MANCHESTER TREE AND WOODLAND ACTION PLAN

2024–34

FOREWORD

Manchester, the world's first industrial city, is now leading the way in a new revolution – where landscape-led, nature-based solutions are a key consideration in city planning.

Our trees and woodlands are key components of the city's green and blue infrastructure – the growing network of interconnected green and blue places that encompass gardens, golf courses, parks, roadsides and highway verges, river valleys and nature reserves.

Manchester has had a focus on trees since its first tree strategy was approved in 2005. In the past 18 years alone, over 125,000 new trees and hedge trees have been planted. Trees of all sizes, big and small, of different species and ages have been planted, including more than 125 community orchards and fruit tree groves.

The benefits of trees are now quantifiable. Manchester's trees provide us with over £3million worth of value every year; they improve air quality, reduce flood risk, and sequester carbon, and also provide many other benefits. (City of Trees, Itree Eco assessment 2018).

Our city has strong roots. Over the past 150 years, we have witnessed seismic changes, including massive population growth and decline, the impacts of war, and more recently extreme weather events caused by a changing climate, in addition to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Standing silently in the background, constantly helping, shading, sheltering, nurturing, restoring, are our city's trees.

Dense housing estates have now become leafy suburbs. The city is a multicultural home to over 550,000 people, as well as thousands of workers and worldwide visitors, who all welcome the benefits provided by trees. Our trees are air conditioners, reducing flood risk and improving our neighbourhoods. Our woodlands have become valuable habitats – stepping stones for wildlife and nature reserves, and part of a steadily growing nature-recovery network.

Our new Tree and Woodland Action Plan (TAWAP) has been developed using the most detailed evidence ever provided. At last, we can understand the realistic possibilities that a growing treescape can deliver: our trees can exist and thrive positively alongside developmental change, complementing the dynamic, ever-changing landscape that is a fundamental part of the Original Modern City: Our Manchester.

Councillor Tracey Rawlins
Executive Member for the Environment

VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Within the context of the wider Green and
Blue Infrastructure Strategy, our vision for
the city's trees and woodlands will be:

**TO SECURE A LONG-TERM FUTURE FOR OUR TREES AND
WOODLANDS FOR GENERATIONS TO COME, PROVIDING
THE RIGHT MANAGEMENT AND STRONG PROTECTION,
AND ENSURING THEIR POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO
CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN A GROWING, WORLD-CLASS CITY.**

TREE AND WOODLAND ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

The four objectives from the original Tree Strategy will continue to shape the many actions that both the Council and stakeholders are already undertaking individually and in partnership, as well as future actions that are required.

1. MANAGING SUSTAINABLY

The sustainable management of the city's tree stock has included tree audits and the development of a Geographical Information System-based tree management approach for Council-owned trees. This objective is still relevant and will continue to help in terms of forward planning and future-proofing the city's tree stock.

2. PLANTING APPROPRIATELY

This objective continues to be appropriate; the right tree planted in the right place is part of creating a diverse and maturing tree stock that is sustainable and resilient and can cope better with the adverse effects of climate change, including new pests and diseases that may appear over time. It will also help us address environmental inequalities, guiding us to prioritise areas and communities that need trees the most.

3. PROTECTING STRONGLY

The aim of this objective is to ensure that Manchester's existing tree stock, both in public and private ownership, continues to have adequate protection. With a fast-growing population, demand for residential growth and developing transport infrastructure, the city's trees and woodlands will continue to face challenges. However, informed decision-making supported by an appropriate policy framework will improve the future for trees and woodlands within Manchester.

4. INVOLVING PEOPLE CREATIVELY

This reflects the need to raise awareness, increase understanding, build capacity and highlight the joy of trees in the city. It remains vital and embraces actions by all partners, not just the Council.

Below the four objectives lie 16 headline actions, each supported by various projects, activities and initiatives.

An approximate timescale is given where appropriate:

Short   0–2 years
Medium   2–5 years
Long   5–10 years
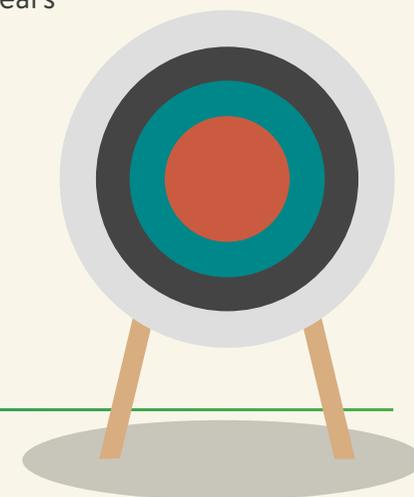
NEW EVIDENCE, NEW APPROACHES

Before developing the TAWAP, we want to understand more about the extent of our city's resource, and what realistic, achievable ambition could look like.

A new commission around growing Manchester's trees is leading the way, with a new level of detail provided in this authoritative look at the way the city's treescape has evolved, how it functions and how it can be improved. Details of the work can be found here: [Trees | Green and blue infrastructure | Manchester City Council](#)

An assessment of the treescape with this level of detail has never been undertaken before in the UK. There are three elements to the work:

EVOLUTION

City roots – the story of Manchester's Urban Forest is an informative 100-year look back at how the city's treescape and its neighbourhoods have evolved over time. It references population decline and growth, and reflects the changes – both positive and negative – across the city's landscape.

OPPORTUNITY AND CAPACITY

Growing Manchester's Trees study

Using the most detailed data sets on tree cover ever provided, we are able to deliver ward-level insight into tree capacity, identifying where and how tree canopy can be increased effectively, sustainably and appropriately. This nuanced, exciting vision looks beyond the usual places for planting (parks and green spaces) and encourages us to look where our trees are needed most – in our own spaces, our gardens and roadsides – to increase the city's canopy cover.

We are working towards a smart, achievable goal, and other cities are also striving to deliver meaningful change over time.

Manchester will work towards increasing its canopy cover from 18.8% to 21.8% by 2050.

This equates to approximately 64,000 large trees, or 320 hectares of planting – the size of nearly 600 football pitches.

Note – this is a citywide target for everyone, not just the Council.

We want to move away from chasing numbers to a more meaningful, realistic goal – tree planting that can be achieved collaboratively over time, incrementally, and based around canopy growth – with everyone having the opportunity to play their part.

Every ward in the city has different characteristics, from overall size to its landscape and housing make-up; therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach would not be appropriate.

Consequently, every ward is provided with its own analysis and has its own area-based tree-opportunity assessment. This takes lots of complex factors into account, including land identified for development, and space for other environmental priorities. Neighbourhoods, communities and organisations can then pick up these individual plans and start shaping them into prioritised planting plans.

FUNCTION

How do we look after the many trees we already have, and cater for constant challenges such as pests, disease and climate resilience, eg. ash dieback? We will provide options for better and sustainable treescape management. A new Ash Dieback Strategy will be developed by the city's Arboriculture Team, and the Tree and Woodland Action Plan will update and refresh the city's Tree Management Principles document to further sustain the climate resilience of our trees and woodlands.

REFINING THE ACTION PLAN

We are not starting from scratch. We are on the third iteration of the Tree and Woodland Action Plan, as times change and new approaches, evidence and support are now available.

In developing the new Action Plan, we have been working closely with the Tree Council. The Tree Council was established in 1973 to bring a partnership approach to tree planting and management with a shared mission to care for trees and the planet's future. The Tree Council inspires and empowers organisations, the Government, communities and individuals with the knowledge and tools to create positive, lasting change at a national and local level.

The Tree Council has acted as a strong and supportive critical friend in developing the plan, refining key focus areas such as ash dieback and hedges, and showcasing some of the key pieces of evidence the city has delivered to wider national audiences. The Tree Council has also compared the plan's development against its Tree and Woodland Strategy toolkit; its suggested approaches, case studies and reference material have been invaluable parts of the process. The Tree Council has also brokered meetings for Manchester City Council to have discussions with the country's leading tree experts. We have sought to sense-check our ideas with the independent Trees and Design Action Group, and have had positive feedback and engagement with local authority tree experts from Leeds, Birmingham and Islington.

The headline actions have been revisited and streamlined down from 21 to 16 across the four key objectives. This will help provide clarity, maximise their effectiveness, and avoid duplication.

Activity is delivered independently and collaboratively by a range of departments and partner organisations. Manchester City Council departments and organisations involved are listed separately against the relevant headline actions.
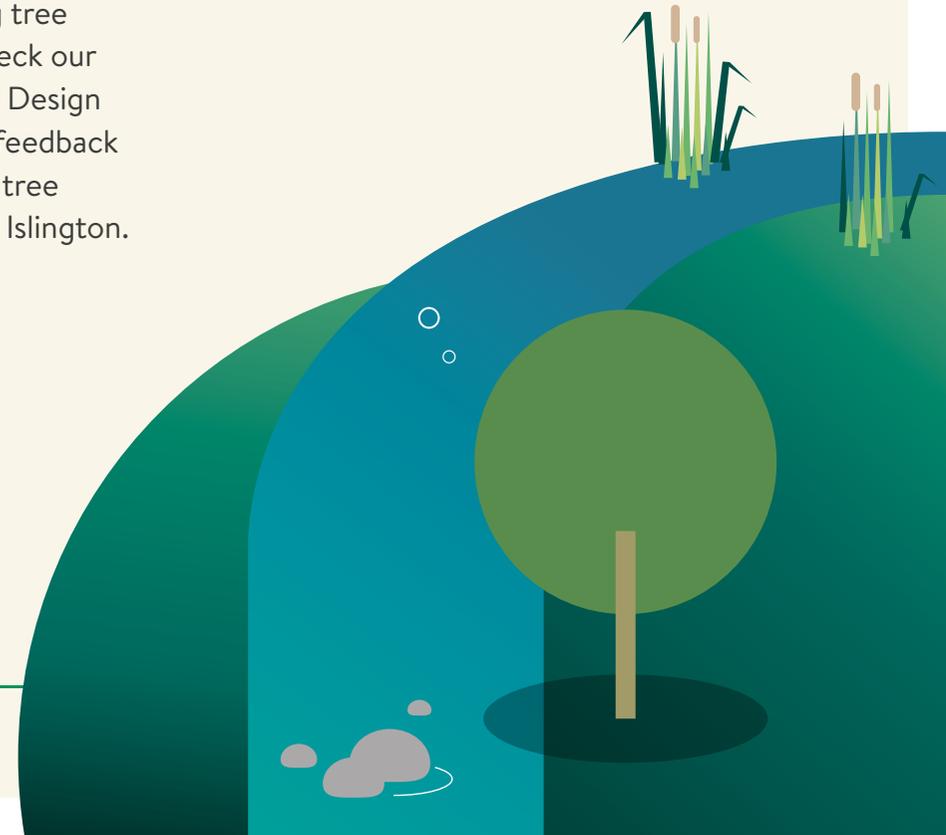
CONSULTATION

A public consultation (Draft Tree and Woodland Action Plan Consultation) took place between 10 November 2023 and 7 January 2024. There were 549 completed responses submitted, and 183 incomplete responses, compared to 140 completed responses to the same survey undertaken in 2017.

Key findings include:

- 94% of respondents think it's extremely important to have trees as part of the urban environment.

- 90% of respondents would like to see more trees in Manchester.

- 98% of respondents value the presence of trees in parks and public gardens the most.

- Respondents value local trees mainly because of their importance to wildlife.

The responses received from the consultation showed support for the actions identified within the Action Plan, and there were no actions that received significant amounts of negative feedback. Keen emphasis was placed around protecting what we have in terms of the treescape. This would be supported by the suggested refresh of the Principles of Tree Management Guidance. The consultation also resoundingly supported the need for more trees in the city, which is reflected in the delivery of the Growing Manchester's Trees capacity study, in which tree-planting opportunities are suggested for all wards.

From an Our Manchester perspective, the Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan consultation provided an opportunity for local individuals and communities to get involved. The consultation asked respondents to state if they would be interested in volunteering opportunities in tree-related activities across the city; 69% of respondents said they would, and a further 19% are already actively involved through Friends groups and community initiatives.

DELIVERING THE ACTION PLAN

In order to deliver the Action Plan, we will, in accordance with Tree Council guidance:

- Ensure that the Action Plan includes (or leads to the creation of) short- to medium-term activity as well as longer-term objectives, so that momentum is maintained.

- Build on and make clear links to other relevant strategies and plans, such as the city's Green Infrastructure Strategy, Parks Strategy, Open Space Study, Our Rivers Our City Strategies, and Biodiversity Strategy.

- Make clear the ownership of the actions to ensure sustainability in the future.
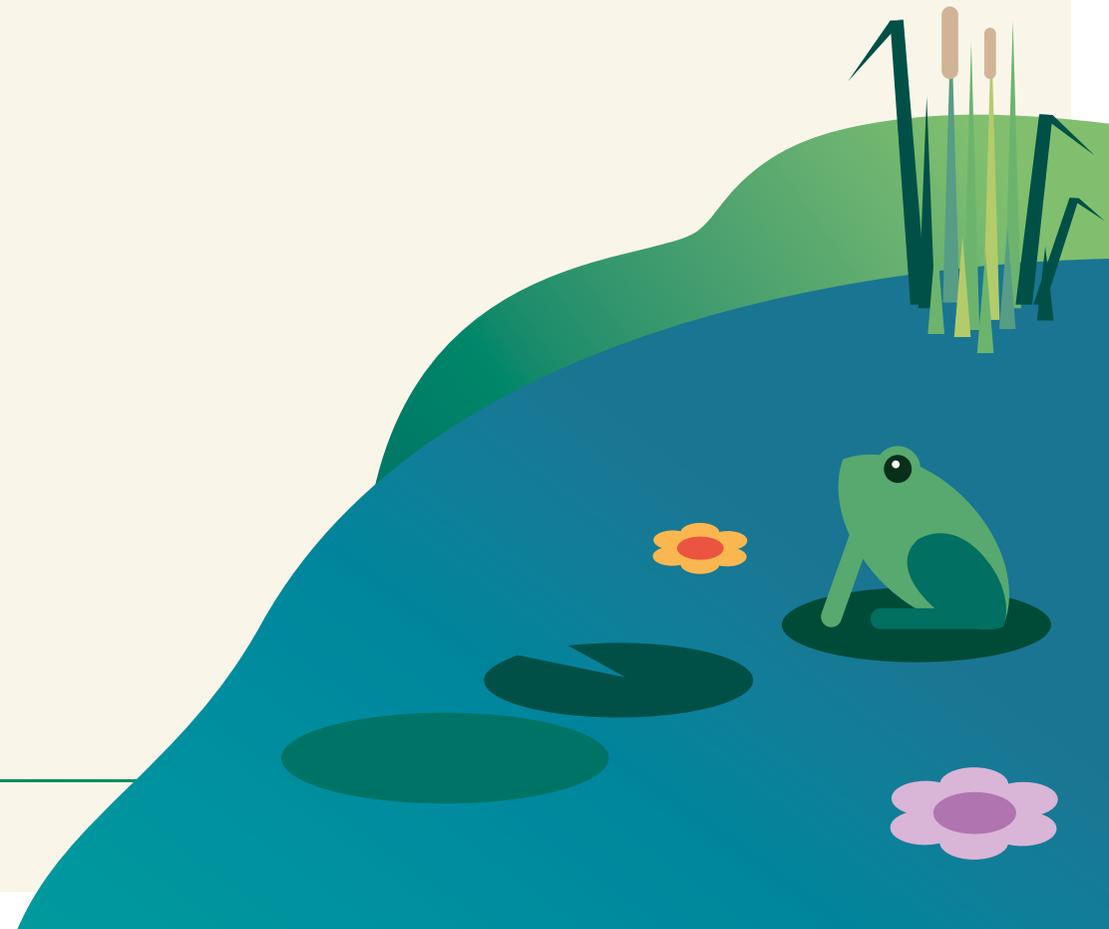
MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Action Plan will be updated quarterly and reported on annually as part of the wider Green and Blue Infrastructure Implementation Plan.

It is dynamic and accessible, making it easier for tree-related activity delivered by a range of partners – from statutory bodies to community groups – to be captured.

The success of the Action Plan will not just be driven by the realisation of the activity illustrated below. Ultimately, it will also depend on the ongoing push by all of us to recognise and support the true value of trees to the city, as we make commitments to enhance and protect the treescape in Manchester for many years to come.

The Action Plan will be monitored through a small number of potentially identifiable measures:

- Number of trees planted on known schemes
- Number of hedge trees planted on known schemes
- Number of orchards/fruit tree groves planted
- The number/area of trees/woodland with management plans
- The percentage of tree-canopy cover across Manchester
- Numbers engaged through events and volunteer opportunities
- Percentage of Sites of Biological Importance in active conservation management
- Number of Local Nature Reserves designated.

FUNDING AND DELIVERY

Projects identified within the Action Plan will either rely on collaborative funding bids being developed, or have been identified as part of existing budget provision. In relation to the Council's commitments, project funding could come from prioritising or reallocating existing resources, while external bids to grant schemes such as the Government's Urban Tree Challenge Fund will be viable, but will need to be driven locally by operational leads in parks, arboriculture and neighbourhoods. It will be vital to work with key partner organisations including City of Trees, the Wildlife Trust, Groundwork Trust and The Orchard Project to maximise external funding opportunities.
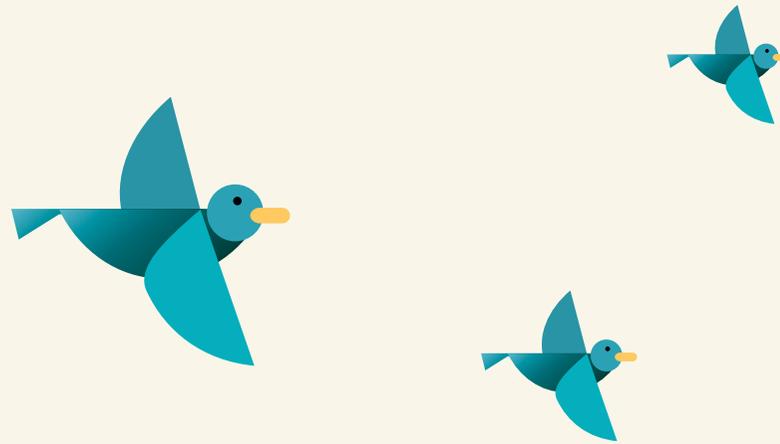
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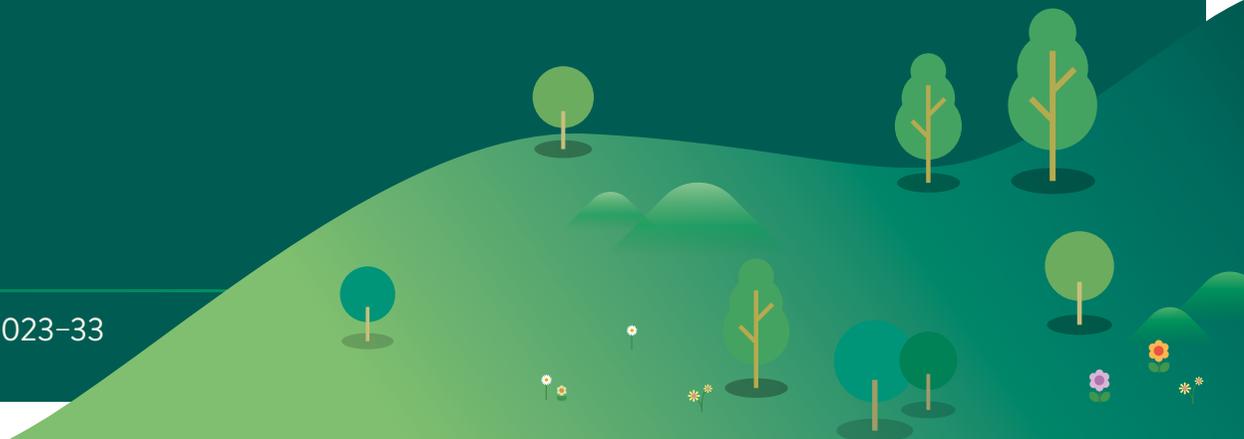
OBJECTIVE 1: MANAGING SUSTAINABLY

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
1. Develop a fuller understanding of our treescape (trees and woodlands)	Refine datasets of tree and woodland cover by:			
	Develop online Manchester City Council green infrastructure browsers	Planning Arbor	City of Trees Universities	S
	Deliver annual highway tree-inspection programme	Arbor		S
	Encourage network of data gathering and information-sharing, eg. university access to canopy data for research	Planning Arbor		S/M
	Review nature of Manchester study – Benefits appraisal of the city's green infrastructure, including tree stock	Planning		M/L
	Update Manchester tree audit	Planning		L
	Revisit itrees eco assessment	Planning		L

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
2. Ensure climate-resilient, sustainable management of the city's treescape	Refresh Manchester Tree Management Principles	Planning	City of Trees	S/M
	Ensure the Tree Management principles continue to be used effectively by Council officers and members	Arbor	RPs Wildlife Trust	S
	Encourage use of trees within broader climate-resilience plans	Nhoods	Groundwork Trust	S
	Utilise Growing Manchester's Trees study information to address need and inform neighbourhood climate change action plans	Nhoods	The Orchard Project	S/M/L
	Develop Ash Dieback Strategy	Arbor		S/M
	Develop and implement localised SUDS guidance	Highways		S/M
	Integrate tree biosecurity considerations into new principles of tree management review	Arbor		M
	Investigate commercial timber-use opportunities	Nhoods Arbor		M/L
	Encourage the development of tree and woodland management plans for Council parks and green spaces, and other landowners	Parks		S/M/L
	Encourage wider departmental ownership of tree-related issues and opportunities through the Council's internal officer GI Group	All		S

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
3. Integrate trees into all relevant strategic regeneration frameworks, plans and policies	Provide strong evidence to support the Local Plan Review, which will reflect green infrastructure themes and priorities and have strong tree-related policies	Planning	City of Trees Wildlife Trust	S/M/L
	Growing Manchester's Trees study will be used to inform and deliver strategic regeneration frameworks and development plans, including: • Victoria North • ID Manchester (Oxford Road) • Eastern Gateway • Bee Network • Our Rivers Our City Strategy • Biodiversity Strategy • GM Local Nature Recovery Network • GM Environment Plan • GM Tree and Woodland Strategy • GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy	Planning Strategic Regen		S/M/L
	A new commission looking at Biodiversity Net Gain Opportunities will lead to possible tree and woodland related opportunities citywide.	Planning		S/M
	Encourage use of trees within broader climate-resilient adaptive plans, eg. sustainable urban drainage projects, public realm improvements	Planning Strategic Regen Highways Transport		S/M/L

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
4. Develop and deliver partnership projects that sensitively improve the functionality of the treescape	Develop appropriate projects to deliver the vision, including:	Nhoods Education	Manchester Museum	
	Forest Schools mapping work being undertaken and continuing, with successful new events being delivered through the parks service.	Parks Nhoods	Wildlife Trust Hubbub	M
	SBI/LNR Management Planning and Action	Nhoods	City of Trees RHS	S/M
	Number of partnership projects supported, including: • Community orchard planting and management • In Our Nature partnership • City of Trees initiatives • Groundwork Trust initiatives • My Wild City programme • TCV Mersey Valley Willow Tit • RHS National Nature Park project pilot • Our Rivers Our City and catchment partnerships		RPs Groundwork Natural England National Trust Rivers Trusts Community groups MNC Catchment partnerships The Orchard Project TCV	S/M

OBJECTIVE 2: PLANTING APROPRIATELY

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
1. Ensure a fair, climate-resilient, healthy and diverse canopy cover across the city	Work towards agreed neighbourhood planting targets identified in the Growing Manchester's Trees Study (GMT)	Arbor Parks	City of Trees RPs	M/L
	Use Growing Manchester's Trees study ideas and planting to positively address environmental inequalities, ensuring that new tree planting is linked to local need and involves local communities	Nhoods		S/M
	Work towards a minimum of 2,000 trees to be planted annually	Nhoods		S
	Develop climate-resilient species priorities	Arbor		S
	Use of native species is encouraged on a project-appropriate basis	Arbor Parks		S/M/L
	Invasive species are recognised and discouraged on public and private lands	Arbor Parks		S/M/L
	Use Ash Dieback Strategy to identify priority areas for management and replanting	Arbor Parks		S/M
	Improve biosecurity via tree procurement processes	Arbor		S/M

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
2. Continued planting of community orchards in suitable priority locations	Develop a focused study in relation to city orchard coverage and need	Planning	City of Trees RPs The Orchard Project	M/L
	Plant orchards to positively address environmental inequalities, ensuring that new tree planting is linked to local need and involves local communities	Arbor Parks Nhoods		S/M
	Work towards a minimum of four orchards to be planted annually	Arbor Parks Nhoods		S
3. Continued planting of hedges in suitable locations	Develop focused study in relation to citywide hedgerow coverage	Arbor Parks Nhoods	City of Trees RPs The Orchard Project	M/L
	Investigate opportunities for roadside hedge planting to combat air pollution in areas of need eg. schools	Nhoods		S/M
	Work towards a minimum of 1,000 hedge trees to be planted annually	Arbor Parks Nhoods		S

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
4. Investigate mechanisms for funding new tree planting, management and maintenance	Support the delivery of the GM Tree Strategy and promote appropriate funding opportunities, eg. GM Environment Fund	Policy and Partnership Planning	GMCA RPs City of Trees The Orchard Project	S/M/L
	Develop partnership funding bids as appropriate, including Urban Tree Challenge	Arbor Parks Nhoods		S/M
	Use funding to positively address environmental inequalities and identify possible opportunities through the Council, eg. Capital Programmes and NIF including urban tree challenge, trees for climate and northern forest via City of Trees	Nhoods		S/M
	Deliver training/capacity-building opportunities Investigating commercial opportunities for trees and woodlands	Arbor Parks		S/M

OBJECTIVE 3: PROTECTING STRONGLY

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
1. Use development management tools to ensure a high standard of tree work, protection and management (INC CAVAT BNG TPOs)	Tree officers to provide guidance and advice through the planning process to ensure compliance of tree work against: • BS 5837 (the British Standard for Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction) • BS 3998 (the British Standard for Tree Work)	Planning Arbor	RPs	S
	Continue to designate TPOs as appropriate	Planning		S/M/L
	Promotion of the Tree Preservation Order process via neighbourhood teams	Nhoods		S/M
	Continue to enforce as appropriate against unauthorised work and damage to trees	Planning		S
	Ensure that consideration is linked to local need and addresses environmental inequalities	Nhoods		S/M/L
2. Deliver effective tree replacement and compensation measures	Ensure that CAVAT assessments are undertaken to fully mitigate tree loss	Planning Arbor		S/M/L
	Use new Biodiversity Net Gain guidance to secure the long-term future of trees and woodland as appropriate			S/M

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
3. Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs): increase the number of SBIs in active management to conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity	Increase the number of Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) in active conservation management by 1–4% annually, working with landowners and land managers	Planning Parks	GMEU NE	S/M/L
	Provide statistical report to Defra annually	Planning		S/M
4. Increase number of Woodland Local Nature Reserves to improve access and conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity	Work towards 1 hectare of LNR per 1,000 population in line with Natural England targets	Planning Parks	GMEU NE	S/M/L

OBJECTIVE 4: INVOLVING CREATIVELY

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
1. Further develop tree-related research to inform decision-making	Identify relevant related research opportunities through ongoing academic collaboration	Planning Parks Nhoods	GMCA UoM MM	S/M/L
	Use research to positively identify and address environmental inequalities	Planning Parks Nhoods	MMU EA GMEU CoT Wildlife Trust The Tree Council	S/M/L

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
2. Promote and raise awareness of the importance and value of trees	Run specific neighbourhood campaigns to generate awareness of and funding for tree planting and management	Nhoods Parks	UoM MMU Manchester Museum Wildlife Trust Hubbub City of Trees RHS RPs Groundwork The Orchard Project National Trust Rivers Trusts Community groups MNC Catchment partnerships The Tree Council	S/M
	Establish online and social media platforms for ongoing promotion of tree-related information	Nhoods Comms		S

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
3. Encourage, provide and record opportunities for community engagement, involvement and activity	Partners, councillors and local communities to use tree-capacity maps to inform climate action plans	Parks Nhoods Arbor	Manchester Museum Wildlife Trust Hubbub City of Trees RHS RPs Groundwork National Trust Rivers Trusts Community groups MNC Catchment partnerships The Orchard Project	S/M
	Ensure that activity is linked to local need and involves local communities	Parks Nhoods		S/M
	Support delivery of tree-related activity, training, capacity building and volunteering opportunities to include: • MFoN • In Our Nature • City of Trees Woodland Accelerator Programme • City Nature Challenge	Parks Nhoods		S/M

HEADLINE ACTIONS	PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS AND ACTIVITY	COUNCIL LEADS	KEY PARTNERS	TIMELINE S M L
4. Showcase best practice, develop case studies and seek recognition for delivered projects	Apply for national awards wherever appropriate, including Britain in Bloom RHS Awards for community greening projects	Nhoods Parks	Manchester Museum Wildlife Trust Hubbub City of Trees RHS Groundwork National Trust Rivers Trusts Community groups MNC Catchment partnerships TDAG The Orchard Project The Tree Council	S/M

ABBREVIATIONS

FULL TITLE	ABBREVIATION	FULL TITLE	ABBREVIATION
Arboriculture Services Team	Arbor	National Trust	NT
Biodiversity Net Gain	BNG	Natural England	NE
Capital Asset Value of Amenity Trees	CAVAT	Neighbourhood Investment Fund	NIF
Manchester City Council Corporate Property Department	Corp Prop	Registered providers (formerly registered housing providers)	RPs
Environment Agency	EA	Royal Horticultural Society	RHS
Greater Manchester Ecology Unit	GMEU	The Conservation Volunteers	TCV
Groundwork Trust	GW	Tree and Design Action Group	TDAG
Growing Manchester's Trees Study	GMT	Tree Preservation Order	TPO
The Wildlife Trust For Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside	LWT	University of Manchester	UoM
Manchester Climate Change Agency	MCCA		
Manchester Metropolitan University	MMU		
Manchester Nature Consortium	MNC		

MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL