

Communities Scrutiny Commission

14th September 2023



Report of: Patsy Mellor

Title: Director, Management of Place

Ward: City-wide

Officers Presenting Report: Richard Ennion

Contact Telephone Number: N/A

Recommendation:

A draft Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy is presented for review.

The significant issues in the report are:

1. Bristol's tree canopy has been measured at 16.9% [data provided by BlueSky]. At a Ward level this ranges from 9-26%, with marked differences between adjacent wards.
2. Tree Impact Criteria (TIC's) have been developed to target tree planting to deliver most benefit.
3. A review of the potential to increase city tree canopy has partly been completed, including an initial stage assessment of the potential to plant trees in the adopted highway and a more detailed assessment of the potential across parks and green space. Further work is required to progress both, and a new study is required to understand the potential to increase tree canopy across non-council land, including private gardens. Progressing this work, and consequence in reviewing a tree canopy target for the city, are identified as actions to be taken forward.
4. This city strategy allows organisations to identify their actions for trees and woodland within a common framework and collaborative approach. Actions that Bristol City Council will lead on are identified.

1. Summary

A draft Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy (BTWS) has been prepared following stakeholder workshops and a public-facing Tree Questionnaire undertaken in March this year.

The BTWS takes an action-focused approach across four themes: 'Plant, Protect, Manage and Participate'. It addresses the opportunity (and need) to increase tree cover and bring existing trees and woodland into positive management. It introduces the Tree Impact Criteria to target tree planting where this would deliver most benefit. The Strategy advocates a partnership and One City approach and invites all landowners, organisations and citizens to participate and take action for trees. The BTWS identifies 'flagship' projects designed to deliver most benefit overall, including actions where Bristol City Council will lead – these projects will require funding. The strategy invites the formation of a 'Tree Partnership Action Group' to coordinate and drive actions. Whilst work has been done to map the potential to increase canopy, this is incomplete and further work is identified as actions within the strategy. The One City target to increase tree cover has been revised to add 795 hectares of tree canopy, taking the citywide total from 16.9% to 24% by 2046 [allowing for projected growth beyond this date]. This remains highly challenging. It is recommended that the target be reviewed following further work to understand the potential to plant trees across all city land. The BTWS is a Bristol focused strategy but highlights the problem of global deforestation and how Bristol citizens and business organisations can reduce pressures to remove forests. Actions in the strategy are assigned to a lead organisation which, where relevant, includes BCC. As such, there is no intention to prepare a separate BCC tree strategy.

2. Purpose

A Bristol Tree Strategy is being prepared within the context of the West of England Tree and Woodland Strategy, and in-response to the climate and ecological emergencies.

Engagement

The draft BTWS reflects feedback from a questionnaire and stakeholder workshops conducted in March 2023.

A 'Tree questionnaire' generated 504 responses (490 individual and 14 business). The headline findings:

- 78% cited biggest benefit of trees was 'encouraging investment' – [a surprising result]
- 32% cited leaves as single biggest problem they had with trees (gutters, slippery surfaces)
- 91% support doubling tree canopy
- 91% respondents have a garden, 9% don't.
- 36% of people don't need help to plant a tree in their garden
- Where help cited, biggest response was access to 'free trees and advice'
- 80% would like to see more trees planted in neighbourhood
- 59% would like to see more trees planted in their street (pavement or carriageway)
- 54% would like to see more trees planted in the road
- 95% prefer the image which shows the same street with trees v without
- 61% okay to see trees planted in their street accepting some loss of car parking space
- 65% not aware that you can already sponsor a tree

- 40% would be okay to sponsor a tree in their street
- 65% would be amenable to contribute to a crowd fund to plant trees in their street
- 50% would be okay to water a tree in their street
- 63% okay to be contacted about planting trees in their neighbourhood
- 41% of businesses would like advice about tree planting on their land
- 64% of businesses did not know whether they would financial support tree planting on others land
- 78% of businesses would offer their staff as volunteers to help plant trees

Two Stakeholder Workshops were conducted in March 2023, where **Workshop 1** reviewed what is happening currently around the themes of planting, protection and management of trees and woodland, and **Workshop 2** worked these up into recommendations for action. The workshops were attended by 14 organisations including University of Bristol, Woodland Trust, Bristol Tree Forum, Forest of Avon Trust, Bristol City Council (City Design Group, Tree Officers, Highways, Councillor for Public, Health, Communities and the One City Plan), BS3 Wildlife, Bristol Walking Alliance, Avon Needs Trees, Friends of Troopers Hill, The Parks Forum, Redcliffe and Temple / City Centre BID, Plan 4 Trees, Bristol NHS Trust, Natural History Consortium.

The Tree Impact Criteria

Tree Impact Criteria (TIC's) are introduced to target new tree planting where this will deliver greatest benefit for citizens and wildlife. The four criteria are:

1. Deprivation - Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Score 1 – 4 (4 most deprived)
2. Heat risk stress - Urban Heat Stress Vulnerability. Score 1-4 (4 highest heat stress risk)
3. Nature recovery – Nature Recovery Network. Score 1-4 (4 most ecological benefit)
4. Tree deficit – below average tree cover. Score 1-4 (4 = least treed)

A combined score (most benefit) map has been produced to show how this approach relates to parks and green spaces (within the Parks and Green Space Strategy)

See Maps attached:

Appendix B (1) Tree Impact Criteria PGSS sites Citywide - Draft 1.2

Appendix B (2) Tree Impact Criteria PGSS sites detail - Draft 1.2

The TIC's apply to any land across the city, as such the PGSS sites maps attached are illustrative. This impact led approach should not prevent tree planting in low impact areas but argues target investment and effort to bring benefit to those in greatest need.

Tree planting opportunity

A study has been completed to assess the potential to increase tree canopy across land included in the Parks and Green Space Strategy (some 2,000 ha of land). This study was based on a sample of sites and has taken a 'design-led' approach to identify a 'most and least likely' scenarios for increasing tree canopy between c. 75 and 150 hectares., by establishing woodland or individual trees. This report introduces the Tree Impact Criteria. See report Appendix E.

3. Policy

The most relevant policies and programmes are referenced in the draft BTWS.

4. Consultation

a) Internal

Council departments via the Stakeholder workshops conducted in March 2023

b) External

Stakeholders invited to the workshops in March 2023.

Public questionnaire exploring interest and attitudes to trees.

It is not intended to consult on the draft BTWS. A draft document will be presented to the One City Environment Board (at the end of September) for input and endorsement. It is anticipated that BCC will endorse the strategy via a Cabinet decision.

5. Public Sector Equality Duties

- 5a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
 - iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - tackle prejudice; and

- promote understanding.

5b) An equalities impact assessment has previously been circulated.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Draft Bristol Tree and Woodland Strategy v3.1

Appendix B: (1) Tree Impact Criteria PGSS sites Citywide - Draft 1.2.

Appendix B: (2) Tree Impact Criteria PGSS sites detail - Draft 1.2.

Appendix C: Summary of stakeholder workshops.

Appendix D: Communities Scrutiny Tree Working Group -recommendations.

Appendix E: Tree Planting Opportunity Report PGSS sites.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None