

**PLACE, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

24TH FEBRUARY 2023

**A TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY FOR
CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2023-2028**

Purpose:

To inform Scrutiny of the progress being made in developing and delivering a Tree and Woodland Strategy for Carmarthenshire County Council.

THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IS ASKED TO:-

Review and assess the information contained in the report and provide any recommendations, comments, or advice to the Cabinet Member and / or Director prior to the report's consideration by Cabinet.

Reason

To formulate views for submission to the Cabinet / Council for consideration

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:-

Cllr. Aled Vaughan Owen, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability

Directorate

Name of Head of Service:

Rhodri D Griffiths

Designations:

Head of Place and Sustainability

E Mail Addresses:

RDGriffiths@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Report Author:

Rosie Carmichael

Rural Conservation Manager

RACarmichael@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLACE, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24TH FEBRUARY 2023

A TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY FOR CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 2023-2028.

1. SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF REPORT.

The purpose of the report is to draw Scrutiny's attention to the progress being made in developing and delivering a strategy for the trees and woodlands for which CCC is responsible.

The strategy addresses CCC's responsibilities for managing trees and woodlands as well as opportunities for new planting. It includes the actions CCC will take to deliver this strategy across its services.

The strategy highlights the role which trees and woodlands play in delivering the concept of place-making and the delivery of green infrastructure as set out in Planning Policy Wales 11. It sets out how the delivery of a Tree and Woodland Strategy, is consistent with the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and Carmarthenshire's Well Being Objective 3. It proposes that in responding to the Climate and a Nature Emergencies which it has declared, CCC needs to ensure that it manages its trees and woodlands appropriately and that it plants more.

The preparation of the strategy is consistent with the Tree and Woodland Strategy Tool Kit for Local Authorities, published by the Tree Council in January 2023. It is proposed that the strategy will be reviewed after 5 years.

The development and delivery of the strategy will enable CCC to develop a long-term approach to managing its existing trees and woodlands and to new planting. It will ensure that it is planting the right tree, in the right place and for the right reasons. Identification of the most suitable areas to plant new trees and woodland will continue to be informed by the consideration of other land use requirements e.g., land required for renewable energy, for nature recovery, and for agricultural use. Decisions will be informed by the best available science.

The UK Climate Change Committee's recommends that the UK needs to establish at least 19% woodland cover by 2050 to mitigate for the effects of climate change. The strategy proposes that CCC should aim to increase the woodland cover on its land portfolio to 19% over the same period, without compromising other essential land uses.

CCC owns 6500ha land. It is calculated that 5.34% of the CCC estate is wooded i.e., 347ha. If CCC is to increase the woodland cover on its land from 5.34% to 19%, or a total of 1,235ha, it will require that CCC plants 888ha of woodland by 2050, or on average 33ha p.a.

To deliver the strategy, an inter-departmental officer working group has been set up to agree actions and report on their delivery. This group will build on the work of CCC's Strategic Land-Use Review group. The Climate Change and Nature Emergency Advisory Panel will be kept informed regarding the delivery of the strategy.

CCC's Ash Dieback Strategy is included in Appendix 1 of the report.

The development and delivery of a Tree and Woodland Strategy for CCC will enable CCC to work in an integrated way across its services to ensure that it:

- manages its trees and woodlands appropriately
- takes action to plant more trees and woodlands across its land portfolio
- allocates the resources required to maintain these.

The adoption of a strategy to manage this natural resource is considered appropriate.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED ?	YES
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IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: Rhodri Griffiths

Head of Place and Sustainability

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	NONE	YES	NONE	YES

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

Adoption and delivery of the Tree and Woodland Strategy will enable CCC to demonstrate that it is delivering Well-being Objective 3 - *Enabling our communities and environment to be healthy, safe and prosperous.*

2. Legal

The delivery of a Tree and Woodland Strategy will contribute to the evidence that CCC is delivering its Section 6 Biodiversity Duty as per the Environment Act (Wales) 2016 “*to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience*”. Delivery of the strategy will be an action in CCC’s next Environment Act Forward plan on which it reports to WG in December 2025. This reporting is a legal requirement. It will also evidence that CCC is delivering the Resilience Goal in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

3. Finance

Delivery of the Tree and Woodland Strategy will impact on finance. To date when CCC has been able to manage or plant trees and woodland, this has usually been financed through grant aid. Grant aid is expected to continue to cover much of the cost of planting new trees and woodlands, however there are instances where grant aid does not cover 100% of costs and additional finance will have to be sought. Grant aid is not always available for the maintenance of trees and woodlands, without which new planting schemes may fail.

As part of CCC's Ash Dieback project it funds the planting of some trees and woodland to compensate for the losses of Ash.

Finance is likely to be required to undertake the compliance checking which is an essential part of both CCC's project delivery and its Development Management service. Compliance checking is essential if CCC is to demonstrate delivery of tree and woodland planting, as well as the delivery of other green and blue infrastructure.

5. Risk Management Issues

The Tree and Woodland Strategy references CCC's management of tree safety and Ash-Dieback. Professional management of these issues by competent officers reduces the corporate risk associated with tree failures. Tree safety is the primary driver of CCC's approach to tree management.

6. Physical Assets

The delivery of the Tree and Woodland Strategy proposed will impact on CCC's physical assets. Tree and woodland planting will take place on CCC land and the existing trees and woodland which CCC own will be managed.

7. Staffing Implications

CCC does have staff in place that already deliver some aspects of the strategy. To address the delivery of green infrastructure and the design, checking and compliance issues relevant to landscaping and tree planting schemes delivered by CCC and development generally, additional staff resources will be required.

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER AWARE/CONSULTED

YES

The preparation of a Tree and Woodland Strategy for CCC is welcomed, as is the setting up of an inter-departmental officer working group that will ensure the delivery of the strategy across the authority. The ambitious targets the strategy sets for the management of our existing trees and the planting of new woodland on CCC land are welcomed. It is proposed that the strategy will be reviewed in 2028 to ensure that the approaches it sets out remain consistent with evolving policy and science.

It is requested that the progress in delivering of the strategy is reported to CCC's Cross Party Advisory Panel on Climate Change and Nature Emergency.

AVO 31/01/2023

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
CCC's Tree Safety Management Strategy Sept 2019 (currently being updated)	N/A	https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/media/1221301/ccc-tree-management-strategy.pdf
Tree and Woodland Strategy Tool Kit for Local Authorities, published by the Woodland Trust in Jan 2023	N/A	https://treecouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/science-and-research/tree-strategies/