



Statement - Cabinet paper on the Tree Strategy and Tree Planting Plan - 8 February 2022

We applaud this plan to commit significant Council funds to develop a Tree Strategy for Bristol and plant more trees during the financial year 2022/2023. We accept the premises of the report as well as the opportunities and risks identified. However, we have a few caveats.

1. Setting the correct baseline tree canopy cover value

Item 1 of the Evidence Base states: *'The One City Plan includes a target to increase Bristol's tree canopy by 25% by 2035 and to double it by 2046, from a baseline given by the 2018 i-Tree Eco study which stated Bristol's tree canopy at around 12%'*.

We have long argued that, given the range of evidence available, setting the baseline canopy cover value at 12% is too low. In our view, credible baseline is more likely to be around 18%; see our blog [Bristol's tree canopy](#).

We do not understand the statement, *'achieving a 24% tree canopy is equivalent to adding 660 hectares canopy cover'*. Where does the 660 hectares figure come from? If a 12% baseline is adopted then, on the basis that the area of Bristol is just under 11,000 hectares, we calculate that 1,320 hectares of new tree canopy will be needed. If an 18% baseline is adopted, then 1,980 hectares will be required.

2. Funding requirements and strategy development

We note the list of achievements in place (some of which will need updating) and those required at paragraph 14. We would like to have seen more detail about how the £40,000 proposed will be delivered to fund the preparation of a Tree Strategy and Tree Planting Plan.

Any strategy will need to plan for delivery at least until 2046 and should be based on SMART goals.¹ The document will need to provide methodologies and tools for measuring progress. Tree strategy documents developed by other councils should be reviewed for comparison.²

There is a substantial risk that inner-city tree cover may decline because it is easier to find planting sites on the edge of the city. We need trees in city centres to mitigate the urban heat-island effect and help reduce pollution. The strategy should address this.

3. Protecting existing urban trees

It is essential that you adopt the [Mitigation Hierarchy](#) approach to the care of existing trees: firstly, protect the trees; secondly, minimise their loss wherever possible; next, remediate any damage caused and, lastly (and only when all other options have been exhausted), compensate for inevitable tree loss by sufficient replacement planting.

If the goal of doubling tree canopy cover over the next 24 years is to succeed, it will be essential to manage trees to maximise all the benefits that existing trees bring. If not then, at the current rate of tree loss, it is likely that net tree canopy cover will decline rather than grow.

Any tree strategy and tree planting plan should become a core part of and inform the Local Plan.

We are delighted to see that plans to develop a future strategy for Bristol's trees are being revived and enthusiastically offer our services to help the Council achieve this.

¹ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and anchored within a Time Frame.

² Indeed, it could be a very helpful piece of research to find out how such strategies have been developed, how much they have cost and how successful they have been.