

Foreword

Trees affect everyone's lives. They grace our city, making it a more attractive place within which to live and work. They improve the environment in both rural and urban areas. Woodlands provide a refuge for wildlife and a haven for people who wish to recreate in quiet tranquility. As major elements of the green environment, trees and woodlands encourage social, economic and environmental regeneration.

Sheffield is blessed with one of the finest urban forests in the country. Sadly, this has been a traditionally under-funded service area. This has resulted in long delays for basic maintenance, nuisance to residents and a declining tree population in some areas. We are determined to do something about these and other problems. Despite the Council's financial difficulties, we will try and find additional resources for this crucial service area.

A healthy environment means a healthy city and a healthy city means an improved quality of life for its citizens. The Tree and Woodland Strategy represents an opportunity to improve the city's environment. It also presents an opportunity to work in partnership with others and to harness community spirit and create a strong sense of ownership. Above all, we want to provide a healthy, diverse green environment for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

This is not just a Council initiative. We want everyone to have the opportunity to get involved in delivering the Strategy and turning proposals into action. Members of the public, local and voluntary groups, businesses, institutes and agencies; all can contribute to making the Strategy a reality. This means forming partnerships, encouraging local action and just getting involved. Even a simple act like planting a tree at a cost of less than a pound can, with care, have a growing impact on the environment which can last centuries. Planting is probably the cheapest, most cost effective and long lasting way of improving the environment and one which can be implemented by anyone, including children.

We commend the Strategy to both residents and visitors to Sheffield. We are confident that it will help in the process of regenerating the city and creating a better future for all of its citizens.

Councillor Peter Moore

ABOUT THIS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – HAVE YOUR SAY

This Consultation Document outlines the Council's proposals for managing and developing the city's trees and woodlands in future. It has been produced to enable the public, including local community and specialist groups and other organisations and bodies, to pass comments on the Strategy before it is finalised. The completed Strategy document will be produced following this period of consultation.

The Strategy is going through an extensive process of consultation, which includes different departments within the Council and potential partners (including external groups, organisations and institutes). The Council places great importance on ensuring the general public are given the opportunity to make comments and wishes to encourage as many people as possible, from all walks of life, to contribute. We want to know your views and concerns and whether you think other elements should be included. It is an opportunity for people to have a say and influence the future course of tree and woodland management in the city.

If you want to make comments or find out further information, you can contact the relevant officers at the numbers/addresses outlined below.

All comments are welcomed. The consultation period is expected to end on 31st March 2001 when amendments will be made and the Strategy presented to the Council's Cabinet for approval.

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1. CONSULTATION SUMMARY

1.1 BACKGROUND

Sheffield's trees and woodlands are dominant features of the landscape and environment and are collectively one of the city's finest resources. They are not simply embellishments but provide a range of important benefits for the public (see Appendix 1). They have a huge impact on the landscape, reduce atmospheric pollution and make the city a healthier, more attractive place to live, work and play. Woodlands (especially ancient woodlands) contain some of the most valuable wildlife habitats in the city and receive hundreds of thousands of visits each year. They provide a unique background for free, locally accessible recreation and education in natural surroundings and are a renewable source of timber and other wood produce. A well-treed environment also attracts inward investment, supports local jobs and contributes to social, economic and environmental regeneration.

1.2 WHY A STRATEGY IS NEEDED

There is currently no single strategy which specifically covers all trees and woodlands and the Council's Woodland Policy of 1987 is out of date. It is also clear that trees are becoming increasingly contentious as maintenance levels, especially on the highway, continue to fall and corresponding problems increase. A strategy is required which addresses these and other problems and which covers all trees and woodlands in the city in both rural and urban areas, including, as far as practicable, those in private ownership. It is proposed that the Strategy will cover a period of ten years at least.

1.3 THE VISION FOR SHEFFIELD'S TREES AND WOODLANDS

The Council's vision for Sheffield's tree and woodland resource is:

Working in partnership to provide sustainably managed trees and woodlands which are rich, diverse, healthy and attractive and of maximum benefit to the public.

1.4 MAJOR CHALLENGES

There are a number of serious challenges to overcome if Sheffield's tree and woodland resource is to be conserved and enhanced and its value optimised in the future. The main ones are:

1.4.1 Under-funding

Trees and woodlands have suffered from under-funding for many years, making it one of the worst resourced of all Council services. This long-term under-funding has compounded the issues referred to overleaf.

1.4.2 **Unsustainable management**

Current management of the city's trees and woodlands is unsustainable. Some of the main issues to be addressed are:

- * Some key elements of the resource, for example, a large section of the highway trees are in decline and there is insufficient planting occurring to renew and enhance them.
- * Some areas of the city have a lack of trees and woodlands.
- * Private trees are often under threat from new developments.
- * A number of woodlands are under excessive pressure from inadequately controlled use and suffering from under-management.

1.4.3 **Lack of co-ordination**

Responsibility for the Tree and Woodland Service within the Council is fragmented between several different departments and sections, with none having an overview or co-ordinating role. There is also no overview of the many private tree/woodland owners and various voluntary and other organisations which are also contributing to the management and upkeep of the urban forest.

1.4.4 **Service level and impact on the customer**

Under-funding has had a major impact on the level of service provided, particularly:

- * More maintenance is required to ensure safety issues are kept to a minimum.
- * Through inadequate maintenance, nuisance problems, especially on the highway, have reached epidemic proportions and large work backlogs – stretching into many years – have built up, frequently causing severe problems for residents.
- * There is a lack of knowledge of the resource and limited databases.
- * Complaints procedures require improving and response times are frequently slow.
- * Other than regarding woodland management, there is generally limited public participation at all levels.

1.4.5 **Profile of trees and woodlands**

There is a general lack of both public and political awareness of the true value of trees and woodlands and they are, consequently, a low priority within all directorates.

1.5 MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite the serious problems affecting the service, on a more positive note, there have been a number of important achievements in recent years. Major successes include:

1.5.1 Woodland management

In the last two years, there have been several important initiatives which are providing a major boost to improving the management of the City Council's woodland resource. Through a programme of woodland management, the number of Council woodlands under active management is steadily increasing. In addition, over £800,000 of Heritage Lottery funding has been secured, to be spent over the next 5 years, on the management of 23 Council-owned woodlands within the South Yorkshire Forest.

1.5.2 South Yorkshire Forest

The South Yorkshire Forest was launched in 1991 as part of the National Community Forest Initiative to create a local community forest in South Yorkshire. Since then, it has become a strong presence in the region and has provided a major boost to urban forestry, tree planting and access and recreation in the region.

1.5.3 Tree planting

Over the last 2 or 3 decades, from many different initiatives, thousands of trees have been planted, many in the creation of new woodlands. Planting has occurred particularly on reclaimed land, new highways, countryside areas and in industrial corridors such as the Lower Don. This will do much to 'green' these areas and help to redress the imbalance between well-treed neighbourhoods and those with low tree cover.

1.5.4 Partnership working

Sheffield has a strong and vibrant voluntary environmental sector which has been well-established for years. Community and specialist groups and others have been involved in many different aspects of urban and community forestry and associated fields, including woodland and countryside projects and tree planting.

1.6 CHANGING THE WAY WE PERCEIVE AND MANAGE OUR TREES AND WOODLANDS – THE CONCEPT OF URBAN FORESTRY

The traditional way the Council manages its trees and woodlands is by treating them in isolation, as so many separate populations, individuals or groups, divided by site and by department and managed on a day-to-day basis. This is confusing for the public and results in the inefficient use of resources. Perhaps more seriously, it encourages short-term management and makes it very difficult to plan for the future. Under this system,

private trees (other than through planning processes) are largely ignored, even though they make up a substantial element of the city's 'treescape'.

In contrast, there is a different approach to managing trees and woodlands referred to as Urban Forestry. This treats all the trees and woodlands in and around an urban area (both public and private) as one overall, unified, multi-purpose resource (as opposed to a collection of small groups and individuals) which has an impact across the entire city. The objective then becomes to manage this resource as one overall population, ensuring it does not deteriorate, and also to gain maximum advantage from it, for the benefit of the public. Planning and prioritisation of resources are also improved and tree management can be focused at a local neighbourhood level.

A major principle of urban forestry is that it is people-oriented; residents and others from all walks of life can engage in devising and implementing community projects and gain from the experiences offered by active participation and the chance to assume control of the management of their local environs. Local initiatives, which have importance at a neighbourhood level, can be encouraged to grow and develop independently.

Although termed urban forestry, the same principles are as equally appropriate to the trees and woodlands in Sheffield's extensive rural areas.

1.7 **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND AIMS**

There are eight proposed Strategic Priorities which, together with associated aims, are fundamental to the success of the Strategy. These are:

1.7.1 **Urban Forestry and Sustainable Management**

Aim: Provide a tree and woodland resource which is protected and enhanced and managed sustainably in accordance with the principles of urban forestry.

1.7.2 **Getting the most out of the Resource**

Aim: An urban forest which is productive and of maximum benefit to the public.

1.7.3 **Funding**

Aim: To increase funding, both internal and external, for implementation of the Strategy.

1.7.4 **Working in Partnership**

Aim: To create and strengthen partnerships for the future management of the urban forest and implementation of the Strategy aims.

1.7.5 **Consultation**

Aims: To provide all sections of the public with information on tree and woodland management projects and programmes and the opportunity to discuss and comment on proposals.

1.7.6 **Improving the Day-to-Day Management of the Resource**

Aim: As far as resources permit, to provide efficient services involved in the management and maintenance of the urban forest.

1.7.7 **Raising Awareness of Trees and Woodlands**

Aim: To have a well informed public and politicians, with trees and woodlands given higher priority.

1.7.8 **Delivering Council Policies and Government Targets**

Aim: A Tree and Woodland Strategy which contributes to the delivery of other relevant Council strategies and policies and government targets.

1.8 **PRIORITY ACTIONS**

Substantial measures will be required to bring about the degree of change needed to prevent further deterioration of the tree and woodland resource and make the appropriate improvements to management. Such is the scale of the problems, it will also take several years to gradually introduce these changes. The following are the key Priority Actions which will have to be introduced to commence the Strategy in year one, and to facilitate all the other actions which will follow:

- * **Establish a Management Team to steer and direct the Strategy** – The Management Team would primarily be responsible for gaining an overview of all the different elements of the service within the Council and ensuring the Strategy is progressed.
- * **Establish Lead Department** – This department would be responsible for leading the implementation of the Strategy on a day to day basis, ensuring the various actions listed in the Strategy are achieved.
- * **Introduce Urban Forestry into the management of the tree and woodland resource** – The traditional municipal approach to tree management has a range of disadvantages and should be gradually abandoned in favour of the more effective urban forestry approach.
- * **Employ Community Foresters to help implement the Strategy on the ground** – The role of community forester is pivotal to the success of the Strategy as it would provide the main interface between the Council and the public; two new posts are proposed (see Appendix 2 for brief job description).
- * **Establish a Urban Forestry Budget** – All existing tree/woodland budgets and any new funding should be combined into one, in order

to improve co-ordination and ensure maximum flexibility and prioritisation of resources.

1.9 **PROGRESSING THE STRATEGY**

Following on from the Priority Actions, a whole range of measures should gradually be introduced, of which the following are the most important:

- * Undertake survey to determine areas of low tree cover.
- * Initiative a programme of tree planting, prioritising degraded areas and those with low tree cover.
- * Provide opportunities for residents to become more actively involved in conservation and planting works.
- * Create a greater network of local groups involved in different aspects of urban and community forestry.
- * Identify potential external funding which, by working with others, can be accessed for implementation of the Strategy, including European and Government funding and Heritage Lottery grants.
- * Research potential partners, including local and specialist groups, organisations, companies and institutes in the public and commercial sectors.
- * Create a database for highway trees and gradually extend to include all other Council trees.
- * Create a database for woodlands to include information on key wildlife and archaeological features and statutory designations etc.
- * Produce supplementary strategies for planting trees/woodlands in relation to planning legislation and function, woodland management, the conservation of hedgerows and the management of highway trees and trees in parks and open spaces.
- * Expand the programme of highway tree renewal concentrating on highways with over-mature and/or problematic trees.
- * Raise the profile of trees and woodlands with a media campaign aimed at local residents, schools and others.

1.10 **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

It is planned to monitor progress of the Strategy annually over the 10 year period, to ensure targets are being attained, with regular monitoring reports presented to the Management Group.

The programme should also be reviewed annually in light of monitoring reports, user feedback, changes created by new initiatives and the results

of the various research programmes and reviews identified in the action items.

2. **A STRATEGY FOR SHEFFIELD'S TREE AND WOODLANDS**

2.1 **Background**

Sheffield has one of the finest urban forests of any major city in Britain. The trees and woodland are, collectively, one of the city's greatest assets, providing a range of benefits for the public and making urban areas more human and agreeable places within which to live, work and play.

Overall, there are over 2,500 hectares of woodland in and around the city, of which over half is owned by the City Council. In addition, there are at least 25,000 mature trees along highways, and many thousands more in parks, open spaces, private gardens and the wider countryside.

Trees and woodlands are not simply embellishments but provide a range of important benefits to the public (see Appendix 1). They have a huge impact on the landscape, reduce atmospheric pollution and make the city a healthier, more attractive place to live, work and play. Woodlands (especially ancient woodlands) contain some of the most valuable wildlife habitats in the city and receive hundreds of thousands of visits each year. They provide a unique background for free, locally accessible recreation and education in natural surroundings and are a renewable source of timber and other wood produce. They are also of social and historical interest (see Appendix 3 for brief history).

A well-treed environment also attracts inward investment, supports local jobs and tourism and contributes to social, economic and environmental regeneration.

The Council's view of Sheffield's tree and woodland resource does not just include the myriad of local authority trees and woodlands it manages on behalf of the public, but also those outside its authority in private and commercial ownership; these are all elements of and add to the city's urban forest.

2.2 **WHY A STRATEGY IS NEEDED**

A new strategy is required because at present there is no strategy specifically covering trees and woodlands and this has disadvantages for the service, for example in terms of long-term strategic management. The Council does have a Woodland Policy (1987) but this has never been fully implemented, needs revising and does not cover non-woodland trees like those in the highway.

The Overall Trees and Woodlands Service is also suffering from a range of deep-seated, long-term problems which need addressing and it is clear that under-maintained trees are becoming an increasingly contentious issue with residents, especially on the highway, where years of under-funding has led to numerous critical problems.

2.3 **SCOPE OF STRATEGY**

The Strategy is designed to cover all trees and woodlands within the city. This mainly involves local authority trees and woodlands but as far as practicable, it is hoped that through encouragement and advice, private and other owners generally will take more interest in their trees and woodlands. The entire city is included in the Strategy, both urban and rural areas, including that part of the Peak District National Park which falls within the Sheffield boundary.

The Strategy will set out the Council's priorities and major programmes for managing the tree and woodland resource in partnership with other organisations, groups and the local community. It initially covers a 10 year period but it should be regarded as the beginning of a continuous, long-term process rather than a finite programme lasting a decade. It will be regularly updated and new elements added as the opportunity and need arises.

2.4 **WHAT THE STRATEGY SHOULD ACHIEVE**

It is hoped that the Strategy will provide the catalyst to reverse the long-term trend of under-funding and under-management that the city's trees and woodlands have suffered from. It would be noted, however, that without a significant increase in resources, it will not be possible to implement the Strategy and the initiative will fail.

There are many different organisations, groups and individuals from the public, private and voluntary sectors who are involved in various ways with trees and woodlands. All potentially can make a contribution to different aspects of the management and development of Sheffield's tree and woodland resource. It is hoped that as many as possible will embrace the Strategy and play a part in its implementation.

In summary, it is hoped the Strategy will:

- * Help protect and enhance the existing tree and woodland resource.
- * Guide and direct future management and provide a more co-ordinated, strategic approach.
- * Focus attention on the issues surrounding trees and woodlands and raise public and political awareness of the value and importance of trees and woodlands.
- * Influence private owners in the management of their own trees and woodlands.
- * Encourage greater use of woodlands for appropriate recreation, access and interpretation.
- * Encourage local action and greater community involvement in and ownership of the care, management and enhancement of the resource.

- * Create an improved, more customer orientated service.
- * Assist the Council in meeting national policies and targets relating to trees and woodlands.
- * Identify areas requiring further work/research, for eventual inclusion in the Strategy over the coming years.

2.5 THE VISION FOR SHEFFIELD'S TREES AND WOODLANDS

The Council's vision for Sheffield's tree and woodland resource is one which recognises its immense value to the city and its citizens and the need to maximise this value as far as practicable. The vision also embraces the need for sustainable management, to ensure this valuable resource is passed on in a healthy state to the generations to come. Finally, the Council wishes to work in partnership with organisations, groups and the general public and to encourage active involvement by all sections of the community at all levels.

The Council's vision is:

Working in partnership to provide sustainably managed trees and woodlands which are rich, diverse, healthy and attractive and of maximum benefit to the public.

2.6 POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Strategy is guided and informed by various other strategies, policies and directives etc. These include those of international origin such as the Bern Convention, Agenda 21 – the Rio Earth Summit (1992) and the Helsinki Agreement (1993) which concern conservation, the Kyoto Agreement (1997) which establishes targets for the reduction in greenhouse gases.

There are also various national strategies and plans including the England Forestry Strategy (1999), the UK Forestry Standard (1998) and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (1995) all of which relate to conservation and sustainable management. There is also the UK Climate Change Programme, which proposes increasing the use of renewable energy, to help meet agreed targets to reduce emissions into the atmosphere which are causing climate change.

Finally there are a host of local strategies and plans covering different issues. These include Sheffield's Unitary Development Plan (1998) (under review), the Nature Conservation Strategy (1991), Access to Sheffield's Countryside (1987), South Yorkshire Forest Plan (1994) (under review), the Woodland Policy for Sheffield (1987), the Community Partnerships Strategy (1997), Sheffield's Parks Regeneration Strategy (1993), Sheffield's Countryside Strategy (1999), Our City Our Future – Towards Sustainability in Sheffield (1998), and Local Agenda 21 – The Living City Initiative (1994). These deal with a range of issues from environmental management, conservation and sustainable management and development, to access and recreation and community involvement and other social issues.

There are likely to be other strategies relevant to the proposed Tree and Woodland Strategy and further research is required to ensure these are eventually taken into consideration.

2.7 OWNERSHIP, RESPONSIBILITY AND INVOLVEMENT

The urban forest includes all trees and woodlands in the city, both urban and rural and not just those which are the responsibility of the Council. There are many organisations, bodies and groups involved in numerous community forestry and other projects as well as different aspects of its management and maintenance. This ranges from local authorities, private tree and woodland owners (both commercial and members of the public), specialist interest groups and external organisations, including those from the voluntary sector. Various national organisations also have an input, especially regarding advice, funding and statutory functions.

Sheffield City Council

The Council is responsible for the city's public trees and woodlands and is charged with providing the necessary care and attention to this large resource, in the same way that it is responsible for all the other items of public property. Within the Council responsibility for the various elements of the service is divided between different departments, including those with landholding and client responsibilities, such as Parks, Woodlands and Countryside, Housing and Social Services and those with statutory functions such as Planning, Transport and Highways, who deal with planning issues. Some departments choose to employ other departments with the necessary expertise to manage their trees and woodlands.

Other agencies

Other agencies include:

- **The Peak District National Park Authority** – which has a similar range of functions to Sheffield City Council and covers part of Sheffield to the West.
- **South Yorkshire Forest Partnership** – which covers the east and parts of north and south of Sheffield and is involved in a range of initiatives including planting and woodland management, advice and promotional activities and events related to greenspace.
- **Voluntary sector groups and organisations** – of which there are numerous, are mainly community-based and participate in various aspects of the planting, management, maintenance and use of the urban forest.
- **Specialist interest groups** – for example, the Sorby Natural History Society, variously act in an advisory capacity, or are involved in conservation projects, record-keeping or lobbying.

- **National and other organisations** – these principally provide advice and/or funding whilst some have statutory functions; the Forestry Commission and Countryside Agency are good examples.
- **The private sector** – there are innumerable private and commercial owners of trees and woodlands and many contribute towards the management of the urban forest by looking after their own trees or woodlands.

2.8 MAJOR CHALLENGES

It is not surprising that there are a number of issues or challenges associated with trees and woodlands and their management and maintenance, in view of the long-term under-funding which has characterised the service. The major challenges, which must be addressed for the Strategy to be a success, are outlined below.

Under-funding

The overall Council budget for trees is estimated to be approximately 25% of that required to manage and maintain the city's municipal tree and woodland resource adequately. As this has been the position for decades, problems have become compounded in what is possibly the worst resourced of all Council services. This has, in turn, been a major influencing factor regarding the issues referred to below.

Unsustainable management

Current management of the city's trees and woodlands is unsustainable despite the large numbers of trees which have been planted in some areas of the city. Some of the main issues are:

- Some key elements of the resource, for example, a large section of the highway trees, are in decline and there is insufficient planting occurring to renew and enhance them.
- Some areas of the city, usually the most socially deprived, have a lack of trees and woodlands.
- Private trees, which form a major element of the city's urban forest, are often under threat from new developments.
- A number of woodlands are under excessive pressure from inadequately controlled use and under-management.

Lack of co-ordination

Responsibility for the Trees and Woodlands Service within the Council is fragmented between several different departments and sections, with none having an overview or co-ordinating role. This makes the prioritisation of resources and strategic management difficult if not impossible. It also means that the public do not have a single point of contact for tree issues and trying to find out which department is responsible for what trees can be very frustrating.

This issue extends to the private tree/woodlands owners and the various voluntary and other organisations which are also contributing to the management and upkeep of the urban forest. With no overview, potential joint initiatives involving owners and groups are being lost.

Service level and impact on the customer

Shortage of finance is having a serious impact on the public and level of service provided, particularly:

- There are increasing safety issues regarding the Council's trees, specially on the highway and in parks and woodlands.
- Through inadequate maintenance, nuisance problems, especially on the highway, have reached epidemic proportions and large work backlogs – stretching into many years – have built up, frequently causing severe problems for residents.
- There is a lack of knowledge of the resource and no databases.
- Complaints procedures require improving and response times are frequently slow.
- There is generally limited public participation at all levels.

Profile of trees and woodlands

There is a general lack of both public and political awareness of all the benefits trees and woodlands have on the city. This means that when it comes to funding, they have a low profile, and consequently a low priority within all directorates.

2.9 MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite the serious problems affecting the service, on a more positive note, there have been a number of important achievements in recent years. Major successes include those listed:

Woodland management

In the last two years, several important initiatives are in the process of providing a major boost to improving the management of the City Council's woodland resource. Through a programme of woodland management, guided by a comprehensive consultation procedure for woodland management planning and implementation, Parks, Woodlands and Countryside are steadily increasing the number of Council woodlands under active management. This includes the current development of a "long-term forest plan" for the predominantly coniferous estate within the Peak Park. From 2001 this will gradually bring around 500 hectares (some 50 woodlands) back into active management.

The Parks, Woodlands and Countryside Service has also been successful in attracting over £800,000 of Heritage Lottery funding, to be spent over the

next five years, to bring 23 Council owned ancient woodlands within the South Yorkshire Forest back into “good heart”.

South Yorkshire Forest

Since the South Yorkshire Forest was launched in 1991, as part of the National Community Forest initiative to create a local community forest in South Yorkshire, it has become a strong presence in the region and has provided a major boost to urban forestry, tree planting and access and recreation in the region. It provides woodland and planting advice to private landowners and has initiated or supported recreational and countryside projects and the planting of tens of thousands of trees. It has done much to promote and raise the profile of forestry and woodlands and provided thousands of pounds in grant aid and other funding to both local groups and the Council.

Tree planting

From many different initiatives, thousands of trees have been planted, many in the creation of new woodlands, over the last two or three decades. Planning, Transportation and Highways have undertaken a large element of this planting on many different sites, particularly on reclaimed land, new highways, countryside areas and in industrial corridors such as the Lower Don. This will do much to ‘green’ these areas and help to redress the imbalance between well-treed neighbourhoods and those with low cover. Other departments, such as Parks, Woodlands and Countryside, and Design and Property, have also implemented planting schemes whilst some local groups have been very active in this area.

Partnership working

Sheffield is fortunate in having a strong and vibrant voluntary environmental sector which has been well established for years. Community and specialist groups and local and national organisations working with Sheffield City Council, and occasionally separately, have been involved in many different aspects of urban and community forestry and associated fields, including woodland and countryside projects and tree planting. This has created many successes and added a new dimension to environmental management in the city.

These positive successes need extending and building upon. The majority of woodlands still fall outside the various initiatives mentioned above, whilst long-term funding for much of the estate needs to be secured. There are many more opportunities for partnership working and local community involvement which remain untapped, whilst, despite the large numbers of trees planted, there are still thousands of potential locations for more trees and an imbalance in tree cover still exists across the city.

2.10 CHANGING THE WAY WE PERCEIVE AND MANAGE TREES AND WOODLANDS – THE CONCEPT OF URBAN FORESTRY

The traditional way the Council manages its trees and woodlands is by treating them in isolation, as so many separate populations, individuals or groups, divided by site and by department and managed on a day-to-day

basis. Therefore, for example, the management of highways trees is not related to the management of other Council trees, such as those in open spaces, even when they are within a few metres of each other and have an equal need for maintenance and an equal impact on the immediate environment. This is confusing for the public and results in the inefficient use of resources. Perhaps more seriously, it encourages short-term management and makes it very difficult to plan for the future. Further, this prevents the establishment of a corporate, strategic overview of management, and the prioritising of resources to where they are most needed, for example towards planting in areas of low tree cover, is almost impossible. Under this system, private trees (other than through planning processes) are largely ignored, even though they make up a substantial element of the city's treescape.

In contrast, there is a different approach to managing trees and woodlands which is termed Urban Forestry. This treats all the trees and woodlands in and around an urban area (both public and private) as one overall, unified, multi-purpose resource (as opposed to a collection of small groups and individuals) which has an impact across the entire city. The objective then becomes to manage this resource sustainably, ensuring it does not deteriorate and to gain maximum advantage from it for the benefit of the public. Urban forestry aims to maintain an equilibrium so that renewing the resource through planting matches, or preferably surpasses, the rate of tree loss. At the same time the various benefits provided by the resource, such as recreation and timber production, can be maximised as much as possible. Planning and prioritisation of resources are also improved and tree management can be focused at a local neighbourhood level.

A major principle of urban forestry is that it is people-orientated, residents and others from all walks of life can engage in devising and implementing community projects and gain from the experiences offered by active participation and the chance to assume control of the management of their local environs. Local initiatives, which have importance at a neighbourhood level, can be encouraged to grow and develop independently. To facilitate this 'community forestry', the local authority must relinquish some of its power; its role must be to empower and support, and encourage and enthuse, whilst also ensuring its own custodial obligations are fulfilled.

Urban forestry complements other related issues such as recycling, production of renewable energy and training and employment, whilst linking in with other strategies for such elements as social, economic and environmental regeneration and leisure and nature conservation.

Although termed urban forestry, the same principles are as equally appropriate to the trees and woodlands in Sheffield's extensive rural areas. This includes traditional forestry, which is mainly practiced in rural areas and involves the management of woodlands (usually plantations) principally but not exclusively for timber.

3. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND AIMS

To help achieve the vision and successfully implement the strategy, eight proposed Strategic Priorities have been identified. These cover different elements of the strategy and each is accompanied by an associated Strategy Aim or Aims. Major issues for each Strategic Priority are also indicated.

3.1 Urban Forestry and Sustainable Management

Aim

Provide a tree and woodland resource which is managed sustainably and protected and enhanced in accordance with the principles of urban forestry.

Major issues

Fundamental to achieving sustainable management is to ensure Sheffield's trees and woodlands are adequately protected and enhanced. Urban forestry, with its various elements, is considered to be the most appropriate way to deliver sustainability.

The urban forest includes large numbers of 'non-council' trees as well as woodlands and it is also important that as far as practicable these are managed sustainably. Generally speaking, the Council should encourage, demonstrate good management practice and promote greater awareness of the value of trees. This approach is often more effective than the excessive use of legislation.

The overall resource should also be enhanced and extended through planting, which should be planned as a continuous process to counteract tree losses and achieve an equilibrium within the urban forest.

Generally speaking, the more affluent areas of the city enjoy the benefits of more trees and woodlands than areas which are deprived and where social exclusion is common and the environment despoiled. Many rural areas would also benefit from more tree planting and woodland creation. However, avoiding damage to valuable habitats, archaeological features and historic landscapes must be prevented, as well as changing the character of areas by planting in the wrong location or using the wrong species.

Despite the many partnership and voluntary sector initiatives which have, or are occurring, there is still a vast untapped resource of schools, members of the public and community organisations in Sheffield who are not actively involved in aspects of urban or community forestry. Many of these could be contributing to the delivery of the strategy and the establishment of posts within the Council – ie, Community Foresters – to provide the necessary stimulus, it is considered appropriate to foster this potential.

3.2 **GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE RESOURCE**

Aim

An urban forest which is productive and of maximum benefit to the public.

Major issues

The urban forest is one of the city's most valuable components, and as with any resource, one of the aims of management should be to maximise the benefits it provides, as far as this is practicable.

Landscape

As well as extending landscape impact through new planting, the existing treescape needs care and attention. Woodlands should be brought into management and trees, especially those which are prominent or of historic value, should be conserved.

Timber and wood produce

At present, only limited timber or wood produce is harvested from Council woodlands. At some sites over-riding nature conservation, archaeological interests and other factors limit the potential for timber production. However, there is considerable scope to sustainably harvest local produce from many woodlands with knock-on benefits for wildlife and recreation. Sheffield's woodlands are sustainably under-utilised at present and although some in private ownerships are being managed for timber, this is not the case with the majority.

Recreation

Woodlands are capable of absorbing many more visitors, provided this is regulated by providing adequate access and footpaths. Improved signage, information and interpretation are all likely to encourage more visitors. At the same time market research into public likes and dislikes is needed to better manage the resource. Residents should also be encouraged to participate in conservation works and tree planting as therapeutic exercise.

Archaeology

Many of the city's woodlands contain archaeological features such as the iron-age hill fort in Wincobank wood, or other signs of their historic management. It is important that these are conserved and protected. At the same time these features are a valuable resource for interpretive and educational activities.

Education

Council woodlands have long been used by schools and colleges, albeit to a limited extent, for educational studies, whilst members of the public can freely study nature in all its forms. Advantage can be obtained from the rich wildlife content, archaeology and social history of woodlands for study

and lifelong learning and the educational (and environmental) benefits of tree planting, especially in school grounds, should not be overlooked. More advice and information, including leaflets and educational packages, should be made available to schools and other educational institutes.

Wildlife

Woodlands, particularly those of ancient origin, are some of the most important wildlife habitats in the city. This is not only valuable in its own right but also improves woodlands as an educational resource whilst enhancing the recreational experience of visitors. However, uncontrolled 'people pressure', whether from legitimate or inappropriate recreational activities, can damage wildlife, and needs to be co-ordinated in balance with other site interests.

Within woodland, wildlife benefits from a variety of species and structure. Many local woodlands are suffering from the dominance of introduced species and a lack of trees of different ages. Most woodlands need to be actively managed through thinning, felling and regeneration works to maintain their wildlife value.

A small number of woodlands within the city boundaries are protected as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and several have recently been declared as Local Nature Reserves. Further declarations would be beneficial in protecting the most valuable local woodlands.

Health and well-being

The health benefits derived from trees and woodlands is becoming increasingly recognised. This ranges from prevention of skin cancers by trees creating shade – for example in school grounds – to reduction of atmospheric pollution. Trees and woodlands can also help reduce levels of stress in people, either through the creation of a greener and more attractive environment, or through therapeutic exercise. There is potential to improve the health of Sheffield's residents by planting more trees and establishing more opportunities for healthy exercise and recreation.

Environmental, social and economic regeneration

Trees and woodlands can play a part in helping to regenerate areas of the city which are run down and socially deprived and which have high levels of unskilled labour, unemployment and limited employment opportunities. Following the decline of traditional industries, there have been limited reinvestment in these areas, something which affects both urban and rural communities. Greening improves image and landscape, encouraging inward investment. Training and employment opportunities can be obtained from the planting, care and management of trees and woodlands, and eventually from the harvesting and conversion of timber into products.

Capacity-building in the local community and support for groups already established in employment initiatives are essential if sustainable regeneration is to be achieved. The Council has a role to play in advising, assisting and encouraging local groups and helping to establish new groups involved in greening initiatives. A network of local groups undertaking

different aspects of urban forestry would also improve delivery of the Strategic Priorities.

3.3 **FUNDING**

Aim

To increase funding, both internal and external, for implementation of the strategy.

Major issues

The pattern of funding has changed over the past decade or so with reducing internal budgets in real terms and increasing potential for externally sourced finance. Government and European policy is continuing to channel more resources through external organisations and local groups in the form of environmental grants, for example those available from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Single Regeneration budgets etc. However, there continues to be considerable scope for local authorities to capture funds directly, especially where strong partnerships with external bodies and community groups are present.

3.4 **WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

Aim

To create partnerships for the future management of the urban forest and implementation of the strategy aims.

Major issues

The Council cannot deliver the whole of the strategy alone and neither would this be desirable. Partnerships for delivering different elements of the service already exist or are being proposed, both with local community groups and more specialised organisations such as Sheffield Wildlife Trust.

The Council has a role to play in encouraging and supporting such partnerships and creating the framework within which they can flourish. Both the private and voluntary sectors should be engaged as well as organisations in associated fields such as health, housing and employment.

3.5 **CONSULTATION**

Aims

To provide all sections of the public with information on tree and woodland management projects and programmes and the opportunity to discuss and comment on proposals.

To improve services by determining user likes and preferences.

Major issues

Good consultation advises and informs, generates feedback and gains public support for projects and proposals. Projects are more likely to succeed if consultation has occurred and public support and involvement gained. This already occurs with local groups and residents when major works are planned on the highway and when woodland management plans are being prepared and implemented. However, there is scope for increasing consultation at different levels, such as the area panels, where regular discussions with the public could take place over issues which have a impact at a local level.

There is also a lack of information regarding public likes and dislikes in relation to trees and woodlands and levels of satisfaction with specific areas of the service. This information is vital in seeking to introduce improvements to the service and making it more customer focused and effective. Some user survey of woodlands have been undertaken and more market research should be encouraged.

3.6 IMPROVING THE DAY-TO-DAY MANAGEMENT OF THE RESOURCE**Aim**

As far as resources permit, to provide efficient services involved in the management and maintenance of the urban forest.

Major issues

Accepting the long-term lack of funding, it is still important to try and provide the most efficient service possible under the circumstances. A more coherent structure, including the establishment of a Corporate Management Group, to gain an overview of the different elements of the service, and Lead Department, to co-ordinate management and implementation of the strategy, would lead to many improvements in day-to-day management.

A review of existing elements of the service should take place to determine whether improvements can be made. This may be aided by the impending Best Value review of Parks, Woodlands and Countryside. Alternative ways of delivering the service, as well as how the service currently operates, should be examined. Other local authorities should also be consulted to find out how they operate.

The public interface should be examined, including aspects such as service information and maintenance and complaints procedures. The latter will in any case require changing in view of the Council's new Customer Service Strategy.

In the same way that greater co-ordination between departments is called for, it would be advantageous to rationalise existing budgets. Rather than these being split between the various departments, all budgets should be pooled into the Urban Forestry Budget, improving, as far as practicable, flexibility and prioritisation. The budget should contain funding for planting, replanting, maintenance and woodland management but should

be sufficiently flexible to enable finance to be transferred from one element to another, whenever the need arose. It must, however, be acknowledged that this proposal will only be successful if at the same time significant additional funding is made available.

Lack of information on the condition, ownership and make-up of the urban forest causes major difficulties for management. In particular, this affects the ability to properly prioritise resources for maintenance, planting and woodland management, and the ability to always respond rapidly to enquiries and to maintain public safety. Many of these problems would be improved if regular inspections took place and databases for trees and woodlands were established. A tree cover survey would greatly assist in this process.

The overall Trees and Woodlands Service is made up of many different elements such as highway tree maintenance, woodland management, planting etc. These are affected by complex issues and further work will be necessary to ensure they are adequately managed in future. Therefore, a number of Supplementary Strategies covering these and other elements should be produced over the next year or two.

Further consideration is needed with regard to trees managed by Housing Services. New measures may be introduced for Housing Services to be removed from direct Council control, and this is likely to include associated land and trees. Until more is known, this element of the urban forest should not be included with proposals for other Council trees.

3.7 **RAISING AWARENESS OF TREES AND WOODLANDS**

Aim

To have a well informed public and politicians with trees and woodlands given higher priority.

Major issues

Trees and woodlands are one of Sheffield's most prominent features, yet despite this the service has a low profile and historically has been a low priority (and poorly funded) within the Council, exacerbating the many problems which exist.

Raising awareness of the benefits of trees and woodlands is considered to be of paramount importance to improving both the service and public participation.

3.8 **DELIVERING COUNCIL POLICIES AND GOVERNMENT TARGETS**

Aim

A Tree and Woodland Strategy which contributes to the delivery of other relevant Council strategies and policies and government targets.

Major issues

There are various Council strategies and policies which both influence and are influenced by trees and woodlands and their management and protection. There are also corporate Council priorities which impact on service delivery and management issues and the Government has also signed up to international agreements on issues such as conserving biodiversity, sustainable development and actions to reduce climate change. Whilst some aspects of these strategies and directives are being delivered, further research is required to ensure all the different elements are incorporated into future management.

Many Council initiatives involve a multi-disciplinary approach where different service areas contribute to corporate objectives. Trees and woodlands can play a part in, for example, strategies aimed at regeneration and efforts are needed to ensure they receive greater consideration on such occasions.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

It is intended to commence implementation of the strategy from May 2001. However, it should be noted that it will not be possible to progress the strategy fully unless substantial additional funding is made available; this is critical to its success.

4.1 PRIORITY ACTIONS

Significant measures will have to be taken to provide the necessary framework to enable implementation to commence. The following is a list of proposed Priority Actions required to achieve this. The majority will have to be introduced early in year one of the strategy, to enable the remainder of the strategy to be progressed.

The Priority Actions are:

- **Establish a Management Team** – to steer and direct the Strategy and create an overview of the service – to consist of a small core of officers from relevant departments, preferably chaired by an elected member, with other officers and representatives from external organisations invited to attend as and when required.
- **Establish Lead Department** – to lead and co-ordinate the implementation of the strategy on a day to day basis.
- **Establish an Urban Forestry budget** – by amalgamating existing budgets and adding additional funding, in order to improve co-ordination and ensure maximum flexibility and prioritisation of resources.
- **Introduce the principles of Urban Forestry into the management of the tree and woodland resource** – managing the city's trees and woodland in accordance with the principles of urban forestry would greatly enhance most aspects of management and maintenance.
- **Employ Community Foresters to help implement the strategy on the ground** – the role of community forester is pivotal to the success of the strategy as it would provide the main interface between the Council and the public; two new posts are proposed.

4.2 SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIONS

The following is a list of the Supplementary Actions required to achieve the aims over the ten year period of the strategy. The actions are listed under the most relevant aims. However, many have common or cross-cutting themes and these will contribute to more than one aim.

Target timescales are indicated – ie, which year the actions should be achieved by, or whether they will be ongoing and continue over the ten year period.

4.2.1 URBAN FORESTRY AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

Aim

Provide a tree and woodland resource which is managed sustainably and protected and enhanced in accordance with the principles of urban forestry.

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.1.1	Avoid felling Council trees except where absolutely necessary, or if carried out as part of a renewal scheme or approved woodland management plan.	Ongoing
4.2.1.2	Continue with and extend the existing programme of woodland management.	Ongoing
4.2.1.3	Continue with the SWF Woodland Heritage Project.	Ongoing
4.2.1.4	Where necessary review and revise all strategies and policies relating to trees and woodlands.	Ongoing - 1
4.2.1.5	Review trees and woodlands in relation to planning legislation and function.	2
4.2.1.6	Produce a code of practice for the protection of trees and woodlands during developments which can be issued to developers.	2
4.2.1.7	Encourage other owners/lessees of trees and woodlands to conserve, manage and protect them.	Ongoing
4.2.1.8	Encourage farmers, other landowners and the general public to plant trees and create new woodlands.	Ongoing
4.2.1.9	Research the potential for more management agreements with private tree and woodland owners.	Ongoing
4.2.1.10	Research the Council's use of timber and timber products.	3
4.2.1.11	Produce a corporate annual programme of planting.	Ongoing - 2

4.2.2 GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE RESOURCE

Aim

An urban forest which is productive and of maximum benefit to the public

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.2.1	Conserve the present treescape by continuing with the programme of woodland management.	Ongoing
4.2.2.2	Initiate a programme of tree planting, prioritising degraded areas and those with low tree cover.	1
4.2.2.3	Be sensitive to historic landscapes and the character of local neighbourhoods when carrying out planting.	Ongoing
4.2.2.4	Forward plan the planting of trees to mitigate the impact of development where appropriate.	Ongoing

Timber and Wood Produce

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.2.5	Improve existing timber quality in woodlands.	Ongoing
4.2.2.6	Bring Council woodland back into productive, sustainable use, and encourage other woodland owners to do likewise.	Ongoing
4.2.2.7	Support others in creating new markets and strengthening traditional uses for timber and wood produce.	2
4.2.2.8	Research the potential to support the use of local home grown timber.	2
4.2.1.9	Research the potential for establishing and marketing short rotation coppice and other biofuels.	2

Recreation

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.2.10	Improve access for all in woodlands through the programme of woodland management and the South Yorkshire Heritage Woodland Project.	Ongoing
4.2.2.11	Improve interpretation in woodlands and provide information on key woodland sites.	Ongoing
4.2.2.12	Promote the value of recreation in woodlands.	Ongoing
4.2.2.13	Provide opportunities for residents to become more involved in conservation works.	Ongoing
4.2.2.14	Where opportunities arise, create new woodlands, prioritising areas of low tree cover.	Ongoing

Archaeology

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.2.15	Protect and take account of all known archaeological features during management operations, avoiding damage wherever possible.	Ongoing
4.2.2.16	Facilitate further research into, and understanding of, associated sites of archaeological interest in consultation with the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service.	Ongoing
4.2.2.17	Plan and execute all woodland management operations in accordance with the Forestry Commission's Forests and Archaeology Guidelines.	Ongoing

Education

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.2.18	Continue with the SYF Heritage Woodlands Project implementing the educational element.	Ongoing
4.2.2.19	Provide educational material to schools, local groups and the general public.	Ongoing

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.2.20	Produce information on local woodlands including nature conservation and archaeology.	1
4.2.2.21	Support cultural and arts events in woodlands.	Ongoing
4.2.2.22	Support and encourage schools to improve their own environments.	Ongoing
4.2.2.23	Facilitate the undertaking of studies and project work in woodlands by schools and colleges.	Ongoing

Wildlife

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.2.24	Conserve existing woodland habitats by continuing with the programme of woodland management.	Ongoing
4.2.2.25	Promote sustainable recreation and access within woodlands.	Ongoing
4.2.2.26	To declare further Local Nature Reserves to protect the most valuable Council owned woodlands.	Ongoing
4.2.2.27	Enhance the value of trees and woodlands for nature conservation in accordance with the UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.	Ongoing

Health and Well-being

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.2.28	Encourage and support the planting of trees to create shade, especially in school grounds.	Ongoing
4.2.2.29	Research the potential for 'horticultural' therapy involving tree planting and conservation works.	4
4.2.2.30	Promote recreation in woodlands and improve opportunities in local woodlands.	Ongoing
4.2.2.31	Plant trees and support local groups in planting to intercept atmospheric pollution, especially in areas where pollution levels are high.	Ongoing

Environmental, Social and Economic Regeneration

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.2.32	Research the potential for tree/timber related training and employment opportunities and support local and other groups involved in such programmes, especially in deprived areas.	1
4.2.2.33	Support and encourage existing and help establish new local and other groups involved in tree planting and tree/woodland management projects.	Ongoing
4.2.2.34	Support Council strategies involved in regeneration, training and capacity building.	Ongoing
4.2.2.35	Encourage inward investment and tourism by improving the image and landscape of inner city and deprived areas through initiating community based and other tree planting projects.	Ongoing
4.2.2.36	Empower local groups and residents to manage their own environments.	Ongoing
4.2.2.37	Create a network of local groups involved in different aspects of urban and community forestry.	Ongoing
4.2.2.38	Determine most appropriate ways urban forestry can contribute to the regeneration of rural areas.	2

4.2.3 FUNDING

Aim

To increase funding, both internal and external, for implementation of the strategy

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.3.1	Identify potential external funding which, by working with others, can be accessed for implementation of the strategy.	Ongoing
4.2.3.2	Support local groups bidding for external funding.	Ongoing
4.2.3.3	Seek sponsorships from the private sector.	Ongoing

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.3.4	Where appropriate, encourage local groups to take over the management of sites and projects.	Ongoing
4.2.3.5	Strengthen partnerships to draw down external funding.	Ongoing
4.2.3.6	Bring all major Council woodlands into the Forestry Commission Woodland Grant Scheme.	1
4.2.3.7	Encourage private woodland owners to enter into the Forestry Commission's WGS.	Ongoing

4.2.4 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Aim

To create partnerships for the future management of the urban forest and implementation of the strategy aims.

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.4.1	Research potential partners, including local and specialist groups, organisations, companies and institutes in the public and commercial sectors.	1
4.2.4.2	Encourage and support groups who wish to become involved as partners in the management of local woodlands.	Ongoing
4.2.4.3	Explore opportunities for leasing woodlands to local and specialist groups where appropriate.	Ongoing

4.2.5 CONSULTATION

Aim

To provide all sections of the public with information on tree and woodland management projects and programmes and the opportunity to discuss and comment on proposals, and wherever possible, be involved in implementation.

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.5.1	Improve services by determining user likes and preferences.	Ongoing
4.2.5.2	Review existing consultation procedures.	1

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.5.3	Work through local area panels.	Ongoing
4.2.5.4	Establish user feedback system.	1
4.2.5.5	Conduct user surveys where woodland management plans are in preparation.	Ongoing
4.2.5.6	Establish forums for discussion and joint management.	1

4.2.6 IMPROVING THE DAY-TO-DAY MANAGEMENT OF THE RESOURCE

Aim

As far as resources permit, to provide efficient services involved in the management and maintenance of the urban forest.

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.6.1	Produce a corporate annual programme of planting.	1
4.2.6.2	Produce a simple colour leaflet outlining departments and responsibilities for the service.	1
4.2.6.3	Rationalise complaints procedures in line with the Council's new Customer Service Strategy.	1
4.2.6.4	Review quality control systems for tree maintenance and complaints handling.	1
4.2.6.5	Undertake a survey to determine areas of low tree cover.	1
4.2.6.6	Create a database for highway trees and gradually extend to include all other Council trees.	1
4.2.6.7	Create an improved database for woodlands to include information on key wildlife/ archaeological features and statutory designations etc.	Ongoing
4.2.6.8	Produce supplementary strategies for planting and the management of woodlands, highway trees and trees in parks and open spaces.	1
4.2.6.9	Undertake regular inspections of Council trees, especially those within or close to the highway.	Ongoing

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.6.10	Expand the programme of highway tree renewal concentrating in highways with over-mature and/or problematic trees.	Ongoing
4.2.6.11	Develop further links with other local authorities and organisations for the sharing of information.	1

4.2.7 RAISE AWARENESS OF TREES AND WOODLANDS

Aim

To have a well-informed public and politicians with trees and woodlands given higher priority.

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.7.1	Make information and literature on trees and woodlands in various media available to all sectors of the community.	Ongoing
4.2.7.2	Improve woodland interpretation.	Ongoing
4.2.7.3	Raise the profile of trees and woodlands with a media campaign aimed at local residents and schools and support others doing likewise.	Ongoing
4.2.7.4	Research new technology for disseminating information and produce a tree/woodland website.	2
4.2.7.5	Make copies of the strategy available to the public.	1

4.2.8 DELIVERING COUNCIL POLICIES AND GOVERNMENT TARGETS

Aim

A Tree and Woodland Strategy which contributes to the delivery of other relevant Council strategies and policies and government targets.

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.8.1	Assess existing Council strategies to determine relevance with Tree and Woodland Strategy.	1

Ref No	Action	Year
4.2.8.2	Review current strategies and influence changes where appropriate.	2
4.2.8.3	Ensure urban forestry contributes to achieving Council policies, strategies and priorities.	Ongoing

4.3 **ANNUAL PROGRAMME**

The various items listed under the Programme Actions in Section 4.1 and 4.2 are effectively a ten year programme of works. This indicates which items will be progressed on a year by year basis over the ten years. From this programme, the first Annual Programme (ie all items listed under year 1) will be drawn. This first programme will be particularly large, as many items will have to be progressed rapidly at the commencement of the strategy, to address the major shortcomings with the current arrangements.

4.4 **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The Strategy will be monitored annually over the ten year period to ensure targets are being attained. Performance indicators will be established by which to assess effectiveness of the strategy, with regular monitoring reports presented to the Management Group. The programme will also be reviewed annually in light of monitoring reports, changes brought about by new initiatives and the results of the various research programmes and reviews identified in the Action Items. User feedback will be employed to determine if the service is improving in the public's view and an annual report will be submitted to the Management Team. Any changes will be reflected in amendments to the following year's programme.

4.5 **THE NEXT STAGE**

The consultation process is due to be completed by 31st March 2001. Following this, a final document will be produced for distribution around this time, subject to approval by the Council.

BIOGRAPHY

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Planning for London's Trees – Cobham Resource Consultants 1996

Trees and Healthy Living Conference – National Urban Forestry Unit 2000

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Sheffield Nature Conservation Strategy – Sheffield City Council 1991

South Yorkshire Forest Plan 2000

APPENDIX 1

THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF TREES AND WOODLANDS

Internationally, major issues such as the destruction of rainforest (100 acres are destroyed every minute) and global warming, and local issues such as the gradual deterioration in recent years of living conditions in many areas, both urban and rural, have led to greater public awareness of the value and the fragility of the environment (of which trees and woodlands are major elements) and the need to manage it sustainably.

There is also increasing awareness at a level of the important role trees and woodlands play. It can be argued that these are essential elements of both the urban and rural environment, as important as buildings and other structures, and fields and moorlands. They are a true part of the nation's heritage, whilst their contribution to the landscape and quality of life, especially in urban areas, is inestimable, even though this is consistently under-valued.

Trees and woodlands, as well as being intrinsically valuable in their own right, for example, by providing timber and a sanctuary for wildlife and at times for people, bestow indirect but inter-related benefits. For example, by enhancing the landscape, they not only encourage inward investment and regeneration but also positively influence how people feel, reducing stress and promoting health and well-being. Above all, trees and woodlands are a social resource, benefiting the public and making both urban and rural areas more human and habitable, and improving quality of life. Trees should be included in policies for health, regeneration, education, community development, nature conservation and culture and leisure.

The benefits of trees and woodlands are:

Landscape impact

People prefer to live in an attractive environment. Trees and woodlands make both urban and rural areas more attractive. In Sheffield they are one of the most prominent features, accentuated as they are by the hills and valleys which dissect the city and contrasting to the artificial, often harsh, built environment. It is not necessary to visit a woodland to enjoy its benefits; the impact it can have on the landscape can be sufficient in itself. Many public preference studies confirmed the importance of trees and woodlands as attractive features in determining landscape quality. Trees enhance the built environment and help integrate new buildings and other structures into the landscape. They also provide important landmarks, contribute to local character and strengthen identity and a sense of place at a local level. Trees and woodlands help provide the framework within which people live, work and play.

Nature conservation

Trees and woodlands bring nature to people's doorsteps. Wildlife enriches people's lives and is enormously popular with the public. The diversity of woodlands and associated habitats provides opportunities for the public to enjoy nature without the need to travel to the open countryside. Much of the wildlife people enjoy in their gardens and in local parks owes its presence to the support structure provided by trees and woodlands.

Woodlands, especially those of ancient origin, are irreplaceable ecosystems which contain some of the most valuable wildlife habitats in the city. This is especially so when they are associated with other habitats, such as streams, wetlands, scrub and diverse margins and grasslands. They greatly enhance the biodiversity of both urban and rural areas.

Recreation and Leisure

Woodlands provide a unique environment for recreation, where individuals and families can experience nature, peace and tranquillity away from urban strife. In Sheffield, hundreds of thousands of visits are made annually to woodlands for informal recreational pursuits such as walking/dog walking, jogging, taking picnics, nature studies, community events, horse riding and cycling, whilst more formal activities such as orienteering also take place. Some recent surveys have indicated the high value users place on their local woodland environment for recreation and 'getting away from it all'. They provide a refuge not only for wildlife but also for people who need a sanctuary from the stresses and strains of modern urban life and few, if any, other urban locations can provide the same experience. They are also one of the cheapest of all leisure facilities the community funds.

Many people also enjoy their leisure experience in parks and urban countryside. Trees greatly enhance this experience by providing a more attractive setting and bringing nature closer to them.

Culture

There is a belief held by some that we have an innate affinity with trees (and woodlands) going back to primeval times which has helped shape the consciousness of mankind. Deified, worshipped, venerated and revered, trees have been a powerful spiritual influence in many cultures and religions across the world. For centuries they have been the subject of myths and legends, ceremonies and celebrations for many, continue to represent powerful symbols of nature and the life force.

Today, trees are commonly to be found in art and literature and people enjoy taking part in community arts events in or around woodlands such as wood sculpture, traditional wood crafts, tree dressing and other cultural activities.

Education and Learning

Woodlands are outdoor classrooms for lifelong learning. They contain a wealth of subject matter to study and understand. They provide a vital and comparatively safe facility for formal and informal learning. Children and adults can both study a wide range of subjects including botany, biology, ecology, archaeology and social history and these can be linked to national curriculum activities. Children learn through play, adventure and exploration as well as active participation in practical conservation work and tree planting. The permanence of woodlands creates a resource for learning which can be carried on well after the formal educational period.

Timber and other wood produce

The urban forest can be managed as a truly sustainable, endlessly renewable resource. Timber is the nation's third largest import, accounting for 85% of total consumption. Imports of western countries are resulting in the disappearance or degradation each year of thousands of hectares of tropical and temperate rainforests, threatening global

catastrophe; Britain, for example, is the world's largest importer of mahogany. There is an ever-increasing need for home grown timber and associated produce to help reduce pressure on these dwindling global resources. Local sourcing also reduces transport costs and pollution, and supports local employment.

As well as timber, trees and woodlands supply charcoal, firewood, wood chips for surfacing and green waste compost. An increasing demand is for 'biofuels' and energy crops such as short rotation willow coppice, which are both renewable and carbon neutral. When these are combusted, they only release back into the atmosphere carbon which was absorbed in the previous decades. In contrast, fossil fuels such as coal and oil release carbon which has been locked up within the earth for tens of millions of years, thus adding to the ambient levels of carbon.

Other produce comes from trees in gardens and allotments and, to a limited extent, woodlands, which can provide organic food in the form of fruit and nuts, whilst there is a growing industry for extracting chemicals and life-saving drugs from trees.

Local economy and regeneration

An attractive tree-rich urban landscape makes a real contribution to economic, social and environmental regeneration. A city with a healthy green environment is much more likely to encourage tourism, attract inward investment and secure the establishment of businesses and commerce. This increases funds available to the local economy through more business rates, as well as creating new local employment opportunities. Tree and woodland industries support various areas of small scale local employment. Jobs are supported which are directly linked to the management, care maintenance and planting of trees and woodlands as well as those involved in harvesting, processing and utilising the produce obtained from them. Planting trees can also help transform derelict land, bringing previously redundant areas back into productive use.

Improving the local economy contributes to social regeneration by reducing unemployment. Both environmental and social regeneration are aided by planting trees, especially when local residents and groups are involved in community forestry projects. These can empower local people and act as a focal point for communities, engendering pride and ownership.

Protection

Trees and woodlands help to conserve the soil by improving soil fertility, and helping form, bind, stabilise and protect the soil from erosion, storm water run-off and flash floods, reducing downstream sedimentation of rivers in the process. They act as a buffer along watercourses helping to intercept pollutants from adjacent land and can increase riverbank stability. They are often planted to help protect water catchment areas of reservoirs, such as in the Peak District National Park.

Trees also slow down wind, saving up to 10% of energy consumption in appropriate conditions. In rural areas they form important shelterbelts protecting both farm animals, and crops and when strategically located, can deflect snow from highways.

Easily accessible, well-managed woodlands also encourage local recreation, reducing the demand for travelling to the rural countryside, thereby reducing pressure, cutting down on transportation pollution and saving on fuel.

Health

Trees and woodlands are a significant factor in the health of a nation, especially in urban areas. The quality of the local environment is greatly enhanced by trees and woodlands and various studies all reinforce the direct link between the urban environment, public health and quality of life.

Trees have a positive impact on people's health in several ways:

- * **Reduction in ultra-violet rays** – There are 50,000 new cases of skin cancer (the commonest form of cancer) registered each year in the UK, a figure which has doubled in the last 15 years. Trees provide shade and protect against harmful ultraviolet radiation which is increasingly important, especially in locations such as school grounds, in view of the alarming reduction in the ozone layer.
 - * **Reduction in air temperature** – Unpleasantly excessive summer air temperatures can be reduced by trees through the transpiration of water and by the deflection of the sun's rays and casting of shade.
 - * **Reduction in atmospheric pollution** – Atmospheric pollution contributes to the premature death of an estimated 24,000 people in the UK each year. Trees are efficient at removing gaseous air pollutants, aerosols (mists) and dust from the atmosphere as well as diluting polluted air by producing oxygen. Leaves can take up pollutants such as ozone, nitric acid vapour, nitrogen dioxide, ammonia and sulphur dioxide. This is particularly important in inner city areas where ailments (eg asthma) aggravated by atmospheric pollutants such as PM10s are spiralling upwards. The steady rise in car use makes tree planting all the more critical.
- It has been calculated that Chicago's urban forest removes over 10 tonnes of airborne dust and fine particles on an average summer day, whilst sulphur dioxide and nitrous dioxide are reduced by around 4-5%.
- * **Stress reduction** – It has been demonstrated that a well-treed environment reduces social stresses. Trees foster emotional well-being, reduce stress and help promote good mental health. Studies have demonstrated that trees reduce levels of stress and emotions like anger and sadness, and that a view with trees can not only produce substantial recovery from stress within a few minutes, but also help recovery from injury and illness. Horticultural therapy, which also reduces stress and helps in recuperation from illnesses, in its broader sense also includes conservation works and tree planting.
 - * **Noise reduction** – Noise is a well-known source of stress and trees, especially those close to the source of noise pollution, help reduce this to some extent. Perhaps more important is the psychological perception of reduced noise, created by screening off the source of pollution – such as a busy highway.
 - * **Exercise** – A well-treed environment is more attractive and stimulating and more likely to encourage people to take exercise and walk instead of using cars.

APPENDIX 2

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY FORESTER

Through employment of the Community Foresters, implementation of the strategy would be literally brought to a neighbourhood level, and in doing so, local communities would be empowered and potential significant additional external funding could be secured. This is a pivotal role necessary to deliver substantial elements of the strategy.

The Community Forester's role would be to:

- * Organise programmes of urban forestry at a neighbourhood level.
- * Increase community involvement in tree and woodland management and project implementation.
- * Establish and manage a voluntary tree warden project.
- * Integrate mature tree management with replanting, at a local level.
- * Liaise with local groups and schools.
- * Liaise with private tree/woodland owners.
- * Advise on available sources of funding.
- * Advise on technical matters.
- * Identify planting locations.
- * Organise and oversee events and volunteer planting projects.
- * Secure external funding.
- * Raise the profile of trees and woodlands.

APPENDIX 3

BRIEF HISTORY OF TREES AND WOODLANDS

The present tree and woodland resource is the result of natural processes which date back to the end of the last Ice Age some 13,000 years ago and more recent intervention by mankind. As the glaciers receded and the climate improved, much of Britain was gradually colonised by woodland. By about 4000 BC, this “Wildwood” was fully developed. However, from this period, deliberate clearance took place, initially by the first Neolithic pastoralists, and continuing to such a degree that by the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, only 13% of South Yorkshire, and about 20% of Sheffield, was wooded. As populations expanded, increasing pressure was placed on woodlands for conversion to arable land and pasture. They were, however, also essential sources of raw materials for domestic purposes, construction and industry. For example, charcoal produced from coppiced timber was vital for the area’s early iron industry. Woodlands, because of their value, were protected and actively managed as a renewable resource.

This provided a period of relative stability until the introduction of new products and materials which replaced wood, such as coal, which caused the economic importance of woodland to gradually wane. By the 19th century they became less valuable than land required for the rapid expansion of the city, and during this period several ancient woodland sites were lost to development. Today, those woodlands remaining are either remnants, though heavily modified, of the original Wildwood, or plantations created over the past century or so. Although there are no exact figures for woodland cover in the city, there was estimated to be around 2,500 hectares (7% of the area) within the city boundaries in 1970.

The present woodland resource is concentrated in the south west and north of the city, including the area lying within the Peak District National Park. Of this, Sheffield City Council currently owns just over 1,400 hectares (3,000 acres), representing over 175 woodlands both coniferous and broadleaved.

Until the mid 1980s, much of the municipal urban broadleaved woodland was managed on a ‘caretaker’ basis, with recreation and access as the primary objectives, and management of the tree stocks generally limited to health and safety matters. However, since this time, woodland management has gradually increased, a process strengthened by the creation of the South Yorkshire Forest in the early 1990s.

In contrast, the Council’s predominantly coniferous estate in the Peak Park was managed on a semi-commercial basis until the early 1990s, after which a dramatic decline in resource allocation led to a major downturn in management, which is only now beginning to be addressed. The management of the majority of these woodlands was transferred to the Parks, Woodlands and Countryside Section of Development, Environment and Leisure in 1998 to provide a single service area with a strategic overview.

Private woodland management is equally variable, with numerous small broadleaved woodlands receiving little in the way of active management but with some of the larger estates being managed for timber and sometimes access.

Sheffield also has a fine population of trees, though with one or two exceptions these are of a fairly recent origin. Those of greatest age are usually to be found within old

hedgerows and a few of the public open spaces and woodlands, and it is comparatively unusual to find a tree of much more than 200 years of age.

Many trees have originated through natural regeneration, in rural areas, waysides, and hedgerows as well as on derelict land, and wherever they have been allowed to grow and develop. In contrast, planting trees was probably not that common before the 17th century and it wasn't until the Victorian era that this became truly fashionable. Trees were not only considered a source of pride and interest and something of a status symbol, but were regarded (correctly) as a means of purifying the heavily polluted industrial-urban air and making towns and cities more comfortable places within which to live. During this period, many new tree species were introduced into the country and in Sheffield, as in many other cities, tens of thousands of trees were planted on both public land, especially along highways and in parks and pleasure grounds, and in private gardens. In many areas, especially on the western side of the city, these have a major impact on the present urban landscape and contribute substantially to its character.

The last century saw several periods of replanting which have substantially extended the area of tree cover. As the city expanded, new developments and housing estates sprang up, and almost inevitably, these were accompanied by tree planting. Municipal schemes, notably the 'Plant a Tree Scheme' of the '60s and '70s, contributed greatly to the present highway tree population and there were also numerous individual planting projects over the last two decades of the century. Today, trees continue to be planted to enhance new developments, whilst planting ornamental trees in private gardens has remained popular.