Council.
2. The BTWS has been produced as a companion to the [West of England Tree and Woodland Strategy](#), which was launched in 2021 by the West of England Nature Partnership of which the Council is a member.
3. The purpose of this report is to seek the Council's endorsement of the BTWS.

Evidence Base / Options to consider:

Key issues:

The One City Plan has a target to double tree canopy by 2046.

The One City Ecological Emergency Strategy calls for 30% of land to be managed for nature by 2030. The Bristol Ecological Emergency Action Plan applies this target to council land. Currently 15% of council land meets the Managing for Nature standard, with plans identified to take this to 31%. The anticipated Green Recovery Fund project, funded by the Combined Authority and Council will take the council to c. 18% including improvements to the management of woodland habitat, identified as a priority in the Tree and Woodland Strategy.

Climate change is harmful to citizens and nature. A key concern is urban heating and its impact on vulnerable communities – as defined in the Keep Bristol cool mapping – of which green infrastructure is a key means to reduce risk particularly by increasing tree canopy in areas of greatest need.

The Parks and Green Spaces Strategy (2024-2039) key theme Nature and Climate identifies the role of the council in providing space for nature, in progressing a nature recovery approach and in providing access to nature to citizens. The PGSS commits to increasing tree canopy by 5 hectares per year on recreational green space.

Ash dieback is a new disease that is affecting ash trees across the UK, leading to their decline and death with associated risk management and canopy recovery obligations. A Council ash dieback and canopy recovery resource plan is in the Committee tracker for agreement.

Bristol has strong advocates for trees and a track record of innovation and action to plant more trees including the council's leadership through its One Tree Per Child and TreeBristol tree planting programmes which celebration this year planting 100,000-trees since 2015 when Bristol was European Green Capital.

Under the UK's new National Forest scheme an application has been submitted on behalf of partners led by the Forest of Avon Trust and Great Western Community Forest to create a new National Forest in the region. If successful, this will bring in additional Government funding and expand the area and influence of the community forest approach. The Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy is a point of reference in its advocacy of an urban forest approach and targets for canopy.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy, led by the Combined Authority, is progressing through its consultation stage. The 'LNRS Toolkit' when published will identify Priorities and Local Habitat Map for nature recovery in the region, including an approach to 'built up' areas.

How does the strategy response to the key issues:

The BTWS sets a 20% tree canopy target citywide, in-line with Forestry Commission recommendations for urban areas, to be achieved by 2035. A 'stretch-target' is also referenced to get to 25% tree canopy, reflecting ambition beyond what is considered a pragmatic and achievable target (in the absence of comprehensive mapping work to prove what is possible). When the strategy was drafted in early 2024, Bristol's tree canopy was 16.9% (2020 data), this has been re-measured, using 2023 data using the same method, and is now 18.2%. This increase is positive and in reflects efforts to plant more trees in recent years. The BTWS acknowledges the pressure on land to prioritise tree planting, the resources required and the role of all city organisations and citizens in making land available to increase tree cover, and pressures such as ash dieback which will reduce tree canopy without action.

The BTWS recognises the disparity in tree cover, which is as low as 9% in some wards. In response the strategy takes a 'benefits-based' and equity approach, defining criteria to prioritise increasing tree cover where need is greatest. These 'Tree Impact Criteria' are set out in the strategy.

The BTWS recognises the need for a collaborative approach and correspondingly identifies actions that organisations and citizens could adopt that would act positively to increase city tree cover and support efforts to protect global forests.

The BTWS is not a Bristol City Council Strategy – it does however identify actions for the council and for other lead partners including the Forest of Avon Trust, The Woodland Trust and Bristol Tree Forum. The commitments are not financial commitments – the way forward is to attract and build resources that deliver agreed priorities.

It is intended that the BTWS is fronted by statements from the Chairs of the One City Environment and Health Boards – to reflect significant combined health and nature contributions. with supportive statements from the lead partners identified above.

Officer Recommendations: -

That the Policy Committee for Environment and Sustainability:

1. Endorses the Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy and provides its commitment to take actions forward in the strategy, which are subject to resources.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

1. The BTWS takes a ‘benefits-based’ approach, adopting ‘Tree Impact Criteria’ to prioritise tree planting (where land is available) to address disadvantage (prioritising tree planting where indices of multiple deprivation are greater and where tree canopy is below the city average) and in response to key agendas to mitigate urban heating risk and nature recovery – supporting the council’s climate and ecological action plan.

City Benefits:

1. Taking a city approach – benefits and targeting as above.

Consultation Details:

1. Stakeholder strategy development meetings held in 2023.
2. Key issues and draft proposals reviewed by Communities Scrutiny Commission
3. One City Environment and Climate Action Boards have been consulted, resulting in approval of the draft BTWS by the Environment Board in February 2024.

Background Documents:

[The Forest of Avon Plan - a West of England Tree and Woodland Strategy](#)

Revenue Cost	£0	Source of Revenue Funding	n/a
Capital Cost	£0	Source of Capital Funding	n/a
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing cost <input type="checkbox"/>		Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/> If yes - existing or new saving? Choose an item. OR Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	

Professional comments section:

1. Finance Advice:

The report is seeking the council’s endorsement of the Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy (BTWS) which is a collaborative strategy with key partners, as set out in the report.

There are no direct financial impacts or any financial commitments from the council for either revenue or

capital funding in this report. If any project work or financial requests come from the BTWS, the work would need to be fully costed, funded, and approved in line with the council’s Decision Pathway process and Financial Regulations.

Finance Business Partner: Kevin Jay, Finance Managers Growth and Regeneration, 20 August 2024. **(FINAL comments to be approved by Ben Hegarty, Finance Business Partner – Growth and Regeneration).**

2. Legal Advice: There are no specific legal implications arising from this report

Legal Team Leader: Husinara Jones, Solicitor, Team Manager – Governance Lead, Commercial and Governance Team, revised 18th September 2024

3. Implications on IT: I can see no implications on IT regarding this activity.

IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson – Lead Enterprise Architect, 10th September 2024

4. HR Advice: There are no HR implications evident

HR Partner: Celia Williams, HR Business Partner, Growth and Regeneration 19 August 2024

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal YES

Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy (draft 060924) – as submitted to and approved by the One City Environment Board in February 2024, incorporating subsequent amendments and updates.

Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) NO

contact equalities.team@bristol.gov.uk for support. See [Equality Impact Assessments](#)

Appendix C – Environmental Impact Assessment (Environmental Impact Assessment) NO

Appendix D – Decision Risk Assessment NO

Appendix E – Exempt Information NO

Appendix F – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external NO

Appendix G – Options appraisal matrix NO

Appendix H – Business case / financial analysis NO