

SUBJECT:	WOODLAND TRUST- TREE CHARTER
DIRECTORATE:	COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT
REPORT AUTHOR:	STEVE BIRD, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, COMMUNITIES AND STREET SCENE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek agreement to the Council adopting the Woodland Trust's Tree Charter in principle, so as to ensure its overriding principles are used in the development of other relevant council policies.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Woodland Trust is a charity established to protect ancient trees and woodland, and to promote trees and the benefits of trees.
- 2.2 To assist with their mission they have produced a Tree Charter that sets out ten key high level strategic considerations that it wishes individuals and organisations to embrace in their thinking about trees.
- 2.3 The Woodland Trust are seeking as many signatories to the Tree Charter as possible as tangible evidence of the nation's support for its ideals.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Woodland Trust is a charitable body, established in 1972 intended to protect woodland habitat, and inform about the value of trees in our society.
- 3.2 Today they maintain over 1000 sites, some 26,000 ha of woodland, but more critically perhaps, focus on engagement in the widest possible sense so as to spread the understanding of trees as an asset and resource in our communities. They have over 500,000 members and active supporters throughout the UK.
- 3.3 To assist with this they have worked with partners to develop a Tree Charter (The Charter for Trees, Woods and People), which sets out some key principles they believe are key considerations for organisations, especially those with responsibility for trees and development. This was launched at Lincoln Castle in November 2017, on the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the Forests by King Henry III in 1217.
- 3.4 Officers met with representatives of the Woodland Trust on 30th October, and explained that the Council is keen to do even more than it has in the past to protect and enhance the environment in the city, but that it also has the difficult task of balancing other potentially conflicting needs around development and economic growth.

- 3.5 The Woodland Trust were keen to make clear that it was not their role to be a lobby organisation to defend trees in all situations and at all cost, or to foster groups that might do similarly. Whilst they would certainly seek to defend irreplaceable ancient trees and woodlands, they also realised that Councils have other responsibilities which could, at times, cause a subjective conflict in priorities.
- 3.6 Instead they suggested that their role is to enlighten all on tree related issues, so that the impact of tree related decisions was transparent to all, and to assist in the development of policies that would assist at times when such conflicts of priorities might arise. Woodland Trust urges every council to have a tree strategy which sets a clear policy framework for tree management and for expansion of the tree canopy cover in the area over time.
- 3.7 They suggested that the Council might like to consider adoption of the Tree Charter 'in principle' as a first step, and that this could be a stepping stone to the development of other suitable policies across the council, over time.

4. The Tree Charter

- 4.1 The Tree Charter is provided in full as appendix to this report. This includes the ten key principles, as set out below, and supporting information/guidance.
1. Nature- Sustain landscapes rich in wildlife.
 2. Planting - Plant for the future
 3. Arts and heritage- Celebrate the power of trees to inspire
 4. Health and wellbeing- Recover health, hope and wellbeing with the help of trees
 5. Protection-Protect irreplaceable trees and woods
 6. Planning -Plan greener local landscapes
 7. Utility and livelihoods- grow forests of opportunity and innovation
 8. Coping with threats- Combat the threat to our habitats
 9. People and access- Make trees accessible to all.
 - 10.Environment- strengthen our landscape with trees.
- 4.2 The Woodland Trust invites individuals to sign-up to the Charter. They encourage groups and organisations to support the Charter, and establish themselves, if they wish, as charter branch members. In other words, local groups who will champion trees in their communities from an educated and informed standpoint. This may be a part of a wider environmental agenda.
- 4.3 In Lincoln two groups have signed as branches to this point, Transition Lincoln, and Edible Campus at the University.
- 4.4 At the time of drafting this report the council is considering options to enhance its role to support the declaration of a Climate Crisis earlier in the year. Liaison with either/both of the above groups will be through whatever liaison mechanism is ultimately established for the wider agenda.

5. Strategic Priorities

5.1 Let's drive economic growth

Having a healthy and well maintained environment is seen as a key part of the development of a strong and sustainable economic base. Maintaining suitable tree cover in the city is seen as a key part of creating a vibrant economy.

5.2 Let's reduce inequality

Everyone should have access to a safe, clean and well maintained environment. Trees are seen as being a vital part of that environment.

5.3 Let's deliver quality housing

Aspirations for the delivery of a quality housing experience, go far beyond the provision of 'bricks and mortar'. The wider environment is a critical part of housing provision, and integral to the provision of a quality experience.

5.4 Let's enhance our remarkable place

Greening our environment is a key plank of the council's approach to enhancing the city.

6. Organisational Impacts

6.1 Finance.

There are no direct impacts arising from supporting the Tree Charter in principle, although future costs may arise if the council chooses to put more resources to trees in the future.

6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

There are no direct impacts arising from supporting the Tree Charter in principle.

6.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

6.4 Human Resources

N/A

6.5 Land, Property and Accommodation

Adopting the key principles of the Tree Charter will mean that this guidance should be used as the basis for any decisions made in relation to trees and council owned land/property.

6.6 Significant Community Impact

Adoption of the principles, and any development of strategies to support them, should assist in justifying decisions made with regards to trees, and thus aid transparency of the council's decision making within communities.

6.7 Corporate Health and Safety implications

Tree management is a serious issue in terms of risk assessment. The council uses trained and experienced staff to assess the risk from trees, and employs independent assessors as appropriate. The Tree Charter would not affect the overriding duties of the council with regards to matters of health and safety.

7. Risk Implications

7.1 (i) Options Explored

Adopt the Tree Charter in principle.
Do not adopt the Tree Charter in principle.

The preferred approach is to adopt the Tree Charter in principle.

7.2 (ii) Key Risks Associated with the Preferred Approach

Some may choose to try and use the council's commitment to this to suggest that it means that the council must retain trees in all locations at all times, rather than it being an approach based on guidance, to help with management of trees as an asset.

8. Recommendation

8.1 That the Council adopts the Woodland Trust's Tree Charter in principle, on the basis that these will be its guiding principles to be considered when assessing tree related issues, and that, having adopted it in principle, it does not bind the Council to it to exclusively to the detriment of other strategic objectives.

8.2 That the Council agrees to work with the Woodland Trust and other partners to translate the Tree Charter principles into action in the City of Lincoln both in terms of policy development and tree planting, in particular to help the Council deliver its commitment to tackling the climate emergency.

Is this a key decision?	No
Do the exempt information categories apply?	No
Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?	No
How many appendices does the report contain?	One
List of Background Papers:	None

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