

**STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**AGENDA**  
**ITEM NO**

**12 APRIL 2021**

**5**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>TREE STRATEGY</b>			
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To remind the committee of the link to 2030 Strategy and Master plan in particular commitment NE11 to support the countywide approach and advocates continued efforts for nature recovery through tree planting in collaboration with the Local Nature Partnership for an efficient and expert led approach to trees in Stroud District.			
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Committee RESOLVES to:</b>  <b>a) Endorse the Gloucestershire Tree Strategy as the basis for Stroud District delivery of greater tree cover, and</b>  <b>b) Agree that a local action plan be developed and monitored in combination with 2030 Strategy governance processes.</b>			
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	The 2030 Strategy including the NE 11 commitment was widely consulted with members and public.			
<b>Report Author</b>	Rachel Brain, 2030 Strategy Manager Email: <a href="mailto:Rachel.brain@stroud.gov.uk">Rachel.brain@stroud.gov.uk</a>			
<b>Options</b>	The main alternative would be to allocate time and resource to producing a 'stand-alone' district tree strategy. This option is discounted in favour of action planning in line with a countywide approach as more expedient means of delivery. This is also in line with 2030 Strategy 'Key Priority for Natural Environment' which is about working in partnership to be more aligned to the fact 'Nature knows no boundaries'. Having no strategy or plan is also an option but this has been discounted as being in conflict with our commitment to 2030 Strategy and a carbon neutral district.			
<b>Background Papers</b>	N/A			
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A - Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership Tree Strategy: <a href="https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/glos-tree-strategy">https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/glos-tree-strategy</a>			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	No	Yes

## 1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In addressing the climate and ecological emergency, decisions around enhancing and increasing tree coverage will need to be made in order that we can: mitigate emissions through offsetting; adapt to a changing climate through planting that gives shading; soil stability and reduced water run off; and enhance nature's recovery through provision of diverse and connected habitats within the district and beyond. Our recently adopted 2030 Strategy and Master Plan recognises this through a range of commitments but particularly those in the Natural Environment theme.
- 1.2 The issues linked with tree planting are complex and many, ranging from the practical such as the need to manage plantings for many years to ensure they thrive to the academic questions around tree species decisions; land use options and the various ecological benefits and consequences of tree based interventions. Tree planting is not always the best option for a site, for example: some species might find trees significant obstacles to their established routes to breeding or feeding grounds; carbon sequestration might be more quickly achieved by not disturbing the stored soil carbon and leaving the land in its current state, trees taking several years to reach their peak of effectiveness in carbon capture; tree planting changes lighting, moisture and transforms the habitat and so expert review is an important part of planning tree planting plans to ensure 'the right tree, in the right place, for the right reasons'.

## 2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 'The right tree, in the right place, for the right reasons' is the mantra behind the Local Nature Partnership's Tree Strategy and being a countywide body their strategy also advocates a 'nature knows no boundaries' approach to planning for nature recovery and a vision of: 'A thriving network of sustainably managed trees and woodlands covering at least 20% of the county, delivering resilience and connectivity for people, wildlife and the economy.'

The overview of the strategy and the role for the council will be presented on 20<sup>th</sup> April by Dr Gareth Parry of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust who has been leading the LNP tree strategy work.

- 2.2 The LNP have also outlined a high level approach to action planning the strategy delivery across 5 areas and this can be seen to have strong allegiance to the approaches in motion at SDC which are already delivering plantings such as the 1,500 trees delivered as part of flood management; the 5 acres being planted at Salmon Springs and the plantings integrated to canal regeneration. Five action areas have been suggested by the LNP that are suggested as a basis for the Stroud District local action plan. The table looks at how we are aligned to this delivery method and considers potential next steps.

Tree Strategy Action Area	What is this about?	SDC Current Practice Example	Examples of Areas for SDC to explore
i) Influence	How we use Tree Strategy and the associated nature mapping work to influence policy and projects at district and local levels	Inclusion of planting in canal regeneration plans	In our work as encourager with landowners, AONB boards and Town and Parish Councils how do we best promote the strategy and encourage its inclusion to local plans and projects?

<b>ii) Invest</b>	Putting tree strategy and nature recovery at the heart of funding and economic strategies for natural capital	Supporting bids such as Green Recovery Challenge Fund and Green Social Prescribing as well as supporting the LNP financially so that it can conduct its work in strategy development and nature mapping.	In our role as enabler and in line with a green economy and an emerging economic strategy that supports rural communities consider how we can make tree planting an attractive option and give our support to emerging biodiversity net gain projects.
<b>iii) Identify</b>	Finding sites for planting	Using our own estates as exemplar and working as an enabler and encourager with landowners we are identifying some opportunities such as the staff volunteer planting done with the environment agency and our Salmon Springs initiative.	In our work as encourager with landowners, AONB boards and Town and Parish Councils how can we encourage people to come forward with potential sites and how do we enable that planting and ongoing management?
<b>iv) Improve</b>	Supporting the spread of good practice	Working in partnership with training and volunteering organisations like Stroud Valley Project and organising events such as 'The Potential in Trees' information event last year are all examples of how we are improving practice around tree planting	How can we contribute to the documenting of planting in Stroud District? How can we engage with planting projects very early to support 'right tree, right place, right reason'? How can we learn from the expertise and knowledge of local communities and work in partnership with them to spread best practice and ensure long term maintenance and care across the district?
<b>v) Interact</b>	Stakeholder engagement	Consulting communities on our development and plans for green spaces	How can we be more focused in our stakeholder engagement to improve access to woodlands, strengthen local timber economies and support community woodland schemes?

2.3 The 2030 Strategy and its targeting process of overarching stretch goals fed by the 'SMART' targets of multiple projects and governed by structures that hold community, youth, member and officer voice offer an efficient route to evolving and delivering our localised action plan with officer experts, community governance, local stakeholders. 2030 Strategy performance and annual reporting also provides the monitoring mechanism to ensure progress.

### 3. CONCLUSION

3.1 If we are to play our part in delivering holistic nature recovery for the county then an approach directly linked to countywide strategy presents a viable route to doing so. If we

want to have a mutually supportive relationship with the range of expertise required to deliver on our shared ambitions, then our existing alliance with the Local Nature Partnership would be the natural course to follow. It is therefore recommended to this committee that we invest our time in defining tangible projects that can deliver on the LNP Tree Strategy, through the action planning approach outlined in para 2.2, and that progress is monitored through 2030 Strategy pathways.

## **4. IMPLICATIONS**

### **4.1 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, as it is recommending that current strategies are built upon and the endorsement of the Gloucestershire tree strategy. Any additional funds that may be identified in the future would be brought back to this Committee in a separate report.

Adele Rudkin, Accountant

Tel: 01453 754109 Email: [adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk)

### **4.2 Legal Implications**

There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations made in this report

One Legal

Tel: 01684 272691 Email: [patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk)

### **4.3 Equality Implications**

An EqIA is not required because this report is not recommending specific delivery action and will have no direct impacts on individuals or communities.

### **4.4 Environmental Implications**

The following sets out details of significant implications identified by Officers:

Endorsing the Gloucestershire Tree Strategy and agreeing to localised action planning for delivery in Stroud District would have positive environmental implications. It would create a more expedient route to delivery of nature recovery through tree and hedgerow planting that is expertly led and intrinsically linked to the strategy of partners neighbouring our district since, 'nature knows no boundaries'.

- Not following the decisions set out in this report leaves 2 options:
  - i) Establish SDC Strategy and Plan – this is seen as requiring more time and resource to tasks that do not directly deliver nature recovery, planting projects and is therefore considered a slower route to progress on an issue integral to our climate and ecological 'emergency' response.
  - ii) No Strategy or Plan – this is seen as in direct conflict to our commitment to a carbon neutral, ecologically sound 2030 as it sets no ambition or resource to progressing on the agenda. As described in the report tree planting in line with 'right tree, right place, right reason' requires an expert led and managed approach.