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Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

6th September, 2020

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The People and Communities Committee will meet as a Hybrid meeting (both remote and in person) in the Lavery Room - City Hall on Tuesday, 12th September, 2023 at 5.15 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

    (a) Apologies

    (b) Minutes

    (c) Declarations of Interest

2. **Presentation - All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care**

3. **Restricted**

    (a) Financial Reporting - Quarter 1 2023/24 (Pages 1 - 8)

    (b) Update on Local Government Regional Resilience Function (Pages 9 - 26)

    (c) Mullaghglass site update (to follow)

4. **Matters referred back from the Council/Motions**

    (a) Responsible Dog Ownership (Pages 27 - 38)

To consider further the minute of the meeting of 8th August which was referred back to the Committee by the Council on 4th September (minute attached).

(b) Sustainable Period Product Scheme (Pages 39 - 44)

To consider further the minute of the meeting of 8th August which was referred back to the Committee by the Council on 4th September (minute attached).

(c) Notice of Motion - Urban Wildflower Meadows (Pages 45 - 46)

5. **Committee/Strategic Issues**

(a) Belfast Tree Strategy (Pages 47 - 148)

(b) Waste Update (Pages 149 - 164)

(c) People and Communities Committee Plan (Pages 165 - 172)

(d) Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC) Terms of Membership and Recruitment (Pages 173 - 182)

(e) Response from DAERA Re: Air Quality Detailed Assessment (Pages 183 - 188)

6. **Operational Issues**

(a) Proposal for Dual Language Street Signs (Pages 189 - 192)

(b) Proposal for Naming New Street (Pages 193 - 194)

(c) St Oliver Plunkett Football Club - Request for Container (Pages 195 - 196)

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Extract from Minutes of:-

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY
PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 8th August, 2023

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Responsible Dog Ownership

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0   Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1   To provide members of the People and Communities Committee with an update on addressing better responsible dog ownership, in particular:

- **The Committee noted the previous update at the meeting on 7 March 2023 and requested a Members' Workshop to discuss the issues and potential solutions to dog fouling in the city in more detail.**
- **Actions taken following the Members' Workshop on 25 April 2023 on Tackling Dog Fouling in the City; and**

- **The deferred decision regarding proposed changes to Fixed Penalty Fines for dog fouling offences and littering offences.**

2.0   Recommendation

2.1   The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the actions and outcomes following the Members' Workshop on 25 April 2023.**

- **Reconsider Options 1 – 3 in relation to the new fixed penalty limits for dog fouling and agree a preferred option.**

- **Consider Option 4 - applying any changes made to the fixed penalty limits for dog fouling offences to littering offences.**

3.0   Main Report

3.1   PART 1 – Members' Workshop

3.2   A Members' Workshop on responsible dog ownership and the tackling of dog fouling in the city took place on 25 April 2023. An overview of the Dog Warden Service was followed with fouling statistics and trends; the challenges when tackling dog fouling

and updates from the various teams in the Council with responsibility for tackling dog fouling.

3.3 Sixteen actions have been grouped under eight headings and since the workshop, officers in the Dog Warden Service, Environmental Education and Outreach Team, Corporate Marketing and Communications, Open Spaces and Streetscene and the Performance and Improvement Unit have held further workshops and been working through these actions.

DATA

3.4 **ACTION 1 – Consider how best to use data from street inspections / street index data or other data sources to identify hot spots and look at impact. Consider how best to provide data to Members.**

3.5 A full analysis of the available data was carried out and the key findings were:

- Customer complaints in relation to dog fouling increased by 14% from 21/22 (889) to 22/23 (1013).
- The data from the Council's Quality Monitoring Survey evidences a seasonal trend to dog fouling, where there is increased dog fouling in the winter months (December – February) compared with the summer months (June – August). This same seasonal trend has been identified in customer complaints recorded by the Customer Hub. It shows from about November to March in both 2021/22 and 2022/23 there was a sharp rise in complaints.

- The number of fixed penalties and revenue from the fines are currently low. Fouling detection patrols are resource intensive and are carried out in pairs. We are continuing to review the opportunity for fouling detection patrols against the other demands on the Dog Wardens time.

- There was a greater number of people with dog licences pre-pandemic than post pandemic.

3.6 Outcome 1 - We will continue to use the data from complaints (via public and Members) and the Quality Monitoring Surveys to target hot spot areas and direct resources. Resources permitting, additional fouling patrols will operate between December and February. We are continuing to work towards pre-pandemic levels of enforcement activity. A licensing intervention has been introduced with an additional resource secured to tackle the backlog. Open Spaces and Streetscene will review the available data and determine how best to circulate future performance information.

3.7 **ACTION 2 – Benchmark other locations with good practice.**

We restricted our benchmarking to Northern Ireland as we felt that other NI authorities would provide information that was most relevant to Belfast in managing these issues. 8 of the 10 councils responded. We asked a series of questions about fouling patrols; dog enclosures; dog control orders; signage; stencilling; provision of free poo bags and use of dispensers. We also reviewed the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Briefing 2019 which collated a list of good ideas from local authorities across the UK:

- **The Green Dog Walkers Scheme**
- **Rewards for residents reporting fouling**
- **Chalk stencils with messages being painted onto pavements**
- **Highlighting fouling with bright coloured sprays**
- **Glow-in-the-dark posters to target night-time fouling**
- **Dog Watch Schemes – inspired by Neighbourhood Watch Schemes**
- **A Council reporting app that allows individuals to identify the location of fouling**

3.8   Outcome 2 – Where appropriate the benchmarking findings have been included in the relevant actions below.

3.9   <u>ACTION 3 – Survey / updated research</u>

We reviewed available research including that commissioned by BCC and carried out by QUB (Canine Behaviour Centre, School of Psychology) in 2004 and 2009. We have re-engaged with QUB and are hoping to work with the university in the coming academic year to draw up a strategy for new research that will be tailored to our needs. However, the university has stressed that resources are limited and any research will need to be conducted within very tight parameters.

3.10   We also reviewed the most recent research from the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Briefing 2019 which included findings from local authorities across the UK. It notes dog fouling is one of the most prevalent issues for local authority environmental services. It is particularly difficult to tackle for a number of reasons:

- **People are aware they could be fined, but many do not think they will ever be caught;**
- **Fouling can happen at any time of day or night, so patrolling often will not catch the offenders;**
- **Residents are (rightfully) hesitant to confront residents who persistently allow their dog to foul;**
- **Prosecution requires good evidence;**
- **Attempts to introduce new dog controls to combat dog fouling can lead to a public**
- **backlash;**

- **The public is still largely unaware that (in many areas) they can dispose of dog waste in any available local authority litter bin;**
- **Many people do not consider leaving dog waste bags on the ground fouling.**

3.11   Outcome 3 – We will continue to engage with QUB regarding opportunities for bespoke research. We will seek to increase awareness of successful prosecutions and will work to address the difficulties listed above through our education programme.

MESSAGING - EDUCATIONAL MESSAGING VIA LEAFLET DOOR DROPS

3.12   **ACTION 4 – Build on current leaflet drops with public awareness messaging in identified hot spot areas.**

This is a cost effective and visible action. However, it does have limitations. If we leaflet a street with significant dog fouling, it is not necessarily the residents of that street that are allowing dogs to foul in their own street. In an attempt to mitigate for this we will normally leaflet several surrounding streets. Fouling in gated alley ways can be attributed to specific houses with access to the alley way and only those houses would be targeted through leafleting.

Outcome 4 – Dog Wardens will continue to leaflet houses in hot spot areas. Colleagues in our Enforcement Team, who tackle littering, will continue to assist with leaflet drops.

3.13   **ACTION 5 – Humanise the message, make messaging local. Harder hitting – health impacts / implications, especially to children.**

3.14   The 'think again' dog fouling campaign was launched during October/November 2022, with a second burst of activity in February 2023 and it has recently been shortlisted for a CIPR (Chartered Institute of Public Relations) Pride Award for best Integrated Campaign. Our objective was to create a campaign using real insights and research to help influence behaviour change by encouraging dog owners to pick up after their dog, take responsibility and Think Again! The campaign used integrated communications consisting of heavyweight advertising, social media and innovative PR.

3.15   Independent research was commissioned to evaluate the paid for advertising element of the campaign and it found that 93% recalled the message; 80% said the artwork was understandable and 72% said its greatest benefit was encouraging dog owners to take responsibility. As the 'think again' campaign is so new Marketing and Corporate Communications have recommended that we do not invest in a new campaign creative until 2025/26 in order to let the 'Think Again' campaign embed and percolate. The current campaign shows the consequences of not cleaning up after your dog. Future campaigns could focus on the perpetrator (hopefully the QUB research will help us identify main perpetrators) and

creative approach would also be reviewed at this time to incorporate feedback from the workshop such as the possibility of having Belfast identifiable images within advertising assets.

3.16   Outcome 5 – We plan to develop a new campaign creative in 2024/25 (for use in 2025/26) and will use up to date research to identify who to target and how best to deliver the message.

3.17   ACTION 6 – Use of social media in future campaigns, particular focus on targeting hot spots, males under 30 etc. and the evaluation of impacts.

Our integrated marketing campaigns already use a wide range of media formats (including social media) to target people during all aspects of their life, when at home before they walk their dog, when they are out walking their dog, when they are online and travelling to and from work. Hotspot areas are currently targeted within current dog fouling campaigns for example during the 'think again' campaign Adshel posters were located at hot spot areas.

3.18   Outcome 6 – Marketing and Corporate Communications team will select the most appropriate media channels in future campaigns to target hot spot areas based on findings/feedback and select the most effective ways of reaching perpetrators based on any new research findings.

3.19   ACTION 7 – Further promotion of the Green Dog Walker scheme to reward positive behaviour.

Our Environmental Education and Outreach Team promote this scheme in our parks during summer fun days with Scoop Dog and also support this scheme with social media activity. (See Appendix 1 & 2) Anyone signing up to the scheme must have a licence for their dog so the scheme is raising awareness of the licensing requirements too. By taking the Green Dog Walkers' pledge and using a Green Dog Walker's lead, owners commit to:

- always clean up after their dog;
- carry extra dog waste bags;
- give free dog waste bags to other dog walkers.

3.20   Outcome 7 – We will continue to promote our successful Green Dog Walker scheme.

3.2.1   MARKETING – SIGNAGE

ACTION 8 – Signage in parks / on street, consider positioning / visibility and work with communities on location.

Our Open Spaces and Streetscene colleagues in parks will continue to use signage at appropriate locations throughout our parks. Whilst we appreciate the role of signage and agree with Members that location is important, we are reluctant to encourage excessive signage. We believe the current level of street signage

throughout the city is sufficient. We will however still consider requests for additional signage but need to be cognisant of the requirement for permission from the Department for Infrastructure should we want to erect signage on its property. As an alternative to street signage we have designed a poster (see Appendix 2) which we can be distributed to local communities in hot spot areas for indoor use.

3.22   Outcome 8 – Open Spaces and Streetscene will continue to use signage in our parks. The Dog Warden Service and our Environmental Education and Outreach Team will continue to engage with communities and raise awareness of the new poster.

3.23   ACTION 9 – Signage: Consider materials, design bespoke signs for specific areas. Consider CCTV message as a deterrent, wardens patrolling this area etc.

Through our benchmarking we have determined that all councils in NI use signs with a variety of construction materials including metal, Perspex, cortex and banners. There was a difference of opinion as to whether graphic signage or cute dogs were the best way to engage with dog owners. Some include the level of the fines on signage and others do not. Given the limitation to use DfI property for additional signage we have instead continued to develop our banners (See Appendix 4) that can be used on park and school railings. We will take account of all of the benchmarking information when developing our next campaign during 2024/25.

Members had suggested CCTV signage (similar to PSNI speed camera signage) to be used as a deterrent. We have taken advice and use of such signage, when we have no CCTV would mean we would intentionally be misleading the public and it would put us at odds with our own Code of Conduct. We already use social media as a deterrent by advising of current and future dog fouling patrols.

3.25   Outcome 9 – We will consider the benchmarking findings on signage when developing our next campaign. We will continue to use social media about dog fouling patrols as a deterrent.

3.26   ACTION 10 – Chase DfI for permission to stencil. Review stencilling and its impact on changing behaviour.

Through our benchmarking we have determined that 7 of the 8 councils that responded use or have used stencilling. Anecdotally, it is considered to be better at raising awareness in the summertime. We have now received confirmation from DfI that it does not object in principle to stencilling. However, we are required to contact the appropriate area manager for each location, to obtain permission, in advance of any stencilling. This is because stencilling can cause damage to certain pavement surfaces. We have already carried out a small pilot of stencilling at schools in East Belfast and are now waiting on permission from DfI for hot spot schools in North, South and West Belfast. A Quality

Monitoring Survey will be carried out before and after in N, S and W and we will then evaluate the effectiveness of stencilling.

3.27   **Outcome 10 – Provided we obtain permission from DfI we will undertake a small pilot of stencilling when the new school term starts and evaluate its effectiveness.**

3.28   <u>**MARKETING – COMMUNITY**</u>

<u>**ACTION 11 – Actively encourage reporting, make reporting process for residents straightforward. Consider pros and cons of providing bag dispensers in certain locations for emergency use.**</u>

3.29   **In the last year we have amended our online dog fouling reporting form. It has been broken down into several questions which prompt more detailed information and we have found the information provided is more useful for targeting hot spots / individuals. The 'think again' campaign also encouraged reporting and our colleagues who manage the social media channels always make a response when fouling is reported.**

3.30   **We recently ran a Billboard Challenge focused on dog fouling in Spring/ Summer School Term and had an excellent response with 19 schools participating. The Key Stage 2 pupils received an interactive, curriculum-based talk around dog fouling and the issues surrounding it. The pupils then designed their own billboards, and we had 4 winners (N/S/E/W) who had their artwork displayed on a local a billboard. (See Appendix 5 & 6). The entries were such high quality we added 4 runners-up, who will receive their entries as a banner for their school. We received positive media coverage of this project.**

3.31   **From our bench marking all the responding councils provide free poo bags in variety of ways e.g. at pop up events, when on fouling patrols, via Green Dog Walker Scheme, in community centres and when sending out licence renewal letters. There were reports of complaints when supplies at council buildings ran out as dog owners mistakenly thought it was the council's role to provide bags. In Belfast we will continue to supply all community centres with free dog bags and a poster encouraging centre users to pick up free bags there.**

3.32   **Based on the costings for the dispensers that were installed in Belfast during the COVID pandemic we estimate each dispenser would cost in the region of £800 - £1000 to purchase and install. There would then be on-going refilling and maintenance costs. We have over 50 parks and open spaces and most have multiple entrances. The bench marking findings demonstrated some difficulties where poo bag dispensers were located outside – in one trial in 4 parks all the dispensers were either destroyed or stolen, another reported that dispensers were 'robbed' almost as soon as they were filled and vandalised dispensers are no longer being replaced. There is the potential when free poo bags are provided in parks for those observed committing an offence to use the lack of poo bags in the park dispenser as a defence. We firmly**

believe that purchasing poo bags is the responsibility of all dog owners and whilst provision of them at events or during fouling patrols is beneficial, the cost to provide them via dispensers is prohibitive and contradicts the message of responsible dog ownership.

3.33   Our Dog Wardens will continue to engage with the public to encourage reporting of dog fouling and to provide free poo bags where appropriate. Our Park Wardens will do the same within our parks.

3.34   Outcome 11 – We will continue to encourage reporting and to provide free dog poo bags at events, at community centres, during fouling patrols and in our engagement with visitors to our parks.

3.35   <u>SERVICE DELIVERY</u>

        <u>ACTION 12 – Continue to deliver a visible response to reports of fouling.</u>

3.36   Through our benchmarking we determined that none of the 8 responding councils patrol 7 days a week as is the case in Belfast. All councils had some scope for variations in the timings of patrols to take account of problem areas, time of year etc. Two of the responding councils have used WISE Enforcement (an external, self-funding company) to enhance / support their Dog Warden fouling patrols. There was no agreement about the best time of day to detect fouling and it was considered to be extremely difficult to detect and more opportunistic in witnessing rather that at planned locations and times. There was a mix of high viz and low viz patrols across the 8 councils with 3 using a blend of both.

3.37   Outcome 12 – We will continue to deliver a visible response to reports of fouling with the use of social media to highlight our activities.

3.38   <u>ACTION 13 – Consider dog enclosures in parks; more bins; more resources to deal with dog fouling; and more FIDO machines.</u>

3.39   Bench marking revealed that 5 of the 8 responding councils have separate dog enclosures in their parks. Within Belfast there are 2 dog enclosures – one at the Grove and one at Stormont. Previous Committee approval was granted in August 2018 with regards to pilot dog enclosures in the West, South & East, however, due to financial pressures, resourcing and Covid this was not progressed. The financial and resourcing pressures still exist, however, this will be refreshed and updated and taken back through the Area Working Groups and then to Committee for approval.

3.40   Outcome 13 – Officers to revisit and refresh the 2018 report and to include graffiti and other pressures such as Anti-Social Behaviour.

3.41   <u>ENFORCEMENT</u>

Action 14 – Bring back report to Committee on increasing dog fouling fine to maximum of £200.

3.42   Outcome 14 – See Part 2 of this Committee Report.

3.43   **LEGISLATION**

Action 15 – Consider if new legislation is needed.

3.44   There is provision within the existing legislation for Councils to decide to introduce Control Orders for specific scenarios and in Belfast we have one for dog fouling and one for the maximum number of dogs that can be walked by one person. A legal process which involves public consultation must take place before a council makes a dog control order. Back in 2012/23 the Council did consider Dog Control Orders for dogs on leads and exclusion zones but ultimately decided that more information / consultation was needed prior to introducing additional Dog Control Orders.

3.45   All but one of the responding councils have dog control orders including dog exclusion zones and dogs on leads. They apply at various locations e.g. in parks, cemeteries and other specified land owned by the Council and if appropriate at various times. They are restricted to Council owned land because the legislation states: '*No offence is committed where the person has a reasonable excuse for failing to keep the dog on a lead, or the owner, occupier or other person or authority having control of the land has consented (generally or specifically) to the person failing to do so.*'

3.46   The primary consideration is to balance the interests of those in charge of dogs against the interests of those affected by the activities of dogs, bearing in mind the need for people, in particular children, to have access to dog-free areas and areas where dogs are kept under strict control, and the need for those in charge of dogs to have access to areas where they can exercise their dogs without undue restriction. Those who responded provided anecdotal evidence that fouling is less likely to happen when a dog is on a lead and our own Dog Wardens agree.

3.47   Outcome 15 – We already have Byelaws that require dogs to be kept on leads on certain council owned land but there are difficulties with enforcement (including lack of a fixed penalty) however a feasibility study could be carried out regarding the introduction of a Control Order for Dogs on Leads in our parks, cemeteries etc.

This is to be considered as part of the update report in Action 13.

3.48   **FINANCE**

Action 16 – Report back to Committee in August with costings of options where appropriate.

3.49   Where appropriate, estimated costings have been included under the relevant actions throughout the report. In addition a separate Committee Report, including costings for Action 13 will be submitted at a later date.

PART 2 - PROPOSED CHANGES TO FIXED PENALTY FINES FOR DOG CONTROL OFFENCES

3.50   In our report for Committee on 7 March 2023 we provided details of The Environmental Offences (Fixed Penalties) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which came into force on 30 December 2022 and amend the previous 2012 Regulations. The effect is to alter the amount of a fixed penalty capable of being specified by the Council for certain fixed penalties. We detailed 4 options for the Committee to review and after some discussion it was agreed to defer until a future meeting. 4 councils in NI have already increased their fines and we would ask that the options below are considering again.

3.51   OPTIONS

- Option 1 – no change

- Option 2 – increase to maximum of £200 with reduction if paid within 10 days. Suggested reduction to £100 as an incentive to pay the fixed penalty promptly and avoid court action.

- Option 3 – increase but not to maximum with reduction if paid within 10 days. Could be anything from £90 - £190, with any level of reduction.

- Option 4 – Consider applying any changes made to the fixed penalty limits for dog fouling offences to littering offences. The Council previously agreed to set the level of fixed penalty fine for littering at £80, reduced to £60 if paid within 10 days. There would be no additional signage costs as most signs include information about dog fouling and littering.

3.52   Finance and Resource Implications

Part 1

There is currently no additional budget available to implement any of newly the suggested outcomes in this report.

Part 2

There are cost implications if changes are required to signage. We do already have a budget for signage and cost varies depending on the size of the sign and the method of mounting but is in the region of £20 - £25 plus VAT each. The livery on come council vehicles would also need to be removed or updated.

3.53   Asset and Other Implications

 None

3.53   Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

 None."

The Committee thanked the Director of City Services for the update report and detailed discussion ensued regarding the ongoing issues that had been highlighted at the workshop.

During discussion the following issues were, once again, discussed/highlighted:

- The lack of dog off lead facilities in parks and open spaces
- Undertaking a feasibility study for dog off lead facilities, citing Wallace Park in Lisburn as a good example;
- Noted the introduction of a new streamlined digital process and the rates charges for concessionary fees for dog licencing;
- Enhancing and localising the dog foul media campaign and also promoting and publicising the need for dog licences;
- Welcomed the stencilling campaign in east Belfast and sought to extend it to the south, north and west of the city (to include liaison with DfI in this regard);
- Discussion regarding the provision of free dog foul bags in problem areas within park locations and not just via community centres and publicising that they were available;
- Ensuring adequate bins for disposal were available for the disposal of dog waste and noted the importance of the location of these bins;
- The use of Fido machines and need to benchmark with other Councils;
- Ensuring adequate staff resources, with costings sought for what would be deemed to be necessary to improve the service;
- A suggestion that officers promote and give out advice regarding the Dogs Trust neutering scheme, which was available at a cost of £50 for dogs belonging to owners on means-tested benefits (for a restricted number of breeds);
- Sought the location and details of how many people had signed up to participate in the Green Walkers Scheme; and
- The development of responsible dog ownership campaigns in the Council's parks and playing field locations.

The Director highlighted to the Committee that it had previously decided not to increase the fixed penalty limits for dog and litter offences and asked the Members whether they wished revisit this again in light of discussions.

A number of Members stated that they would be opposed to increasing the fees at this stage and would be keen to see some of the other initiatives implemented prior to this measure being further considered.

Following discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

 That the Committee agrees to introduce option 2 and option 4, as detailed in the report.

On a vote, 6 Members voted for the proposal and 13 against and it was declared lost.

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Flynn,

That the Committee agrees to introduce option 2.

On a vote, 11 Members voted for the proposal and 8 against and it was declared carried.

The Committee therefore:

- agreed to adopt Option 2 in respect of fixed penalty limits for dog fouling and dog fouling offences - to increase the fine to a maximum of £200, with a reduction of £100 if paid within 10 days as an incentive to pay the fixed penalty promptly;
- agreed not to apply any changes to littering offences at this time and noted that an update report would be submitted to committee in due course.

Extract from Minutes of:-

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY
PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 8th August, 2023

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Sustainable Period Product Scheme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0   Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the success of the Period Waste Scheme (March 2022 - current) and seek direction on future delivery.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and make a recommendation that the Environmental Education & Outreach team will cease provision from April 2024 given that:

- ○ **current demand appears to have been met through the first two pilot programmes;**
- ○ **there is no available budget to run a third programme**
- ○ **provision will be established through the new legislation**

2.2 The Committee is also asked to authorise the Director of City and Organisational Strategy to submit a formal written response on behalf of council, as outlined at 3.13, to the TEO consultation on the provision of free period products.

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 The aim of the Period Waste initiative was to raise awareness and encourage increased use of reusable period products. This will have an environmental benefit as it will reduce the amount of period waste that is entering our waste stream and being landfilled, and it will also reduce plastic waste. Disposal of single use menstrual products - tampons, pads and applicators generates 200,000 tonnes of waste per year in the UK[1]. In addition, sanitary waste can be made of up to 90% plastic.

3.2 In the most recent BCC Waste Composition Study (2014) it was found that 1.87% of all miscellaneous combustible waste (the largest category of waste we collect) was of a sanitary waste nature

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[1] Calculation by Natracare 2018

(including other absorbent hygiene products but excluding nappies). This means each household was producing on average 3.38Kg of this type of product waste per year.

3.3 This project was primarily focused on waste reduction but also had the benefit of providing a sustainable resource for those affected by period poverty which is an added pressure on individuals and families as a result of the current cost of living pressures.

3.4 The pilot scheme was launched on 30 March 22 to unprecedented demand and in less than 24 hours the pilot had to be closed because of demand. Through the scheme we provided free access to reusable period products to 3,159 people in the Belfast area. Council worked with the social enterprise, 'Hey Girls'. (www.heygirls.co.uk) to deliver the scheme, where participants could register and order reusable sanitary products online.

3.5 Social media coverage and feedback on the scheme was also very positive. Commentary praised Belfast City Council for bringing the initiative forward. Over 95,000 people were reached through Council social media on the topic with over 225,000 people having viewed twitter posts promoting the scheme.

3.6 Market research targeted at participants of the pilot found that 94.2% of respondent use the products they received all or some of the time. 43.5% said they no longer use single use period products and 86.9% say it has lessened their use of single use products. The project has recently been awarded the Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful 'Behaviour Change Award for Tackling Single Use Plastic' for 22/23.

3.7 In August 22, SP&R approved expansion of the project and an additional budget allocation so that another tranche of the pilot could be delivered. This was launched in January 2023 and is currently ongoing. To date, 1770 individual orders of products have been processed during this phase of the pilot. As would be anticipated, the rate of requests for products has significantly decreased, given that products are reusable and therefore repeat orders from individuals would not be expected. This pilot continues to be promoted and it is projected that the remaining budget will be utilised by March 2024.

3.8 In addition to the extension of the pilot, a project with support from the Climate Change Fund was launched in June 2023. This project engages with partners in the Community Voluntary Sector (CVS) to provide them with reusable sustainable solutions to period poverty which they can then pass on to their service users. Officers have been engaging through women's groups and other CVS groups and have shared information with the Women's Steering Group as well as promoting the initiative through council's social media. Any group interested in becoming involved should email EnvironmentalOutreach@belfastcity.gov.uk

Future Considerations

3.9 Period products are essential items for personal care to address a normal biological need and should therefore be available to everyone who needs them, regardless of their economic status.

3.10 In recognition of this, the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (NI) was made by the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2022 and requires that period products will be made available from May 2024. The requirements of the Act go beyond seeking to make provision for those in financial difficulty, there is a recognition that period products are necessary and essential items that should be available free of charge and accessible by all persons who need to use them.

3.11 The Executive Office (TEO) is currently undertaking a public consultation process which is seeking views on how best the Executive Office (TEO) can ensure that period products are 'obtainable free of charge' by 'all persons who need to use them', 'while in Northern Ireland'. Further detail on the background is contained in the full consultation document available here: **www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-free-period-products.**

3.12 A reasonable choice is required by the Act. Within the Act 'products' are defined to include tampons, sanitary towels and articles which are reusable. It is anticipated that there will be an expectation that council will be a partner in the delivery of this service though no details are available at this stage.

3.13 The TEO consultation survey is predominantly seeking the views of those who use period products and/or who buy products on behalf of other family members. Therefore, whilst it would not be appropriate for council to answer the TEO these questions, it is recommended that council should submit a letter of response outlining our support for the need for period products to be offered to everyone as they are essential items for personal care to address a normal biological need and should therefore be available to everyone who needs them, regardless of their economic status. In addition, we will request early engagement with Council to explore our role in any delivery mechanism which is envisaged. Our response will also highlight the learning we have gained from our pilot initiatives on period poverty (as part of our Gender Equality Plan and linked, Belfast City Council launched a pilot offering free period products for the public in council buildings and facilities and free access to reusable period products and) and stress the importance of ongoing collaboration around this issue.

Recommendations for Reusable Period Product Pilot

3.14 The legislative requirement to be introduced by the Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 will ensure that period products are available to individuals to ensure period dignity. The reasonable choice element will supersede the reusable period product pilot in that individuals can request reusable items within the legislation.

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3.15   Given that;

- **current demand appears to have been met through the first two pilot programmes;**
- **there is no available budget to run a third programme**
- **provision will be established through the new legislation**

It is recommended that the pilot does not continue after March 2024.

Financial and Resource implications

3.16   To match the initial scheme would mean a further £50,000 budget which is not within existing budgets.

3.17   For reference, participants could choose to order a Full Cycle Pack (containing 1 x reusable pantyliner, 2 x day reusable pads and 2 x night reusable pads) to the value of £21.40 per pack or approximately £12.99 for a Period Cup Combo (including all associated costs).

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

3.18   The pilot scheme was designed to be accessible to as many residents in the Belfast area as possible.”

Several Members noted that they were pleased with the success of the scheme and hopeful that the introduction of the new legislation would help to ensure that period products would now be available to individuals to ensure period dignity.

A Member encouraged officers to join up with schools to maximise value for the Council scheme prior to its cessation in April 2024.

The Committee noted the report and agreed the recommendations as outlined at 2.0 of the report, with the addition that the Director of City and Organisational Strategy, in his written response, on behalf of Council, as outlined at 3.13 of the report, to the TEO consultation also highlight the Committees’ concern regarding the budget cuts and withdrawal of funding by the Department of Education for the scheme.

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Subject:	Motion - Urban Wildflower Meadows
Date:	12th September, 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services, CNS
Contact Officer:	Sara Steele, Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?   Yes ☐   No ☒

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision ☐
After Council Decision ☐
Sometime in the future ☐
Never ☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?   Yes ☒   No ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	To bring to Members' attention a motion on Urban Wildflower Meadows, which the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 29th August, referred to this Committee.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Committee is asked to consider the motion.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	**Key Issues** The Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 29th August, considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 4th September:

3.2	**Playful Belfast City Streets** "This Council reaffirms its commitment to enhancing our city's ecological credentials. Therefore, this Council is dedicated to a pilot project that will aim to identify one site for wildflower cultivation in each quadrant of the city. These sites must adhere to one of the following criteria: a) Owned by the Council itself, b) Owned by another Government Department, or c) Currently unadopted. The precise locations for these pilot projects will be presented for discussion during the inaugural convening of the area working groups. This Council comprehends the benefits that Urban Wildflower Meadows can bring to our city, ranging from reduced maintenance to supporting our climate change ambitions, and ultimately leading to Belfast becoming a more biodiverse city." Proposer: Councillor McLaughlin Seconder: Councillor Long
3.3	Members are reminded that in accordance with Standing Order 13(l), where the notice of motion seeks to commit the Council to expenditure not previously agreed through the Committee process, the motion will stand referred to the relevant Committee for consideration. If the motion is agreed at the Committee, then this will usually require a further report from officers outlining the financial and other implications should the notice of motion be adopted.
3.4	**Financial and Resource Implications** None at this stage.
3.5	**Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment** This motion, if agreed, may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and should be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate
4.0	**Appendices - Documents Attached**
	None

PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Belfast Tree Strategy
Date:	12 September 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services, CNS
Contact Officers:	Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager Alan McHaffie, Senior Woodland and Recreation Officer Maria McAleer, Performance and Improvement Officer

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?	Yes	☐	No	X

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Some time in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	X	No	☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issue
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the outcome of the Belfast Tree Strategy public consultation and to seek approval for publication of the final strategy.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Consider this report along with a presentation on the development of the Belfast Tree Strategy and action plan from Kenton Rodgers, co-founder of Treeconomics and to give approval for the publication of the new Belfast Tree Strategy.
3.0	Main report
	Key Issues
3.1	At its meeting of the 8 November 2022 members of this committee received a report (copy at Appendix 1) on the development of the Belfast Tree Strategy. A public

consultation commenced on 24 January 2023 and concluded on 24 April 2023. This included engagement with communities across Belfast with five workshops at the following venues:

- Girdwood Community Hub
- Falls Park Bowling Pavilion
- Avoniel Leisure Centre
- 2 Royal Avenue Belfast
- Malone House Belfast

3.2   In total over 900 people attended the workshops during the 12-week period and 500 free trees were distributed along with practical advice on planting and maintenance from Council staff.

3.3   This second phase of consultation also contained a survey delivered via the Your Say Belfast Platform on the Council Website. This received 119 responses.

3.4   The key findings from the second phase of consultation were as follows:
- 97% of respondents definitely agree or agree with the vision of the Belfast Tree Strategy.
- 103 responses came from members of the public.
- Consultation responses were received from every DEA.
- 90% of respondents definitely agree or agree with the Councils targets, priorities and action on Trees and Urban Forest Structure, community framework and sustainable resource management.
- 89% agree with the 23 commitments the Council has set out with the strategy.

3.5   The commentary and feedback during the public consultation phase also included a wider range of views and asked for Council focus on the following areas:
- More trees and green spaces within the City Boundaries and City Centre
- Encourage volunteering and adopt a tree warden scheme to support the delivery of aims of the strategy.
- Stricter targets for native planting within each Council ward
- That the strategy is ecologically vital.
- Tree parks need to be created for peace and tranquility.
- More advice for people planting trees in their own gardens.
- Council to consider the maintenance, including pruning and mixed tree planting.
- More tree planting in working class communities in North Belfast and around

	the new university.
	- Set aside land for orchards.
	- Encourage DFI to adopt additional trees or landscaping within their schemes and address issues relating to maintenance (tree roots) in streets.
	- Please remember to include native trees and wildflowers, which help pollinators.
	- Strongly agree with the aim of developing a new biodiversity action Plan
3.6	Other important stakeholder engagement took place through presentations to and discussions with Belfast City Council Disability Advisory Panel and Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Board. The BBC Radio Ulster Gardening Programme also covered the development of the tree strategy and the public consultation events.
	National Recognition
3.7	Belfast City Council's progressive approach to the development of the Belfast Tree Strategy has been noted at a national level and the Senior Woodland and Recreation officer has been invited to present a paper on the Belfast Tree Strategy at two conferences:
	1. National Tree Officers conference – Reading, England on the 7th of November 2023
	2. European i-Tree conference – Dundee, Scotland on the 20th of June 2024
3.8	The development process of the Belfast Tree Strategy was selected in July 2023 by researchers from the University of Cambridge as a case study for their research project on the Management of Physical Infrastructure Systems in Cities to Protect Public Health from Climate Change-Related Hazards.
	Belfast Tree Strategy Action Plan – Development and Delivery
3.9	The Belfast Tree Strategy is accompanied by a 5 year action plan and a copy is attached at Appendix 3. This sets out in more detail the work that must be done to deliver the strategy, its aims, priorities, and commitments, including the actions and resources required for delivery starting from Oct 2023. A number of key actions are prioritised as follows:
	1. Move from a 5 to a 3 year tree health and condition inspection Programme for all semi - mature to fully mature park trees, and from a 5 year to a 2 year tree health and condition tree inspection Programme for the Department for Infrastructure street trees which the Council manage on behalf of the DfI.

2. Undertake a detailed canopy cover assessment including woodlands and hedges.

3. Create an 'opportunity tree planting plan' for both hard and soft landscape areas across the city.

4. In partnership with the Woodland Trust – undertake a tree equity mapping exercise.

5. Coordinate collaborative arrangements to meet the objectives of the Council's One Million Tree initiative.

6. Set up and establish a Tree Warden scheme across the city.

7. Coordinate collaborative arrangements to meet the objectives of the plan, including skills building, potential courses and feed into apprenticeship schemes.

8. Develop and manage trees within woodlands and assign a management plan for each woodland.

9. Undertake a Capital Asset Value for Amenity trees of trees owned by the Council

10. Commit to developing a new biodiversity action plan

Equity Mapping

3.10 One of the actions of the Belfast Tree Strategy highlighted above will be to undertake an Equity Mapping exercise across the city.

3.11 Equity Mapping looks at tree canopy cover in terms of health, air pollution, education, employment etc. Typically, lower income areas have fewer trees, and this is something which is acknowledged within the Tree Strategy, and it's recognised that trees should be made available to everyone in all areas of the city. The Woodland Trust are working with American Forests to bring Tree Equity Scores to the UK. This will help cities to assess tree cover and to prioritise areas where trees can be planted to provide the greatest benefits to local communities.

3.12 As a result of the close working relationship between the Woodland Trust and Belfast City Council, Belfast along with Birmingham City Council has been chosen by the Woodland Trust and American Forests to test the Tree Equity scoring model before its roll out across all UK cites. It would be important to note that this project will not incur any cost to the Council. As part of the Tree Equity Mapping project, the Woodland Trust would like to mark the launch of this initiative through a tree planting event in Belfast sometime between the end of November and December 2023 with some form of commemorative tree(s) in either a

	street, or a park such as Ormeau, Falls, Water Works or within a number of local school grounds, all of which has yet to be agreed upon and confirmed.
3.13	Discussions are ongoing with the Woodland Trust and if a park is the preferred option to plant a tree(s) we would seek Members approval to proceed, and the Woodland Trust has confirmed they will cover all costs associated with any tree planting.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.14	The development of the Belfast Tree Strategy and action plan to date has cost £30K. The Council has contributed £20k with provision for this made from existing revenue estimates in 2022. The remaining £10k was kindly provided by the Woodland Trust in the same year. Resourcing of staff and equipment required to deliver the strategy and associated activity is detailed within the action plan. Committee are asked to note that delivery of the action plan will require additional resources and investment in the Woodland & Recreation team. A subsequent bid for resources will be submitted as part of the Council budget estimates process for 2024/25.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments
3.15	There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs Implications identified at this point.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: Previous Report to People and Communities Committee 8 Nov 2022 Appendix 2: Belfast Tree Strategy – Draft for approval Appendix 3: Belfast Tree Strategy Action Plan (Printable Version) – Draft for approval

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Belfast City Council

Subject:	Belfast Tree Strategy Survey and Draft Strategy
Date:	8 November 2022
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services, City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officers:	Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager
	Alan McHaffie, Woodland Management Unit Manager
	Maria McAleer, Performance and Improvement Officer

Restricted Reports		
Is this report restricted?	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☒

If yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in		
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes** ☒	**No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this summary report is to update Members on the outcome of the Belfast Tree Strategy Survey and final steps in the development of the Council's draft Tree strategy.
2.0	**Recommendation**
2.1	The Committee is asked to consider the report and:
	1. Note the results of the tree strategy survey and summary of respondent comments.
	2. Note the draft strategy and the final phase of consultation and engagement on it.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u>

	Following a procurement exercise, Council appointed Treeconomics to work with to produce a Tree Strategy for Belfast. Company details can be viewed via this link [About - Treeconomics](#) Treeconomics works internationally with community groups, research organisations, public bodies, municipalities, and private business to complete projects which highlight the value of trees. They have a wealth of experience in this area of work having worked on similar projects with Birmingham City Council producing The Urban Forest Master Plan [Birmingham's Urban Forest Master Plan - Treeconomics](#) ,The London Borough of Ealing and a tree study for the Royal Parks in Hyde Park , London.
3.2	
	The draft strategy focuses on the maintenance and development of the natural environment. Produced in accordance with national guidance, it is designed to provide robust and objective justification for future tree provision across Belfast.
3.3	
	In order to produce the draft strategy, we have engaged with key stakeholders through a series of workshops. Details of the stakeholders are acknowledged in the draft strategy and listed in Appendix one of this report.
3.4	
	As an initial step and on the advice of key stakeholders, we invited the public to fill in a survey so we could capture people's views as to what they wanted to see in our tree strategy. This survey (attached as Appendix 3) ran via Your Say Belfast from 27 July to 27 August 2022 and received 615 responses which will help inform the strategy and future policy.
3.5	
	The strategy will have a 10-year lifespan from its launch date and will set out a commitment to delivering key priorities and actions in a fully resourced action plan which will be reviewed at approximately three yearly intervals starting from February 2023. The strategy will incorporate the aims of council and key city partners and will reflect existing programmes such as Belfast One Million Trees, the Belfast Local Development Plan, the Belfast Agenda and clearly links tree planting and management with Belfast's climate ambitions and the benefits that trees provide to health and wellbeing.
3.6	
	The proposed Belfast Tree Strategy lays out a clear vision: "That Belfast is a city which focuses on protecting, enhancing and expanding its woodlands, hedges, and trees, connecting people to nature, and ensuring that these continue to be a major asset to everyone who lives, works, and visits our city."
3.7	
	C&NS had hoped to issue the draft strategy in September 2022, but the volume of responses received was higher than anticipated and the project team needed more time to

	consider the views of the public and incorporate them into the final draft strategy which is attached at Appendix 2. Consultation on the draft strategy will include its publication in December 2022 on Your Say Belfast and all stakeholders will have 12 weeks to comment on the document. This will be supported by several tree management webinars and education events aimed at community groups during that period which will be publicised in the local media.
3.8	The Council received 615 responses to the initial public survey which ran in July and August of this year. A summary of the responses to the survey questions can be found in Appendix 4. A synopsis of the headline results included the following: - Council received 615 responses from in total with the District Electoral Area (DEA) with the three highest number of respondents as follows. - Botanic (Blackstaff,Central , Ormeau Stranmillis, and Windsor) with 160 respondents. - Lisnasharragh (Cregagh, Hillfoot, Merok, Orangefield, Ravenhill and Rosetta) with 120 respondents - Balmoral (Belvoir, Finaghy, Malone, Musgrave and Upper Malone) with 116 respondents. - 95% of all responses came from the members of the public and every DEA returned a response. - 93.5% of all respondents felt there are too few trees in Belfast - 81.1% of respondents could see a tree from their property - 92.7% of all respondents felt that Belfast would benefit from having a dedicated tree strategy in place. - Approx.33% of all respondents disagreed/somewhat disagreed that street trees seemed well cared for in Belfast - Approx. 88% of all respondents felt that trees are worth the financial cost of maintaining them. - Approx. 78% of all respondents agreed that planting new trees on private property in Belfast is important.
3.9	In addition, to answering questions there was an opportunity to provide commentary and many respondents took time to do this providing feedback and insight about trees and what they mean to both Belfast's residents and visitors alike. A synopsis of the comments received included the following: - Protecting Belfast's Tree's, woodlands, and hedges for future generations

		- Producing a comprehensive tree strategy for the city and moving forward with its delivery
		- Environmental education, community, and volunteer opportunities to get involved with the delivery of the strategy
		- Concerns regarding tree felling, tree management, health and safety, woodland, and hedgerow maintenance
		- Tree provision and planting to ensure equality of distribution across the City
		- Planning advice and concerns regarding trees
		- Biodiversity and concerns for native species
		- Environmental and climate change concerns
	3.10	Treeconomics will be present at committee and will deliver a short presentation to members that will provide the committee with a summary of the key aspects of the work to date and future actions needed to deliver the strategy. The presentation will cover • the history and current state of the Urban Forest • the future vision for Woodlands, Hedges and trees provision in the city • the action plan in particular the Targets, Priorities and Actions identified to deliver the strategy
	3.11	The Belfast tree strategy 2023 -2033 and the associated action delivery plan will be taken forward by relevant staff from City and Neighbourhood Services and Council partners as identified in the action plan that will accompany the strategy. It is proposed that this action plan will be independently evaluated in February 2024 following year one and at three yearly intervals thereafter. The reports produced will be presented to elected members of this committee for review and comments post evaluation and review by CNS DMT. Council will also comply with any associated monitoring requirements as set out by external funders of the strategy and agreed by council.
		Financial & Resource Implications
	3.12	The project total to date is £30k. The Council has contributed £20k and provision from this was made from existing revenue estimates. The remaining £10k was kindly provided by the Woodland Trust.
	3.13	Resourcing of staff and equipment required to deliver the strategy and associated activity for Years 1 to 3 will be included in the Action plan which will be reported to members in February/March of 2023
		Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
	3.14	

	An equality screening exercise and rural needs assessment will be carried out and approved by the Council's Equality and Diversity Officer for issue with the draft strategy.

4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 List of stakeholders
	Appendix 2 Draft Tree Strategy - Click to Download
	Appendix 3 Tree Strategy Survey Questions
	Appendix 4 Survey results Summary

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Belfast Tree Strategy 2023-2033

1 | Acknowledgements

Workshop Participants

Dr Mark Johnston MBE - Advisor

Ian McDermott - Advisor

Joe Higginson - Woodland & Recreation Officer, Belfast City Council

Declan Hasson - Planning Officer (trees/landscape), Belfast City Council

Orla Maguire - Biodiversity Officer, Belfast City Council

Anthony Conway - Parks Manager, Belfast City Council

James Noakes - City Innovation Broker, Belfast City Council

Richard McLernon - Project Co-ordinator, Belfast City Council

Malachy Campbell - Senior Policy Officer, NI Environment Link

Malachy Brennan - Regional Grounds Maintenance Manager, Belfast Region, NI Housing Executive

William Hancock-Evans - Senior Lecturer in Global Change Ecology, Queens University Belfast

Trevor McClay - Network Maintenance Manager, Department for Infrastructure Roads

Bill Fulton - Senior Civil Engineer, Department for Infrastructure Roads

Roy Armstrong - Operations Manager, George Best Belfast City Airport

Simon Rees - Regeneration Project Officer, Belfast City Council

Gregor Fulton - Estate & Outreach Manager, Woodland Trust

Nina Schonberg - Nature Recovery Networks Project Manager, Wildlife Trust

Craig Somerville - Partner in Belfast One Million Trees, National Trust

Jim Bradley - Manager, Belfast Hills Partnership

Lisa Critchely - Belfast Hills Partnership

Emma Sharpe - City Regeneration Project Officer, Belfast City Council

Mura Quigley - Adaptation and Resilience Officer Climate Team, Belfast City Council

Mark Whittaker - Senior Planning Officer, Belfast City Council

Project Manager

Stephen Leonard - Neighbourhood Services Manager

Authors

Kenton Rogers - Treeconomics

Danielle Hill - Treeconomics

Catherine Vaughan-Johncey - Treeconomics

Harry Munt - Treeconomics

Ian McDermott

And for Section 2 - Introduction and Background

Dr Ben Simon - Advisor

Dr Mark Johnston MBE - Advisor

Foreword

Belfast City Council produced this Tree Strategy to help it manage and improve its tree-scape so that it can provide a resilient and diverse urban forest for future generations. The Belfast Tree Strategy lays out a clear vision which focuses on protecting, enhancing and expanding its woodlands, hedges, and trees, connecting people to nature, and ensuring that these continue to be a major asset to everyone who lives in, works in, and visits our city.

We are seeing changes in our weather patterns as a direct result of climate change and trees can help adapt our living environment and mitigate some of the effects of climate change.

The Belfast Tree Strategy reflects the aims of key city partners, including Belfast City Council. It draws on existing programmes such as Belfast One Million Trees, the Belfast Local Development Plan, and the Belfast Agenda. It also connects with the Belfast Resilience Strategy, Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan and will deliver 37 key actions over the next 10 years with a review of the strategy once every three years.

We know through our consultation that there is significant support for the development of this strategy and through this strategy and its delivery we are sending out a clear message, that our city's trees are valued and need to be protected and cared for over the coming decades.

I am delighted with the commitment and vision council has set out in this strategy and encourage you to read it.

Cllr Micky Murray, Chair of People and Communities Committee

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"It is that range of biodiversity that we must care for - the whole thing - rather than just one or two stars."

- David Attenborough

Section 2

Introduction and Background

"Some of my local streets have trees, some do not. I think all the streets should have them. During hot spells they provided much needed shade and improve the environment markedly."

- Belfast Resident and consultation respondent

The earliest descriptions of the landscape around the northern Lagan Valley date from the late 16th century. A map from this period by Francis Jobson is of particular interest as it distinguished areas with tall growing trees from areas of scrub. Jobson indicated that the lands southeast of Lough Neagh and in mid Down had tall woodland trees. The districts around Carrickfergus, North Down and the Ards Peninsular were largely devoid of woodland and the Lagan Valley contained predominantly underwood.

With the development of the town of Belfast in the 17th century, much of the woodland in the northern Lagan Valley was cleared for agriculture, cut for firewood or used in industries such as ship building, tanning and charcoal-making for ironworks. However, some leases instructed tenants to retain trees and plant hedges and saplings, and surviving records for the Donegall estate from the 1730s and 1740s refer to the employment of men termed 'wood rangers', who looked after trees and hedges. A large woodland was retained at Cromac (lower Ormeau) until the 1790s, when the last trees described as principally oak with some ash and alder were felled. Also, recent tree ring dating at Belvoir Park has demonstrated that some of the imposing oaks that today grace this site have grown undisturbed since the mid - 17th century.

In the second half of the 18th century large scale tree planting started, supplied by local nurseries that advertised the sale of a wide variety of species including non-native trees and fruit bushes. Planting continued during the Victorian era in gardens, estate lands, on hill slopes such as Cave Hill, Colin Glen and Cregagh Glen.

Following the formation of the Belfast Botanic and Horticultural Society in 1827 a 14-acre site was purchased at the junction of the Malone and Stranmillis Roads for the Belfast Botanical Garden which opened in 1828. Its diverse collection of trees and shrubs from around the world were primarily for the enjoyment of the Botanic Society's members until it became a public park in 1895 when the Belfast Corporation bought the gardens. Belfasts first public park (Ormeau Park) in the south of the city, opened in 1871 on land adjacent to the River Lagan, that was formerly part of the Donegall family estate. It already had many fine mature trees and these were supplemented by much new planting. In the late 19th and early 20th century, several new and extensive public parks were opened by Belfast Corporation, many of which also had plenty of fine mature trees. Following the Belfast Burial Ground Act (1866) the Corporation opened the Belfast City Cemetery near the Falls Road in 1869. This was followed by a number of other public and private cemeteries that added greatly to the city's open space and tree cover.

In 1900, the Corporation formed its Cemeteries and Public Parks Committee from what had previously been two separate committees. This was the forerunner of Belfast City Council's City and Neighbourhood Services Department that now manages some 49 public parks, 9 cemeteries, and the vast numbers of trees and shrubs within them.

In 1846, Belfast Corporation established the Improvements Committee, part of whose duty was to initiate street tree planting. Unfortunately, there is little recorded evidence of this earliest planting. In 1900, street tree planting was taken over by the newly-formed Cemetery and Public Parks Committee. Most of these early street tree plantings were undertaken before and immediately after the First World War and comprised a limited range of species such as limes and London planes. By the late 1960s, pollution in the city had reduced to a level where a greater variety of species could be planted, such as hornbeam, cherry, birch, and rowan. From the late 1980s, systematic street tree planting in Belfast increased significantly with many more roads being planted, particularly in the suburbs. A considerable amount of this planting was initiated by the Belfast Development Office and by 1993 there were over 9000 street trees recorded on Belfast City Council's tree inventory.

Throughout the 20th century, Belfast's suburbs expanded steadily and many of the new residential properties, particularly in the wealthier districts, had quite large gardens. With the increasing popularity of gardening as a pastime, many were planted with some trees and shrubs, which then contributed substantially to the overall tree cover in the city. In contrast, much of the 20th century was marked by decades of neglect of woodlands and the felling of trees when the grounds of former big houses and private estates were sold.

In the period following the Second World War both statutory and voluntary organisations started to promote trees and woodlands and to advocate the protection of trees. The first big tree campaign in Northern Ireland was launched by the National Trust in 1945 to save woodland at Colin Glen in west Belfast. Tree Week was initiated in Northern Ireland in 1967 and has since been adopted throughout the UK as the main annual celebration of trees. The protection of trees through Tree Preservation Orders was introduced into Northern Ireland legislation in 1973.

By the 1970s it was widely acknowledged that because of a lack of planting and management, most woodlands had an uneven age structure, with a predominance of mature trees and few saplings or developing trees. In response, statutory organisations together with voluntary sector environmental organisations started to develop large scale tree planting projects and place greater emphasis on tree care.

The need for a coordinated approach in the planting, maintenance and management of city trees led to the development of the Forest of Belfast (FoB) urban forestry initiative, which was launched in 1992. Its original thrust was as an urban planning initiative and this led to the concept of urban forestry being given official recognition in Northern Ireland. The establishment of an extensive urban forest was included as an objective in the draft of the Belfast Urban Area Plan (published by the Department of the Environment (NI) in November 1987 and confirmed in the final document published in 1990 (DoE(NI), 1990).
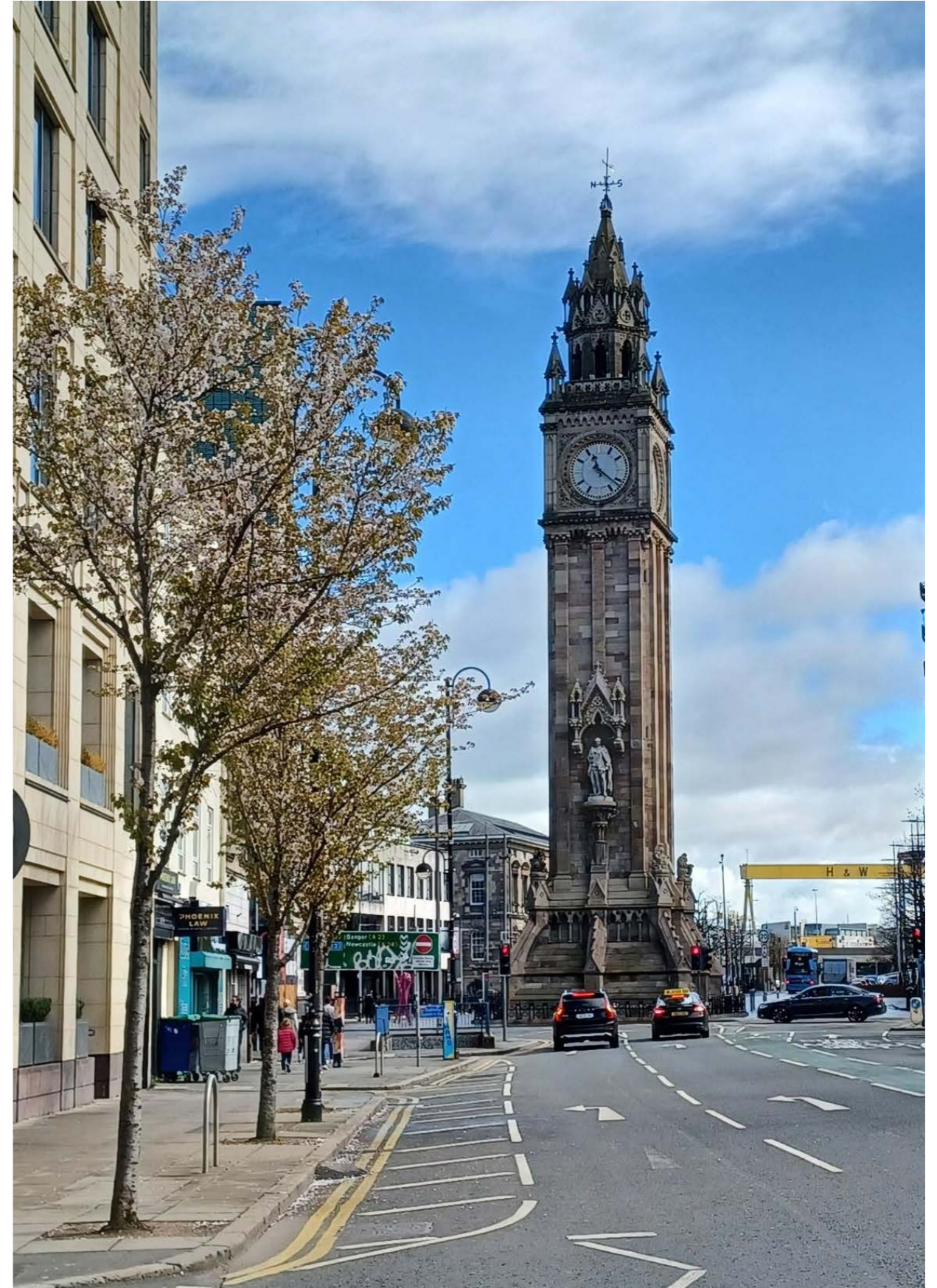
The Forest of Belfast then developed into a city-wide urban forestry initiative involving a partnership of the public, voluntary and private sectors and operated for over two decades. During this time the project produced a comprehensive survey of Belfast's trees, detailing the structure and composition of the tree cover, as well as its condition and ownership. Not only was this data crucial for informing where Belfast should be tree planting in the 1990s and early 2000s, it also serves as a useful datum point and yardstick for measuring its impact today against the more recent i-Tree Eco urban forest survey.

In recent years new tree schemes have been developed, such as the Million Trees Belfast initiative, and public support for trees and tree planting continues to grow. There is now widespread awareness of the importance of trees for recreation, amenity and for our mental health and well-being; for increasing biodiversity and for mitigating climate change. In addition, the need for planting and management to counter an increasing number of tree pests and diseases is widely appreciated. Trees in Towns II (2008) remains the most detailed and wide-ranging study of urban tree management by Local Authorities in Britain.

Further Reading:

Britt, C. and Johnston, M. (2008) Trees in Towns II: A new survey of urban trees in England and their condition and management. Department for Communities and Local Government: London.

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Simon, B. (2009) If Trees Could Talk: The story of woodlands around Belfast. The Forest of Belfast: Belfast.

What is the urban forest?

The urban forest consists of all the green infrastructure in an urban area. This includes trees, hedges, and vegetation which can be found anywhere from deliberately planted roadside trees to vegetation found in bodies of water. The urban forest provides benefits to those who live among it. These benefits include, air pollution removal, carbon sequestration and storage and reducing flood risk. Other social benefits such as an increase in house value, amenity value of trees and health benefits for residents are also increased in a diverse, healthy urban forest.

The urban forest of Belfast is a vital resource for the city and the rapid growth of statutory and voluntary organisations undertaking tree projects prompted the inclusion of a policy on urban forestry in the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (Published in 1990). This policy to 'make trees an integral part of the urban fabric led to the formation of the Forest of Belfast urban forestry partnership to support a more strategic approach to tree planting and tree care. One of its very early tasks was a comprehensive survey of trees throughout Greater Belfast.

Some of the key findings of this study, Belfasts Trees (Segovinao, 1995) are reproduced in Table 1(below) alongside data from the 2022 i-Tree Eco urban forest assessment. It is encouraging to see that at first glance there has been significant improvement on tree numbers, tree cover and density, a testament to previous tree planting initiatives such as the community woodlands initiatives of the 60's and 70's, the Yew trees for the new millennium campaign and the work of the Conservation volunteers millennium tree campaign, which had planted half a million trees by 1991.

Study	Number of Trees	Tree Cover Estimate	Average Tree in Good Condition	Trees p/ha
1995 Forest of Belfast	732,000	8.3%	70%	46
2022 i-Tree Eco	808,000	14.5%	35%	61

Table 1: Urban Forest Estimates for Belfast

However, 14.5% tree cover is still short of the 20% recommended by Forest Research and the 30% target by the 3-30-300 rule recommended by the IUCN. The task ahead is huge, but not impossible. Belfast's current One Million trees campaign will go a long way to help achieve this target but only if it is complimented with other programs, that not only plant the right trees, in the right places for the right reasons, but are also able to provide care and maintenance, involve communities and measure the outcomes (both good and bad), take stock, learn and continually improve.

This strategy reflects the aims of key city partners, including Belfast City Council, existing programmes such as Belfast One Million Trees, the Belfast Local Development Plan, the Belfast Agenda and also clearly links tree planting and management with Belfast's climate ambitions and the benefits that trees provide to health and wellbeing. The plan will have a 10-year lifespan from its launch date and sets out a commitment to delivering key Priorities and Actions for the next 3 years.

The 37 targets, priorities and actions laid out in this 10 year tree strategy document will build on Belfasts previous successes and include actions around sustainable management, community engagement and on ongoing measurement of the structure and composition of Belfasts urban forest.

With ever growing concern about climate change, the loss of biodiversity and the need for sustainability we need to take action now to ensure that future generations can continue to benefit from Belfasts trees long into the future and that Belfast is able to achieve its ambitious vision for the urban forest.

What is the 3-30-300 rule?

This rule of thumb provides clear criteria for the minimum provision of urban trees in our urban communities at the same time, it is straightforward to implement and monitor – and easy to remember.

1. You should be able to see 3 trees from your window

2. There should be 30% tree cover in every neighbourhood

3. You should only be 300m or less from your nearest park

Figure 1 - The 3-30-300 rule (Konijnendijk, 2021)

Sources and References:

Hill, D., Ruddick, J. and Walker, H. (2022). Valuing Belfast's Urban Forest - Technical Report. Treeconomics Ltd. Last accessed: 13/07/2022. Available online: https://www.treeconomics.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Belfast-i-Tree-Eco-report.pdf

Konijnendijk, C. (2021) The 3-30-300 Rule for Urban Forestry and Greener Cities

Segoviano, A. (1995). Belfast's Trees - A survey of Trees in Greater Belfast. The Forest of Belfast Project

The Forest of Belfast. (1994) A Strategy Document. The Forest of Belfast Project

"Trees are poems that the
earth writes upon the sky"

- Kahil Gibran

Section 3
Vision

"That Belfast is a city which focuses on protecting, enhancing and expanding its woodlands, hedges, and trees, connecting people to nature, and ensuring that these continue to be a major asset to everyone who lives in, works in, and visits our city."

Although the Vision has a city-wide scope, it is important to work at the neighbourhood level, together with local communities and stakeholders, to ensure the successful implementation of the plan.

This new Tree Strategy is championed by Belfast City Council and Belfast One Million Trees, and was developed in a collaborative process over series of workshops with representatives of the local government; interest groups; and representatives of the community; and with the support of Treeconomics. The Strategy outlines key topics, priorities, and actions under three central themes:

1) Trees and Forest Structure,

2) Community Framework,

3) Sustainable Resource Management Approach.

The Strategy is structured around a comprehensive set of key performance indicators, informed by the current state of evidence and best practice. For each of these performance indicators, an assessment of the current situation is made, ambitions are laid out, and priorities are identified. Moreover, specific actions and roles and responsibilities are defined.

In addition a public consultation was also undertaken as part of this strategy. The online survey questionnaire was one of the most popular posted by Belfast City Council with 615 respondents and 200 pages of feedback. Further details and highlights are provided in Appendix V.

This ambitious Tree Strategy is an important step forward. Its future implementation, with a coordination role for Belfast City Council and in collaboration with a wide range of local partners and members of the community, will make the city greener, healthier, and more resilient to climate and other challenges.
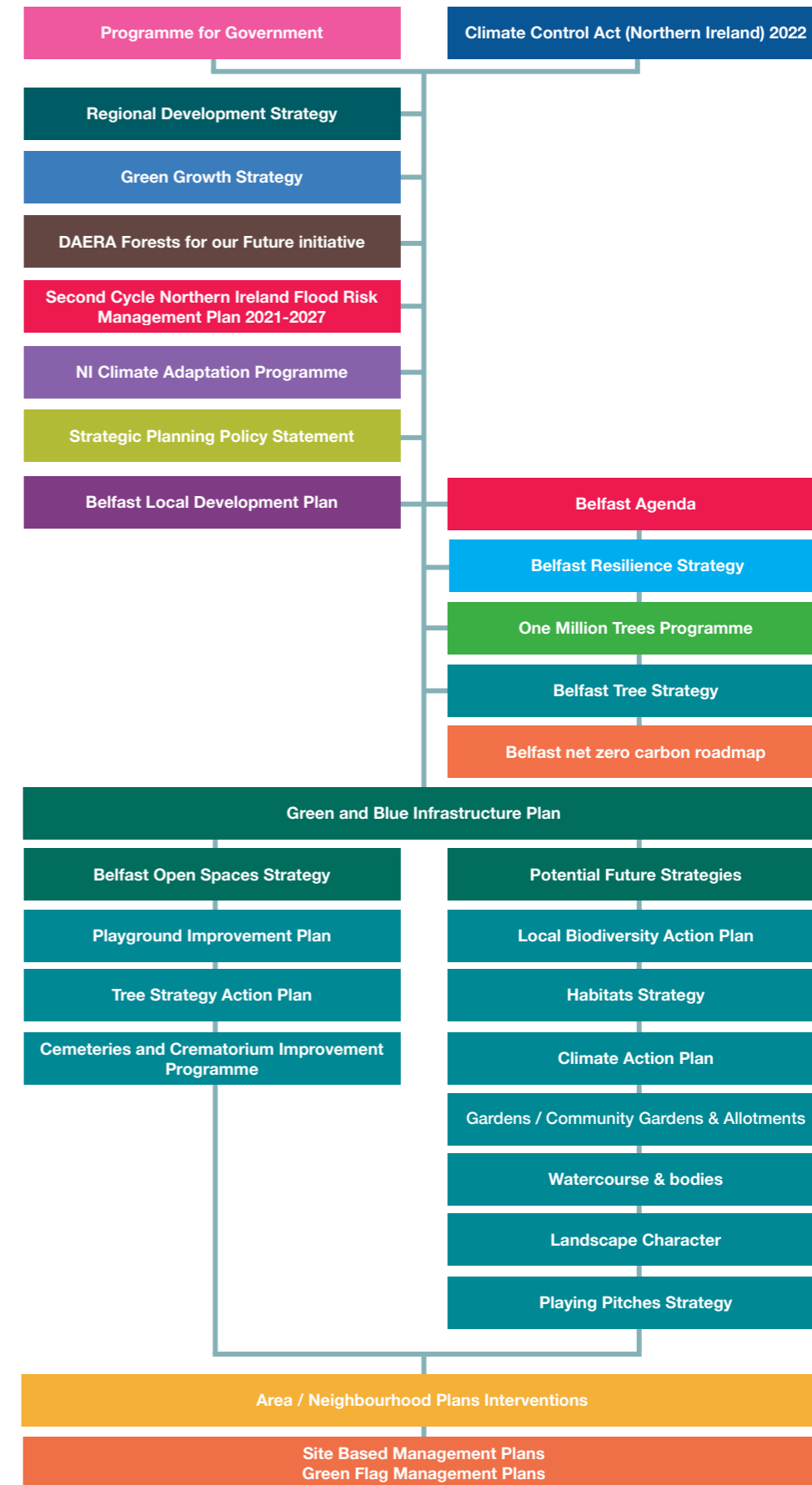
Figure 2: current policies, strategies and initiatives of Belfast City Council

"It seems to me that we all look at Nature too much, and live with her too little"

- Oscar Wilde

Section 4

Targets, Priorities and Actions

1.Trees and Urban Forest Structure

"Apart from the obvious environmental benefits of trees /shrubs ie cleaning the air by removing toxins, wildlife habitat, biodiversity. They also provide essential shade for walkers, cyclists, animals etc who frequent the area."

- Belfast Resident and consultation respondent

T1   Relative Tree Canopy Cover

Tree Canopy Cover, which is often also referred to as tree cover or urban canopy cover, can be defined as the area of leaves, branches, and stems of trees covering the ground, across a given area, when viewed from above. Canopy cover is a two dimensional metric, indicating the spread of canopy cover across an area. Assessing canopy cover is popular because it is relatively simple to determine from a variety of means and it can be calculated at relatively little expense.

There are many methods of assessing canopy cover at this scale, including i-Tree canopy, i-Tree Eco, Sentinel satellite data, Bluesky National Tree Map, etc. These methods are not directly comparable with each other as they use different metrics and definitions of what constitutes canopy cover.

Going forward Belfast will identify a suitable method of assessment so that repeat surveys are consistent and can be compared in order to track and monitor performance.

It has also been acknowledged that for any future assessment it will be important to be able to differentiate between the tree canopy cover also provided by Woodlands, Hedges, Parks, Open grown and Street trees.

Tree Cover	Study type	Study Year	Source
14.5%	i-Tree Eco	2022	Valuing Belfast's Urban Forest Report
8.3%	Aerial Photography	1994	Forest of Belfast Project

Table 2: Urban Tree Cover Estimates for Belfast

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Percentage Canopy Cover

	1 < 7
	7 < 13
	13 < 19
	19 < 25
	25 < 31
	31 < 37
	37 < 43
	43 < 49

Figure 3: Belfast's Existing Canopy Cover Percentage by Ward measured with Sentinel Satellite Data
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© contains modified Copernicus Sentinel data (2017), processed by CBK PAN

Actions

1. *Carry out a detailed canopy cover assessment to establish accurate potential canopy cover and the amount of tree cover also provided by woodland and hedges.*

2. *Review every 5 years by carrying out a canopy cover assessment.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Open Spaces Strategy
Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
High	1-2. Belfast City Council	TBC - Short term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Moderate	The existing canopy cover equals 0–25% of the potential.	The existing canopy cover equals 25–50% of the potential.	The existing canopy cover equals 50–75% of the potential.	The existing canopy cover equals 75–100% of the potential.

T2   Size (Age) Diversity

A healthy urban forest relies on its age diversity to maintain its ability to provide constant benefits to the people who live in Belfast over time. Maturing trees must be protected and managed to ensure they thrive and survive to become veteran trees (senescent), and juvenile trees must be planted constantly to replace old trees, dying trees, and trees removed for safety reasons. Larger, older trees typically provide more annual benefits than smaller, younger trees. However, these younger trees are vital to maintaining a healthy and sustainable forest.

Generally, the most accurate way to gauge age diversity is to compare current tree size in each species (in terms of diameter at breast height, or DBH) to the maximum diameter for that species. The goal would then be to maintain a tree population that is unevenly distributed among different age classes, making sure that there are enough juvenile trees for the future.

It is of course also important to strive for age diversity across the entire tree population – including public trees managed "extensively" (as a group) in parks and natural areas, as well as trees on private property, both city-wide and at neighbourhood level.

The recent i-Tree Eco study for Belfast gives the current age diversity across all trees as: 67% Juvenile, 24% Semi - Mature, 8% Mature and 1% Senescent.

Sources and references:

Richards, N.A., (1982/1983). Diversity and stability in a street tree population. Urban Ecology 7, 159–171 – as cited in McPherson, Urban Forestry & Urban Greening 12 (2013) 134– 143.
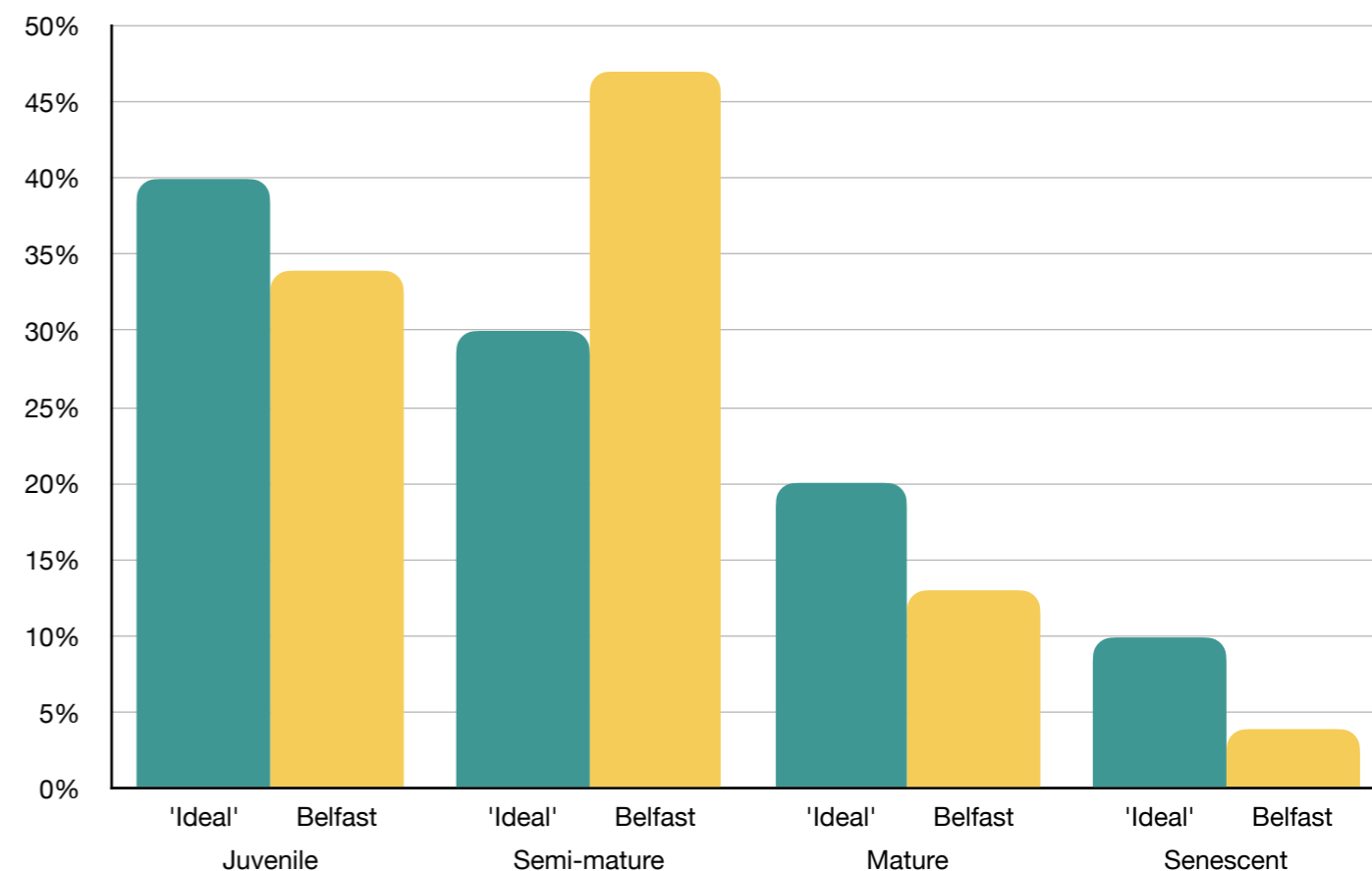
Figure 4: Richards "Ideal" Distribution of Tree Age Across the Urban Forest Showing Typical DBH for Each Age Class.

Actions	Link to relevant corporate policies	Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
1. *Review every 10 years.*	Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan	Medium	1. Belfast City Council, Belfast Hills, One Million Trees	TBC - Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	Even age distribution or highly skewed toward a single age class.	Some uneven distribution, but most of the tree population falls into a single age class.	Total tree population across municipality approaches an 'ideal' age distribution of 40% juvenile, 30% semi-mature, 20% mature, and 10% senescent.	Total population approaches that ideal distribution borough-wide as well as at the ward level.

T3   Species Diversity

Diversity is an important aspect of the urban forest to monitor. Trees are split into families, genera, species and varieties and it is essential to have a mix of these to create a diverse urban forest. However, maintaining a high level of both inter- and intra- species diversity is also key to urban forest sustainability. Sufficient tree diversity can increase overall resilience in the face of biotic and environmental stresses and threats. A more diverse tree-scape is better able to deal with possible changes in climate or pest and disease impacts.

Understanding the species diversity of Belfast's existing urban forest is a vital first step. From there, tree planting and management plans can enhance the diversity in line with the goals and KPI's of the action plan. The recent i-Tree Eco study indicates that Belfasts top three most common species (Ash - 11%, Sycamore - 9% and Beech - 5%) account for 25.8% of the population.

Santmour's (1990) 10-20-30 rule for species, genus and family, and Barker's benchmark of 5% per species are useful tools in assessing and providing targets for species diversity in the urban forest. Ideally, the array and location of suitable tree species would be so diverse that no single species would represent more than 5% of the tree population across the municipality or more than 10% in any given neighbourhood. However these rules apply only to street tree populations.

For landscape scale approaches Hubbell's dominance diversity curves can be a more useful aid to visualise species diversity. The longer and shallower the curve, the greater the diversity.
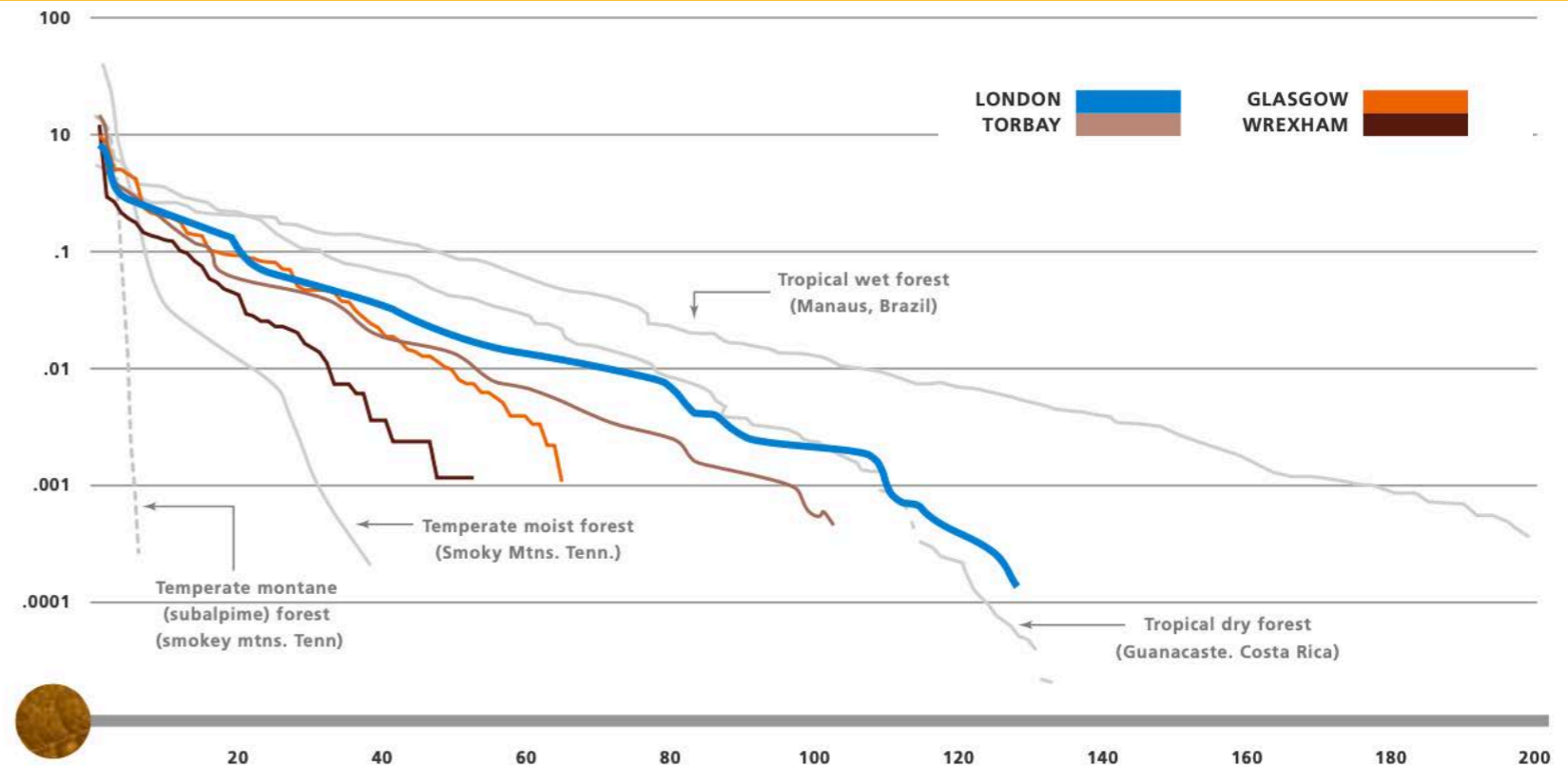
Figure 5: Dominance diversity curves for UK cities compared with example forest types

Sources and references:

Santamour, F.S. (1990) Trees for urban planting: Diversity, uniformity and common sense, in: Proceedings of the Conference Metropolitan Tree Improvement Alliance (METRIA). pp. 57–65.

Barker, P.A. (1975) Ordinance Control of Street Trees. Journal of Arboriculture. 1. pp. 121-215.

Beeauchamp, K. 2016 Measuring Forest Tree Species Diversity. Forest Research.

T

Actions

1. *Assess Belfast's street tree diversity to Santamour's Rule and also across the entire urban forest using Hubbell's dominance diversity curve method.*

2. *Review every 10 years.*

Link to relevant corporate policies	Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Belfast Open Spaces Strategy	High	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Short term project
Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan		2. Research Partner	

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Low	Five or fewer species dominate the entire tree population across municipality.	No single species represents more than 10% of total tree population; no genus more than 20%; and no family more than 30%.	No single species represents more than 5% of total tree population; no genus more than 10%; and no family more than 15%.	At least as diverse as "Good" rating (5/10/15) municipality-wide – and at least as diverse as "Moderate" (10/20/30) at the neighbourhood level.

T4 Species Suitability

Species suitability involves selecting a broad array of species which are well suited to both the urban and regional environment.

Trees have unique needs; all tree species have different genetic characteristics and growth strategies which have been developed to maximise survival and growth in their natural habitats. Climate, soil, and other environmental aspects can affect their ability to survive and thrive. In cities, trees are subject to more external stresses than their woodland counterparts, and this can limit their lifespan and make them more susceptible to pests and disease. By promoting the planting of suitable species in suitable locations, trees are less likely to suffer from these stresses and therefore reach their full potential.

The determination of species suitability should take into account concerns such as adaptability to local climate and future climate change, invasive potential, soils, moisture demands, disease risk, and management considerations.

Checking plant hardiness zones is a good place to start. The USDA-designed system maps zones on minimum temperatures, and is now available for the rest of the world. Forest Research have developed a climate matching tool (https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/climate-matching-tool/) which may be of some use in predicting future climates. FR's Ecological Site Classification Decision Support System (ESC-DSS) found online at https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/ecological-site-classification/ can indicate a tree's suitability depending on a range of factors such as soil moisture and nutrient regime, climate and topography etc.

In the example opposite, species suitability has been mapped using multiple different layers in an interactive tree planting opportunity map which also displays potential carbon storage and sequestration.
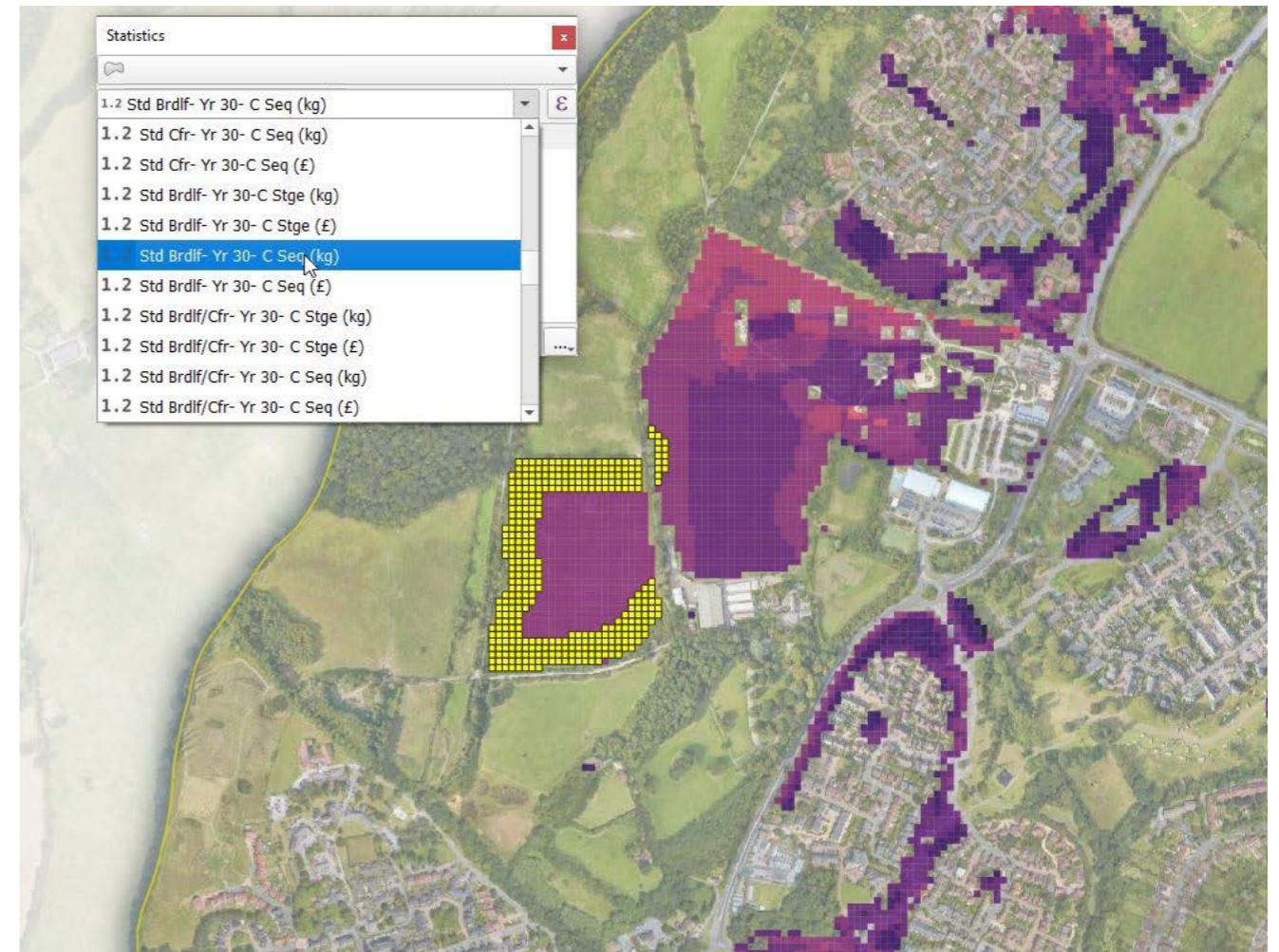
Figure 6: Tool to show species suitability and carbon sequestration projections

Actions

1. *Assess species suitability across Belfast for a changing climate.*

2. *Establish Native - Non Native Guidelines for urban and rural areas.*

3. *Explore how to include Intra Diversity.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Open Spaces Strategy
Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1-3. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium to Long term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	Fewer than 50% of all trees are from species considered suitable for the area and for projected climate.	>50%-75% of trees are from species suitable for the area and for projected climate.	More than 75% of trees are suitable for the area and for projected climate.	Virtually all trees are suitable for the area and for projected climate.

T5   Publicly Owned Trees

Trees managed individually, such as street trees, are considered to be "managed intensively," according to arboricultural techniques – whereas trees in woodlands or other natural areas are typically "managed extensively," as a group. Park trees or trees on institutional campuses can fall into either category, depending on how they are managed.

Understanding how many trees are managed in this way and what this type of management entails will help provide a baseline for improving future 'intensive' practices. A tree inventory documenting these trees, their location, species, health, etc is invaluable for tree maintenance and risk management.

Belfast already uses a tree inventory system for the street trees and those in parks. This includes detailed condition ratings and historic and planned maintenance. The next step is to migrate this system to a GIS based platform.

Figure 7: The street lined trees of Belfast

Actions	Link to relevant corporate policies	Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
1. *Move to an integrated GIS based tree inventory system.*	Belfast Open Spaces Strategy Belfast Transport Policy Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan	Low	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Good	Condition of urban forest is unknown.	Sample-based tree inventory indicating tree condition and risk level.	Complete tree inventory that includes detailed tree condition ratings.	Complete tree inventory that is GIS-based and includes detailed tree condition as well as risk ratings.

13

T6 Publicly Owned Woodlands and Natural Areas

Trees in woodlands or other natural areas are typically "managed extensively," as a group whereas trees managed individually, such as street trees, are considered to be "managed intensively," according to arboricultural techniques (See T5). Park trees or trees on institutional campuses can fall into either category, depending on how they are managed.

Understanding how many trees are managed in this way and what this type of management entails will help provide information for improving future 'extensive' practices.

Natural area surveys that incorporate patterns and structures of ecological functions would be useful. Woodland fragmentation, recreational overuse, disturbance and invasives such as Rhododendron have all been highlighted as issues of serious concern, which are as yet unquantified.

Developing individual management plans and a web map for these areas could be a useful tool for both management, community engagement and connectivity. Current 'extensive' management methods should be reviewed and updated if necessary.

Actions

1. *Carry out benchmark surveys on the nature and extent of Natural areas including Woodland and Hedgerows and assess usage level and patterns, threats, ecology and function of these natural areas.*

2. *Develop Targets, Priorities, Actions and KPI's for these areas for inclusion in strategy documents and individual management plans. With an emphasis on connectivity. Connecting people to woodlands and connecting woodlands to other woodlands.*

3. *Migrate woodland and other natural environment data to a webmap.*

Priority Habitats

- 🟩 Woodland
- 🟨 Grassland
- 🟪 Peatland
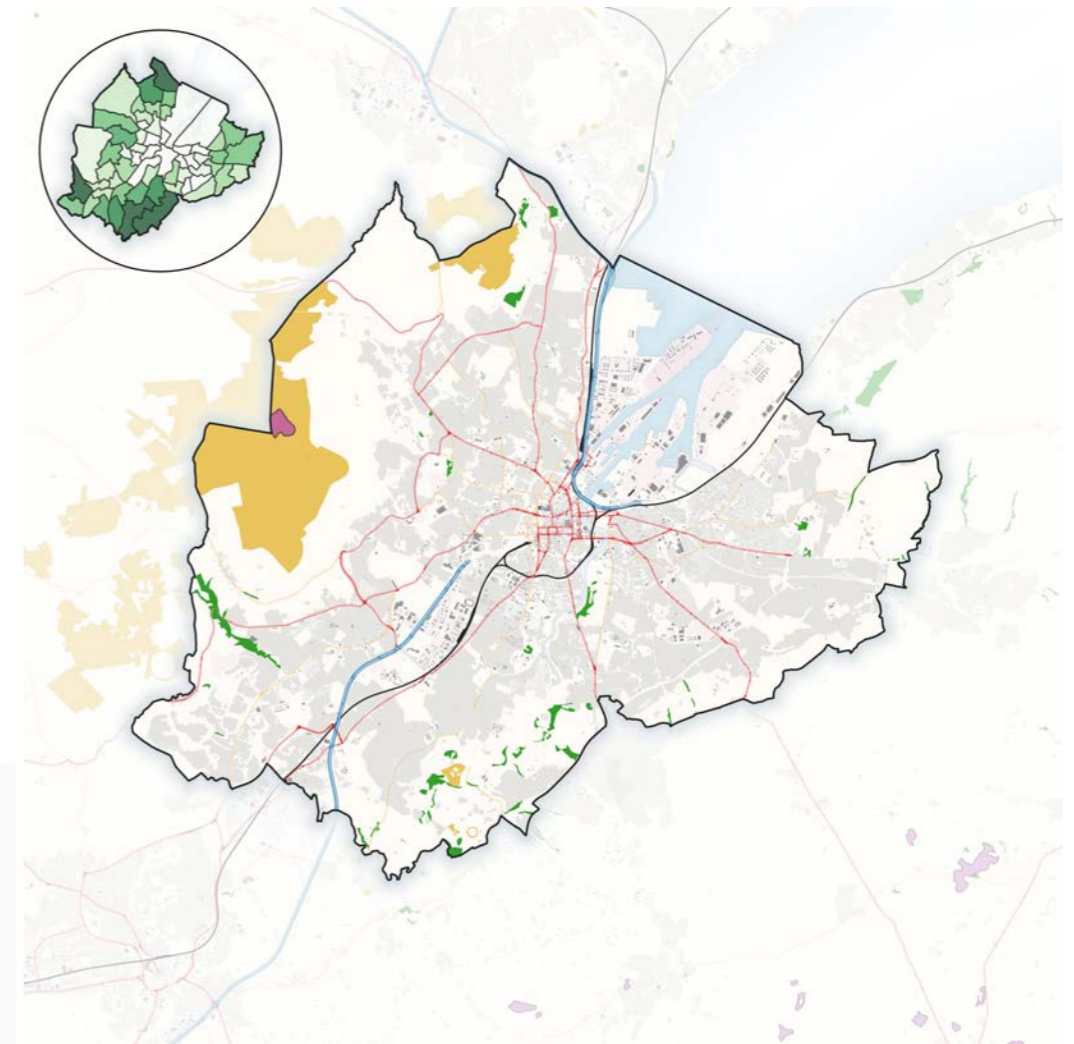
Figure 8: Priority habitats with high ecological importance across Belfast (Inset: Canopy cover by Ward)

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Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2022.
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Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Open Spaces Strategy   Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Low	1-3. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Good	No information about publicly owned natural areas.	Publicly owned natural areas identified in a "natural areas survey" or similar document or on webmap.	Survey document also tracks level and type of public use in publicly owned natural areas.	In addition, usage patterns, ecological structure and function of all publicly owned natural areas are also assessed and documented.

14

T7   Trees on Private Property

Trees on private property are more difficult to survey and manage than those on public land due to the extent and inaccessibility of these trees. It relies on land owners taking an active role in tree management.

In addition to an i-Tree Eco sample based analysis, a detailed assessment of the Urban Tree Canopy which can be displayed on a city-wide basis should be carried out for optimal results.

A full inventory of trees on private properties may be a tall order, however many of Belfast's trees will fall into conservation areas, and many more will be on record with a tree preservation order (TPO). Fully collating the data already held on these trees may be useful in combination with an i-Tree Eco sample survey.

Furthermore, the Bluesky National Tree Map (NTM) also provides an estimate of tree numbers and could be used in conjunction with OS mastermap to provide a point based assessment relatively quickly.

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Actions

1. *Ongoing review and update of existing interactive maps for current TPO and Conservation sites.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan

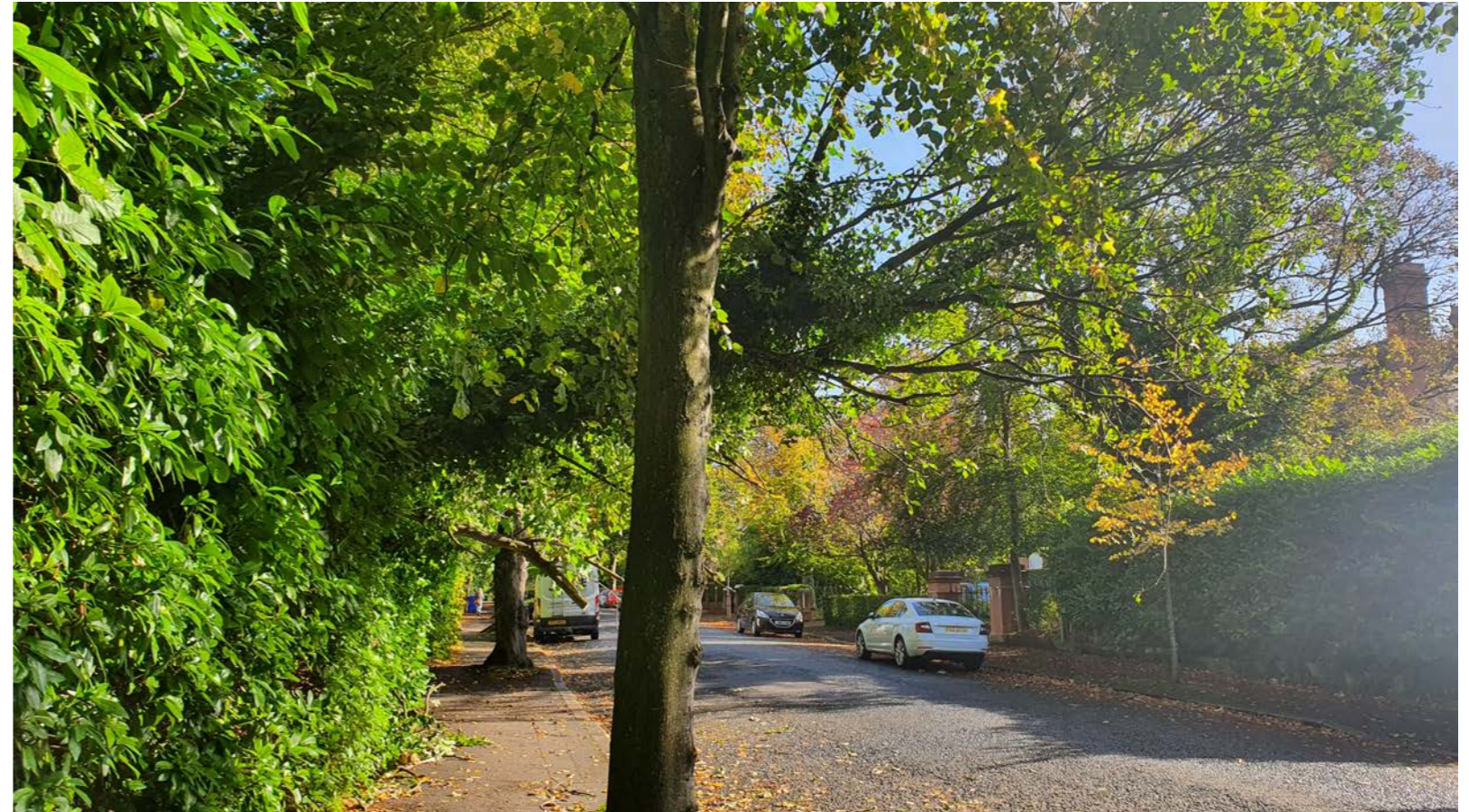| Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Low	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Short to Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Good	No information about privately owned trees.	Aerial, point-based assessment of trees on private property, capturing overall extent and location.	Bottom-up, sample-based assessment of trees on private property, as well as basic aerial view (as described in "Fair" rating).	Bottom-up, sample-based assessment on private property, as well as a detailed Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) analysis of entire urban forest, integrated into municipality-wide GIS system.

T8 Other Elements of the Urban Forest - including Biodiversity

Other elements of the urban forest include shrubs, hedges, green walls and roofs, plants, wildlife, and water. These elements, along with trees, provide a wide range of benefits, including ecosystem services and amenity value.

Whilst shrubs, like trees, can be surveyed (for example as in the i-Tree Eco project), and green walls and roofs can be counted and measured, many of these other elements are very difficult to quantify, such as biodiversity for example. Assessing and quantifying these environmental impacts and services is even more complex. However, tools like the Urban Greening Factor (UGF) as used in London can provide a guideline and targets for urban greening.

In order to maintain and enhance the urban forest, Belfast needs to consider these other elements and to identify opportunities around new greening, biodiversity enhancement and development. This will help the city to make the most of its urban forest so that it continues to provide benefits to the community into the future in both a meaningful and quantifiable way.

Actions

1. *Information on these elements may be available from other 3rd parties - needs enquiring, collating and reviewing find the gaps.*

2. *Research and review current tools and best practices for measuring and quantifying these additional elements.*

3. *Commit to developing a new biodiversity action plan.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Open Spaces Strategy
Belfast Biodiversity Policy
Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1-3. Belfast City Council	TBC - Short to Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Moderate	No information about other elements of the Urban Forest.	An assessment of existing elements of the urban forest has been carried out and a green infrastructure baseline has been established.	Establish relevant local UFG targets. Identify opportunities for new greening in development.	A relevant local UFG policy has been developed and implemented. Monitoring is ongoing.

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T9 Tree Benefits

Trees in cities bring with them both benefits and costs. Whilst many of the costs are well known, the benefits can be difficult to quantify or justify. Nevertheless, a considerable and expanding body of research exists on the benefits that urban trees provide to those who live and work in our cities, to green infrastructure and to the wider urban ecosystem.

Trees provide a 'sense of place', moderate extremes of high temperature in urban areas, improve air quality, reduce rainwater runoff, and act as a carbon sink. Yet, trees are often overlooked and undervalued. Understanding and valuing these services allows us to make more informed planting and management decisions for the benefit of current and future generations. It can also help communicate the importance of trees to the public and to those in the planning and development sector, encouraging the protection and management of existing trees as well as new planting.

i-Tree Eco is a tool which can be used to quantify tree benefits whilst also giving an overview of the structure of the urban forest. The random plot sample survey of Belfast provides a comprehensive analyse of the quantifiable tree benefits. Not all benefits are quantifiable, however amenity valuations (i.e. CAVAT) can help with valuing urban forests.

Belfast One Million Trees project conducted an i-Tree Eco valuation of the urban forest in 2022. The results of this study can be found at:

https://www.treeconomics.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Belfast-i-Tree-Eco-report.pdf

About i-Tree:

i-Tree is a suite of tools developed to assess the value of the urban forest and the ecosystem services provided which:

- Quantifies the benefits and values of trees around the world.

- Aids in tree and forest management and advocacy.

- Shows potential risks to tree and forest health.

- Is based on peer-reviewed international research.

i-Tree Eco is an application designed to use field data from individual trees, complete inventories, or randomly allocated plots across the sample area to analyse the forest structure and ecosystem services provided.
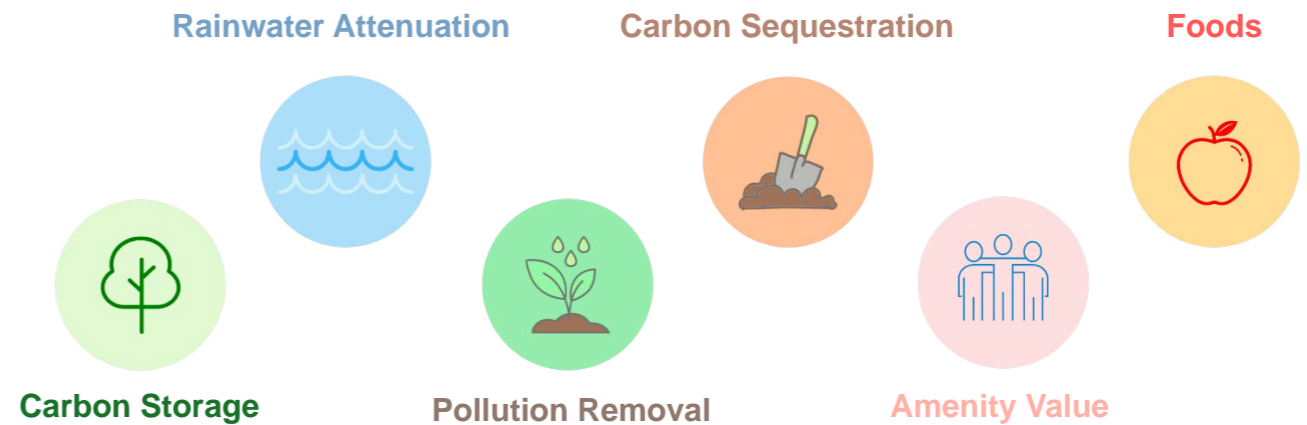
Rainwater Attenuation   **Carbon Sequestration**   **Foods**

Carbon Storage   **Pollution Removal**   **Amenity Value**

Actions	Link to relevant corporate policies		Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
1. *Resurvey in 10 years.*	Belfast Open Spaces Strategy Belfast Transport Policy Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan		Low	1. Belfast City Council	2032

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Optimal	No comprehensive information available about tree benefits in the city.	Some information available on key tree benefits, such as biodiversity.	Sound information available on a key set of tree benefits, such as biodiversity, recreation, environmental services (see below).	Comprehensive information available on all tree benefits across the city.

T10   Wider Environmental Considerations

Belfasts urban forest has a vital part in the fight against climate change and can be part of both adaptation and mitigation strategies. Urban trees and woodlands are particularly important as a way of reducing the urban heat island effect, and in removing air pollution from built up areas and highways. In certain situations, trees can also reduce the energy use of buildings by providing shade in summer (reducing the need for air conditioning) and insulation from cold winds in winter (reducing the heating costs).

With the UK target of carbon net neutrality by 2050, and Belfasts aims to achieve 66% reductions on its 2000 level of emissions by 2025, 80% by 2030, 88% by 2035, 93% by 2040, 97% by 2045 and 100% by 2050, the trees and other elements of the urban forest in Belfast are key.

Climate change poses a direct risk to the residents in Belfast; a warming climate increases risk of heatstroke, while increased rainfall will cause more frequent and more severe flooding. Biodiversity is also at risk, as species will struggle to adapt to warming climates, earlier springs and mild winters.

These considerations should be taken into account when managing the urban forest to ensure that the correct management practices are being enforced, tree and shrub species are as suitable to the future environment as possible, and that biodiversity is protected and enhanced, with biodiversity net gain as a key drive. Belfast City Council will use the 10 principles identified by the RSPB as guidelines for Biodiversity net gain until it is embedded in the decision making framework. Monitoring species and numbers will be important, and considering opinions from outside groups regarding more specific systems and locations will be key to preserving existing environments in Belfast. Working with the most up to date and location relevant climate and weather data is important to avoid generalisations and achieve the best results for the future.

pm2.5 pollution
(ug.m-3) gravimetric PM2.5

- 6.4 - 7.2
- 7.2 - 7.7
- 7.7 - 8.1
- 8.1 - 8.7
- 8.7 - 9.1
- 9.1 - 9.6
- 9.6 - 10.4
- 10.4 - 11.7
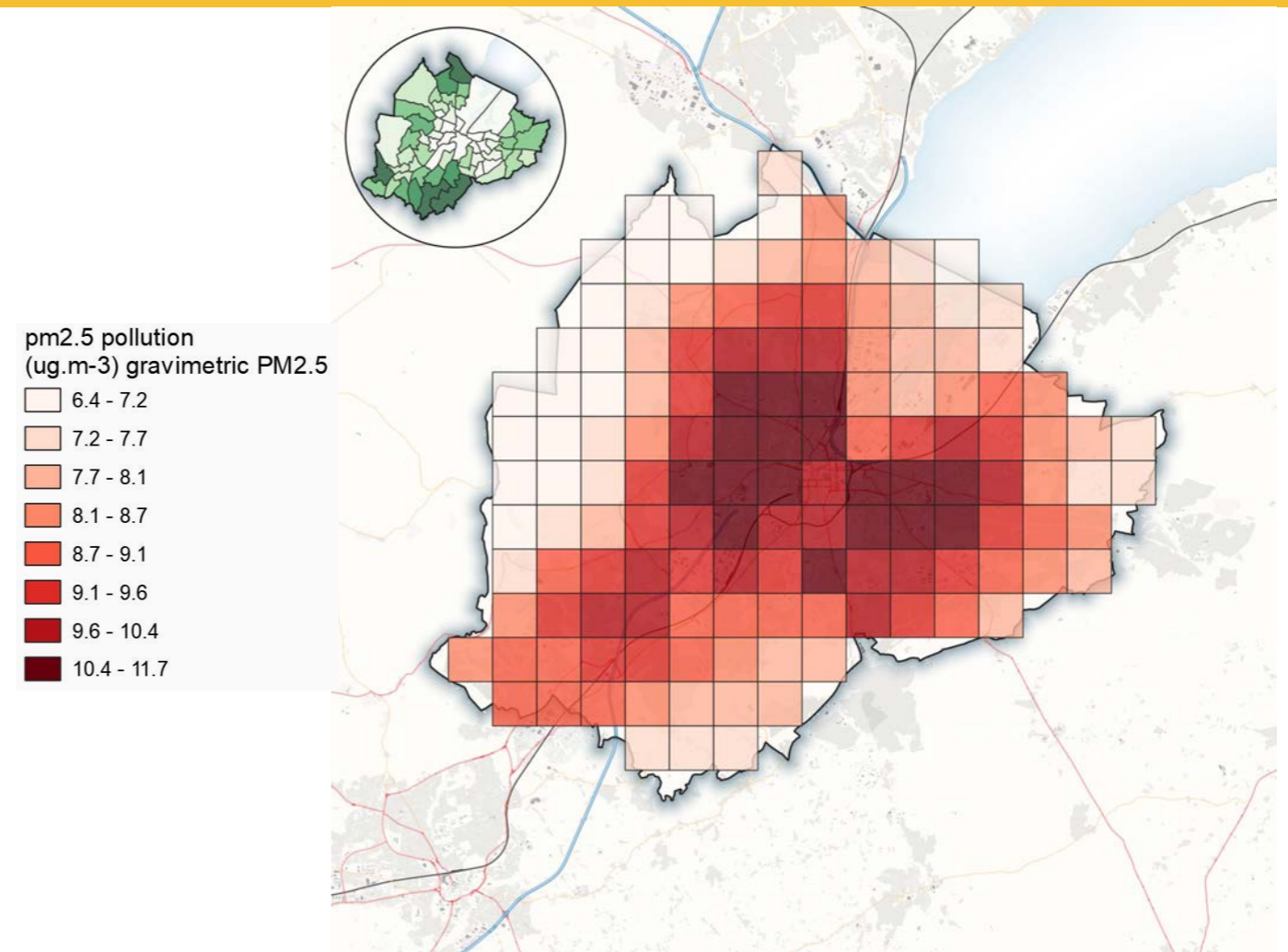
Figure 9: Pollution of Particulate Matter <2.5 microns concentration across Belfast (Inset: Canopy Cover by Ward)
Source: UKAIR : Website: https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/data/laqm-background-maps
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Actions

1. *Complete an urban forest risk assessment to assess the risk from Flooding, Climate change, Pest and Diseases and others.*

Link to relevant corporate policies

Belfast Open Spaces Strategy

Belfast Transport Policy

Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1. Belfast City Council with support from others	TBC - Medium term project

Performance Indicators

Current Performance Level	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Moderate	No consideration/information that relates urban trees to climate change, air quality, water.	Some consideration of environmental aspects in relation to urban trees, e.g. looking at climate change.	Consideration of at least major environmental aspects in relation to urban trees.	Full consideration of environmental aspects in relation to trees, based on comprehensive, state-of-the-art information.

Key Performance Indicator	Current Performance Level				Priority
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal	
T1 - Relative tree canopy cover			Good		High
T2 - Size (Age) diversity		Moderate			Medium
T3 - Species diversity		Moderate			High
T4 - Species suitability		Moderate			Medium
T5 – Publicly owned trees			Good		Low
T6 – Publicly owned natural areas			Good		Low
T7 – Trees on private property			Good		Low
T8 – Other elements of the UF; shrubs, hedges, green walls and roofs, plants, animals and water		Moderate			Medium
T9 – Tree benefits (including biodiversity)				Optimal	Low
T10 – Wider Environmental Considerations (including Climate Change, Air quality and Water)		Moderate			Medium

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"It is our collective and individual responsibility to preserve and tend to the environment in which we all live."

- The Dalai Lama

Targets, Priorities and Actions

2. Community Framework

"Trees are a natural thermo regulator. And a vital component of urban life. They provide a solution to climate change, have economic, social, environmental and health benefits. They help wildlife and connect communities."

- - Belfast Resident and consultation respondent

C1   Governance and Leadership

The aim of this target is to help all municipal departments and agencies within Belfast to communicate and cooperate to advance goals related to urban forest issues and opportunities. Belfast City Council will continue to work with other NGO's and agencies when necessary.

However, building a focussed network of urban forest partners to undertake co-ordinated action in delivery of this strategy would be desirable. The council will aim to work with a number of external partners to manage and maintain the urban forest. This may include, among others, The Woodland Trust, The Conservation Volunteers, Ulster Wildlife Trust, the Belfast Hills Partnership, the National Trust, the Department for Infrastructure, and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Initially the council will undertake a review of who the current stakeholders and actors are and where they are working across the city. It will then consider a map tree of stewardship across the city and will canvass opinion on whether to set up a Tree Forum as a means to strengthen and co-ordinate the governance and leadership of the urban forest.
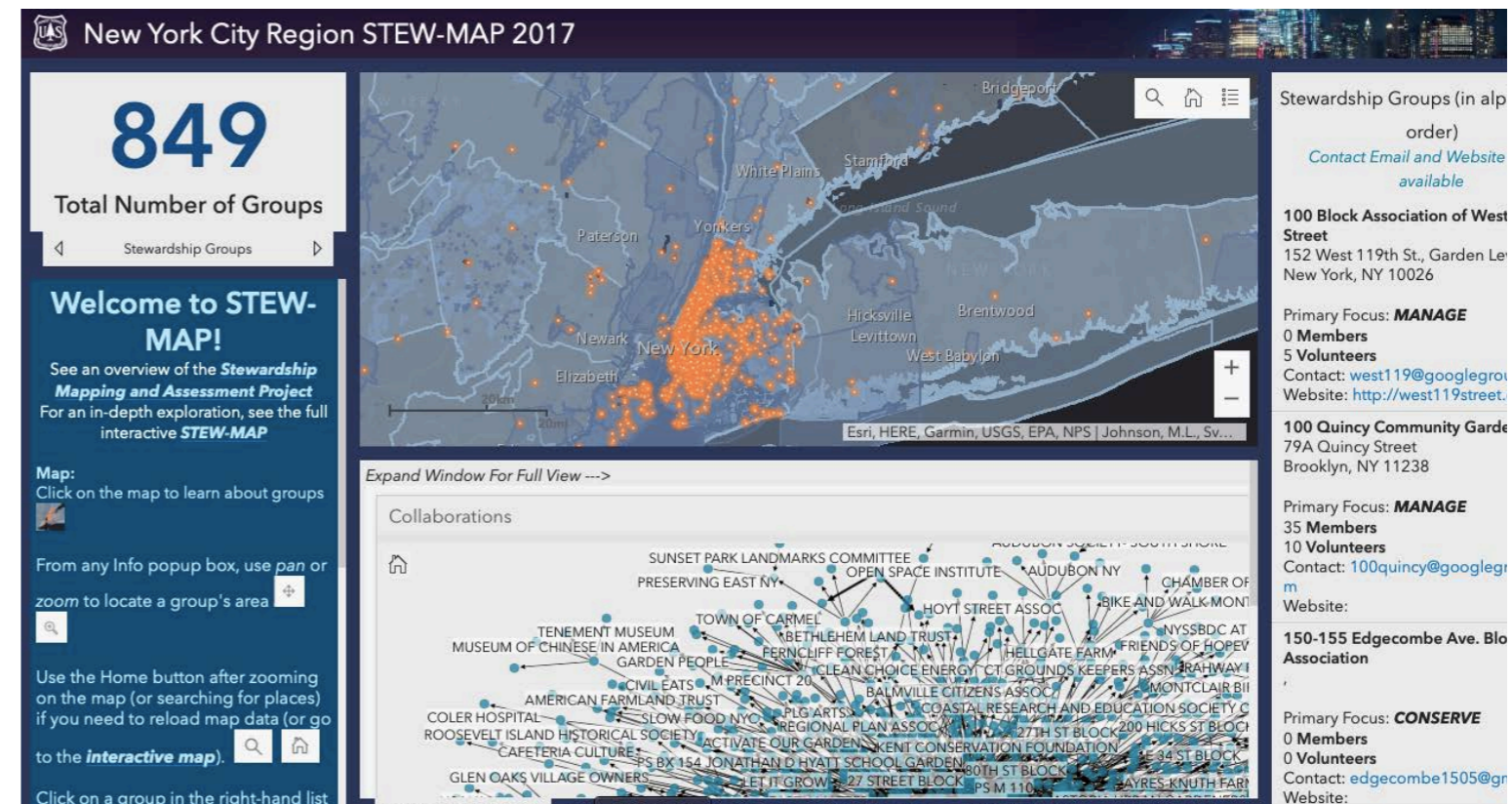
Figure 10: Example Stew Map from NewYork which details which organisations work in which areas, their size, focus and overlap with others.

Actions

1. *Conduct a review of potential partners, schemes and community groups.*

2. *Commission a database or stewardship map of Belfast.*

3. *Evaluate setting up a Tree Forum.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1-3. Belfast City Council	TBC -Medium to Long term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	Agencies take actions impacting urban forest with no cross-departmental coordination, consultation or consideration of the urban forest resource. Leadership for UF management is fragmented.	BCC works with other NGO's and Agencies on ad-hoc projects as and when they arise.	BCC regularly and frequently works with other NGO's and Agencies to establish projects and plans. There is a cultural champion in place.	Integrated UF governance and leadership provided by a single dept and measured to plan that reflects local and international policies.

C2 Belfast Council Departmental Co-operation

This target aims to encourage all departments within BCC to consult and collaborate with the urban forest managers on issues relating to the urban forest. Regular communication across departments and agencies will be key to ensuring that the urban forest is considered to the fullest extent throughout the council. Key departments to incorporate into this network are public health, planning and development. Other key departments include education, housing and highways, which although external to the council, still need to be involved in the process.

Opening communication channels and interdepartmental teams can help to coordinate urban forest management by providing knowledge and guidance to all council departments when required in order to ensure that trees and green infrastructure are considered in full at all stages of decision making.

Belfast Climate Commission and The Resilience Team are good examples of other BCC departments whose own strategies and objectives will overlap with the tree strategy.

BELFAST CLIMATE COMMISSION

Actions

1. *Set up dedicated interdepartmental/interagency working teams to facilitate the work packages arising from this strategy.*

Link to relevant corporate policies

Belfast Open Spaces Strategy

Belfast Transport Policy

Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Low	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Short term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Good	Departments/agencies take actions impacting urban forest with no cross-departmental coordination, consultation or consideration of the urban forest resource.	Departments/agencies recognize potential conflicts and reach out to urban forest managers on an ad hoc basis – and vice versa.	Informal teams among departments and agencies communicate regularly and collaborate on a project-specific basis.	UF policy implemented by formal interdepartmental/interagency working teams on all projects.

C3   Utilities Co-operation

C3 aims to ensure that all utilities – above and below ground – employ best management practices and cooperate with the city to advance goals and objectives related to urban forest issues and opportunities. This includes electric, gas, water, cable, telephone, fibre-optics, etc.

Utilities are required to follow certain standards for managing vegetation – including pruning branches, protecting roots, and performing overall management of trees and other vegetation that could impact their services, and city policies may also regulate certain utility management practices, such as overhead line clearance. Introducing and enforcing best practice standards which protect trees and other elements of the urban forest will be key, and collaboration with utilities could help advance the goals and objectives of the strategy.

Some utilities extend beyond the Belfast area. Figure 11 shows the water catchment areas which supply Belfast. These areas are not constrained by political boundaries, and this should be taken into account when assessing how the urban forest and utilities interact. Water companies will also be encouraged to develop systems in which trees provide a vital role in water management.
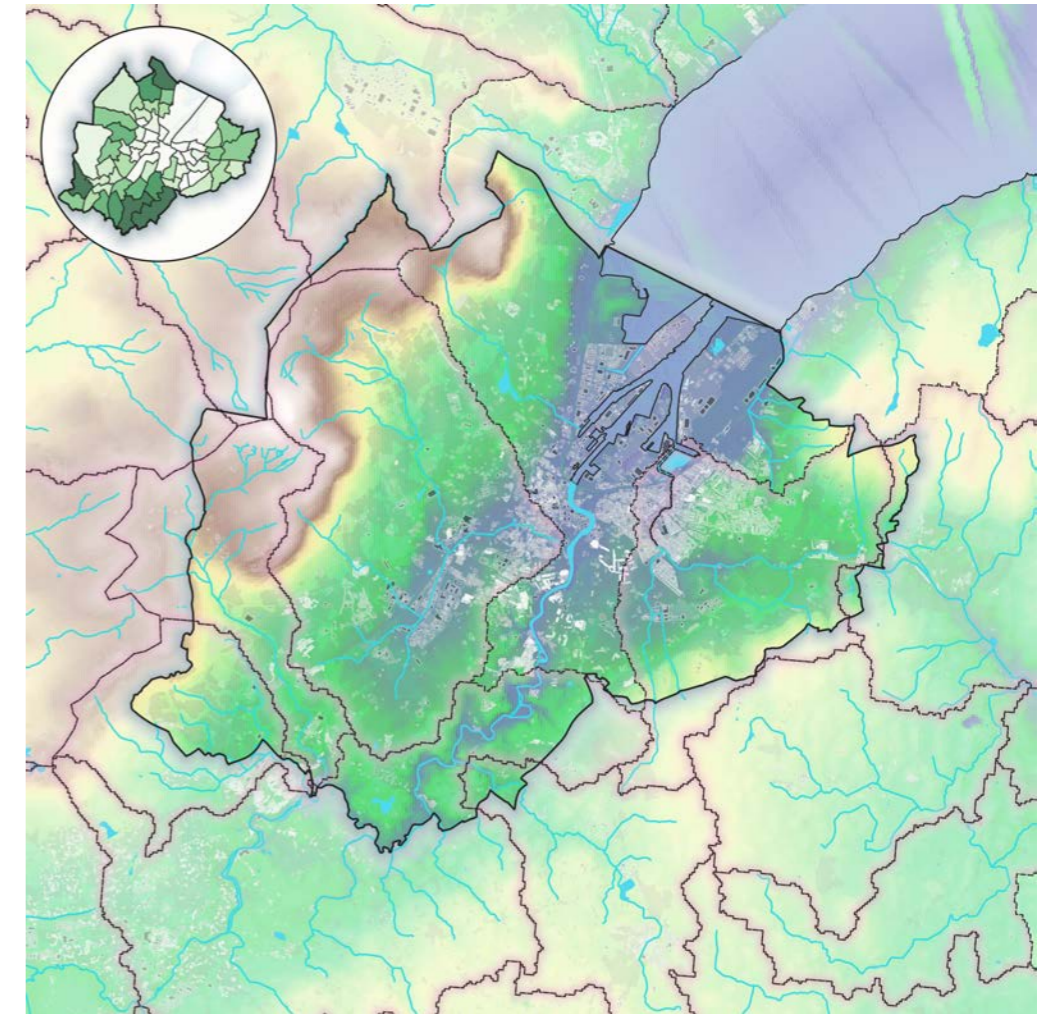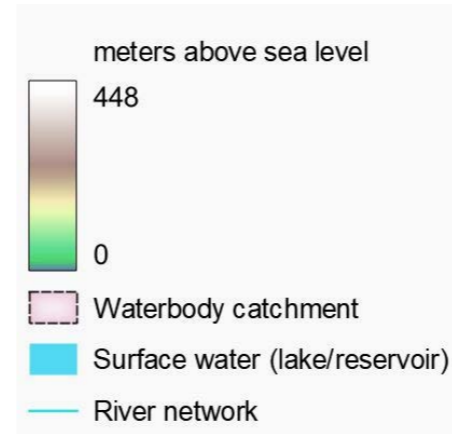
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meters above sea level

448

0

- [ ] Waterbody catchment
- Surface water (lake/reservoir)
- River network

Figure 11: Hydrology of Belfast shown to extend beyond political boundaries (Inset: Canopy Cover By Ward)
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Actions

1. *Compile list of relevant utility providers and contacts.*

2. *Set up formal initial engagement workshop with utility providers on trees in the built environment.*

3. *Coordinate collaborative arrangements to meet the objectives of the plan (e.g. a tree charter that utilities can sign up to when they want to work on BCC land and training courses on trees for relevant employees in these utilities).*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Transport Policy

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1-3. Belfast City Council	TBC - Short term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	Utilities take actions impacting urban forest with no council coordination or consideration of the urban forest resource.	Utilities employ best management practices, recognize potential municipal conflicts, and reach out to urban forest managers on an ad hoc basis – and vice versa.	Utilities are included in informal council teams that communicate regularly and collaborate on a project-specific basis.	Utilities help advance urban forestry goals and objectives by participating in formal interdepartmental/interagency working teams on all municipal projects.

C4 Green Industry Co-operation

The "green industry" encompasses all professions and businesses that routinely support or engage in tree and vegetation management activities. Among others, these can include landscapers, nurseries, garden centres, contractors, maintenance professionals, tree care companies, landscape architects, foresters, planners, and developers.

BCC will work together with green industries to advance municipality-wide urban forest goals and objectives, and adhere to high professional standards. Close co-operation with the green industry presents an excellent opportunity for municipal urban forest managers to influence management of the forest resource on private property.

Nurseries   Farming   Forestry   Skills & Training
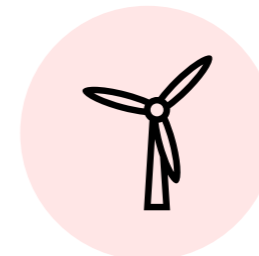
Tree Surgeons   Renewable Energy   Waste Management

Actions

1. *List representatives and contact details for each relevant business or organisation.*

2. *Coordinate collaborative arrangements to meet the objectives of the plan (e.g. a tree charter that businesses can sign up to if they want to collaborate with BCC on this plan). This should include discussions on skills building in the sector for Belfast and NI by looking at potential courses and apprenticeship schemes.*

Link to relevant corporate policies

Belfast Open Spaces Strategy

Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1-2. Belfast City Council	TBC - Short term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	Little or no cooperation among segments of green industry or awareness of municipality-wide urban forest goals and objectives.	Some cooperation among green industry as well as general awareness and acceptance of municipality-wide goals and objectives.	Specific collaborative arrangements across segments of green industry in support of municipality-wide goals and objectives.	Shared vision and goals and extensive committed partnerships in place. Solid adherence to high professional standards.

C5 Involvement of Large Private and Institutional Landholders

As a large proportion of land within cities is owned by private individuals, organisations and institutions, enlisting their help in enhancing and protecting the urban forest is paramount. Outreach programs, management plans and funding strategies will help to incorporate these landholders. Communicating the benefits of trees will help inspire landholders and institutions to invest time and money in natural resources.

The goal is to help large private landholders embrace and advance city-wide urban forest goals and objectives by implementing specific resource management plans so that they can manage trees on their property in the most beneficial way.

Belfasts One Million Trees program is an example of an initiative which could be used to guide the development and achievement of this target. The Woodland Trust, Trees for Cities and The Tree Council of Northern Ireland all have good resources on engaging 3rd parties on tree planting and maintenance standards and techniques that can forward this target. There is also more that could be done to collaborate with large institutions, although many already are part of the Belfast One Million Trees Partnership. For example the National Trust, Universities, Belfast Harbour, Crown Estate, DfC, NIHE, Housing Associations, DfI and the Education Authority are all examples of large active organisations in the city centre.

There's also a suite of supplementary planning guidance for large developers which includes the; Planning and Flood Risk SPG, Trees and Development SPG and the Sustainable Urban Drainage SPG.
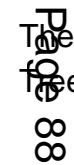
Figure 12: Map showing Belfast's Queen's University Campus and the surrounding green spaces outlined in red
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Actions

1. *Create database of larger landholders and contact details for each.*

2. *Coordinate collaborative arrangements to meet the objectives of the plan.*

3. *Communicating about e.g. health benefits to support partnerships and enhance tree protection.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Open Spaces Strategy
Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1 and 3. Belfast City Council 2. One Million Trees Project	TBC - Short term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	Large private landholders are generally uninformed about urban forest issues and opportunities.	Belfast conducts outreach directly to landholders with educational materials and technical assistance, providing clear goals and incentives for managing their tree resource.	Landholders develop comprehensive tree management plans (including funding strategies) that advance municipality-wide urban forest goals.	As described in "Good" rating, plus active community engagement and access to the property's forest resource.

C6 Community Involvement and Neighbourhood Action

At the neighbourhood level, communities and residents groups will be encouraged to participate and collaborate with BCC and its partnering Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in urban forest management activities.

Collaborating with smaller community groups such as volunteers, schools and charity groups can encourage further community involvement with projects in small neighbourhoods and wider district areas, which would benefit the whole city. Neighbourhood activities often help the community members to connect more with their urban forest, and encouraging communities to get involved will reduce the likelihood of conflict or opposition to tree planting.

Creating an interactive Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project (STEW-MAP) such as those completed in Paris and New York may be a useful tool for engaging the public. It is a research methodology, community organising approach and partnership mapping tool developed by the USDA which shows who is responsible for the local environment. It has never been done in the UK and could be an invaluable tool to engage local residents and establish a network of UF management teams across the city.

Introducing a new Tree Warden program for Belfast is potentially a great way to encourage volunteers and community engagement. Belfast will seek to set up a tree wardens scheme over the course of the next 5 years.

Actions

1. *List reps and contact details for key groups.*

2. *Asses potential for creating stewardship map/mapping of community groups.*

3. *Explore opportunities for a tree equity map.*

4. *Link to other, wider initiatives and awards.*

5. *Publicise events and launches.*

6. *Agree proposals and coordinate the planting of living Christmas trees within the city*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Open Spaces Strategy
Belfast Transport Policy
Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Low	1-6. Belfast City Council and NGO could set this up and get funding - done previously by Conservation Volunteers. NGO's will need support for funding though and cant be seen as 'offloading'	TBC - Short to Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Good	Little or no citizen involvement or neighbourhood action.	At the neighbourhood level, citizens participate and groups collaborate with Belfast and/or its partnering NGOs in urban forest management activities to advance municipality-wide plans.	Some neighbourhood groups engaged in advancing urban forest goals, but with little or no overall coordination with or direction by municipality or its partnering NGOs.	Many active neighbourhood groups engaged across the community, with actions coordinated or led by municipality and/or its partnering NGOs.

C7 General Appreciation of Trees as a Community Resource

In order for the strategy to be a true success, one of its legacies should be that the people of Belfast love, respect and appreciate its trees. By engaging and encouraging the community in this way, it can be ensured that the urban forest will be protected and enhanced for generations to come. Changing peoples values can be difficult, but through education, celebration and engagement, the hope is that people will come to value the trees around them and the wider part which they play in the health of the city, the nation, and the world.

Not only local communities, but also stakeholders from all sectors and constituencies within the city – private and public, commercial and nonprofit, entrepreneurs and elected officials, community groups and individual citizens – should understand, appreciate, and advocate for the role and importance of the urban forest as a crucial community resource.

"Having public agencies, private landholders, the green industry, and neighbourhood groups all share the same vision of the city's urban forest is a crucial part of sustainability. This condition is not likely to result from legislation. It will only result from a shared understanding of the urban forest's value to the community and commitment to dialogue and cooperation among the stakeholders."

Clark et al, 1997

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Figure 13: Tree Tag Examples

Sources and references:

Clark, J.R., Matheny, N.P., Cross, G. And Wake, V. (1997). A Model of Urban Forest Sustainability. Journal of Arboriculture. Volume: 23. Issue: 1

Actions	Link to relevant corporate policies	Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
1. Investigate setting up a local tree awards scheme. 2. Review methods for gauging and measuring this target.	Belfast Open Spaces Strategy Belfast Transport Policy Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan	Medium	1-2. Belfast City Council	TBC - Short to Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	General ambivalence or negative attitudes about trees, which are perceived as neutral at best or as the source of problems. Actions harmful to trees may be taken deliberately.	Trees generally recognized as important and beneficial.	Trees widely acknowledged as providing environmental, social, and economic services – resulting in some action or advocacy in support of the urban forest.	Urban forest recognized as vital to the community's environmental, social, and economic well-being. Widespread public and political support and advocacy for trees, resulting in strong policies and plans that advance the viability and sustainability of the entire urban forest.

C8   Regional Collaboration

As a leader in NI green infrastructure and urban forest management it is important that Belfast reaches out to neighbouring towns, cities, and municipalities to encourage collaboration, co-operation and innovation of the urban forests across the region and the country. In supporting its neighbours, Belfast can help provide much needed guidance and advice by creating a communication network, and in doing so, secure the future of many smaller areas.

The Million Trees Project aims to plant one million native trees across Belfast by 2035. Already, 63,000 trees have been planted in Belfast and the surrounding city regions. This is a vast undertaking which requires regional collaboration and communication to succeed in the given timeframe.

Community initiatives could provide an invaluable opportunity to promote the progress made by the city in terms of urban greening and green infrastructure.

Widely publicising events all year round such as National Tree Week (usually in late November to early December), Arbor Day, planting days (winter time) and outdoor events, will bring focus onto Belfast's urban forest, and encourage visitors from the surrounding areas.

Belfast supports the creation of nature recovery network in order to reverse the decline of biodiversity and enable nature's recovery at scale. The National Trust, the Woodland Trust, Ulster Wildlife, and RSPB, recently partnered on a project to build capacity to deliver a Nature Recovery Network in Northern Ireland. Belfast's urban forest will have an important role to play in the development of the network creating corridors and joining up habitat for wildlife.

Page 01 of 01

Belfast Heat Pack

Cities can be impacted by a range of weather and climate hazards including extreme heat, heavy rainfall and sea level rise. The Heat Pack provides information on how extreme heat events in your city may change this century due to climate change, the impacts, and how to build resilience to extreme heat.

WHY ARE CITIES PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO HEAT?

Built up urban areas have large amounts of tarmac, concrete and other dark surfaces that absorb heat during the day and release it at night causing cities to be warmer than surrounding rural areas. This Urban Heat Island effect can increase already high background temperatures.

Cities generally have less green and blue spaces, compared to more suburban and rural areas, such as parks, forests, ponds and wetlands that act to cool their surroundings.

Heat emissions from transport and air conditioning units add excess heat into urban environments increasing already high background temperatures by ~1°C.

Cities are home to large populations and critical infrastructure such as transport hubs, key government buildings, water and energy supplies. Often these systems are interconnected.

Actions	**Link to relevant corporate policies**	**Priority**	**Responsibility for Action**	**For Review:**
1. *Work with BCC Comms team to be made aware of the plan and its ongoing initiatives.*	National Planning Policy Framework	Low	1. Belfast City Council	5 yrs

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Good	Const. and Wards have no interaction with each other or the broader region. No regional planning or coordination on urban forestry.	Some neighbouring municipalities and regional agencies share similar policies and plans related to trees and urban forest.	Some urban forest planning and cooperation across municipalities and regional agencies.	Widespread regional cooperation resulting in development and implementation of regional urban forest strategy.

C9 International Reputation

To bring Belfast to the forefront of urban forestry both in the UK and internationally, it should aim to become a part of international schemes. The Biophilic City Network (https://www.biophiliccities.org/birmingham-uk) and Tree Cities of the World (https://treecitiesoftheworld.org) are world renowned programs which certify that the city has achieved -and continues to work towards- a diverse and healthy urban forest.

These internationally recognised titles help to promote understanding that the urban forest and the management of it, is of a recognised and high international standard. With the Million Trees Project underway, Belfast's reputation of being a 'green' city is growing, and the city should aspire to join such initiatives.

Not only will Belfast push to achieve these international initiatives, it shall endeavour to lead by example and provide guidance to other cities worldwide. To succeed in this, Belfast should promote its successes and continue to innovate its forest management strategies and GI development plans.

It will do this by working to this plan, actively promoting itself as a 'green' city, continuing to learn and engage with new best practices, sharing knowledge and its successes, such as the Million Trees Campaign.

Figure 14: The Dalai Lama planting a tree in Belfast in 2000

Actions	Link to relevant corporate policies	Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
1. *Research Urban Forest International initiatives, awards and schemes and review which may be suitable for application.*	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development FAO Green Cities Initiative UN Habitat -The New Urban Agenda	Medium	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Moderate	There is no vision - aspiration or consideration of Belfast as an UF of International reputation.	Belfast is sometimes considered for its leadership in international contexts, based on specific efforts and projects.	Belfast has signed up to international programs such as Tree cities of the World and the Biophilic City Network and makes good use of these networks to further its UF program.	Belfast is regarded as an international example and leader in its UFM and is prominent on the international stage as a UF city.

Key Performance Indicator	Current Performance Level				Priority
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**	
C1 – Governance and leadership		Moderate			Medium
C2 – Belfast Council departmental cooperation			Good		Low
C3 – Utilities cooperation		Moderate			Medium
C4 – Green industry cooperation		Moderate			Medium
C5– Involvement of large private and institutional landholders		Moderate			Medium
C6 – Community involvement and neighbourhood action			Good		Low
C7 – General appreciation of trees as a community resource		Moderate			Medium
C8– Regional collaboration			Good		Low
C9 - International Reputation		Moderate			Medium

"Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago"

- Warren Buffet

Targets, Priorities and Actions

3. Sustainable Resource Management Approach

"A co ordinated approach with appropriate upkeep would ensure the City will benefit from a healthier and greener environment."

-Belfast Resident and consultation respondent

R1 Tree and Woodlands Inventory

A tree and woodland inventory involves taking stock of the individual trees within the urban forest. It is time and labour intensive to compile a full tree inventory of all trees, and would be unrealistic to achieve. However, plot/sample based inventories of woodland areas, combined with existing street and park tree inventories are a good place to start.

BCC should continue to build upon its existing tree inventory datasets for parks and street trees. It is important to ensure that data is uniform, both in its methods of collection and its format so that it can easily be compared from ward to ward, and over time.

Compiling the inventories of Belfast's trees into a single portal or system, would be an essential starting point to establish the structure of the urban forest, including the number of trees, diversity of species, and age distribution of council owned trees. This is important as a baseline from which to monitor future progress and from which to manage the tree stock.

Although an i-Tree Eco study has been completed, this gives an overview of the total urban forest both public and private. Though vital, this is not representative of the council managed trees, and therefore decisions on species, health and management may differ. Ideally, in time Belfast will know the complete structure of the urban forest as a whole, and also by ward across the city.

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Actions	Link to relevant corporate policies	Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
1. Review current Tree Management software and update if required with additional data on Street Trees and Woodlands. 2. Investigate wether it will be possible and feasible to include hedges and hedgerows within a tree management system.	UK's Nationally Determined Contribution The UK Climate Change Act The 25 Year Environmental Plan Clean Air Strategy Clean Growth Strategy	Low	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium - Long term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Good	No inventory.	Complete or sample-based inventory of publicly owned trees.	Complete inventory of publicly owned trees and sample-based privately owned trees that is guiding management decisions.	Systematic comprehensive inventory system of entire urban forest – with information tailored to users and supported by mapping in municipality-wide GIS system.

R2 Tree Valuation and Asset Management Approach

Tree valuation is an important part of managing and promoting the urban forest. With the trees valued, local people can understand the value of trees beyond the material worth. With these figures to hand, advocating for trees becomes easier.

Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees (CAVAT) was developed by the London Tree Officers Association (LTOA) and others in 2008. It is one of the principal methods of tree valuation in the UK, and aims to provide a method for managing trees as assets rather than liabilities. It can be used for individual trees or for the tree stock as a whole. Documents related to CAVAT including a user guide and the spreadsheet calculator can be viewed online at: https://ltoa.org.uk/documents-1/capital-asset-value-for-amenity-trees-cavat.

CAVAT is already used and built into policy to ensure trees are viewed positively. In Belfast, a CAVAT valuation was done as part of the i-Tree Eco project, which indicated that the total amenity value of Belfast's trees is around £4.64 billion. Understanding this figure at ward level would be the next step, and an inventory to the council owned trees in each ward would be the first step.

The Species with the highest CAVAT Values are *Acer pseudoplatanus* (Sycamore), *Fagus Sylvatica* (Beech), *Chamaecyparis Lawsoniana* (Lawson's cypress). The most common species of tree in Belfast's urban forest is *Fraxinus excelsior* (ash), 10% of the population in the urban area). The average condition of ash trees surveyed in the urban area was 65%, while the average condition of sycamores surveyed in the urban area was 86%, resulting in their high public amenity value.

The tree with the single highest amenity value is a common beech in the grounds of Queen's University Belfast, with a CAVAT value of £88,000. The tree is in a woodland, has a stem diameter of over 100 cm, and is in good condition.

The CAVAT system is only really appropriate when applied to individual trees that are visible to the public. Furthermore, the i-Tree results are sample based and Belfasts individual woodlands are currently not subject to an asset valuation. These knowledge gaps will be addressed in the future.
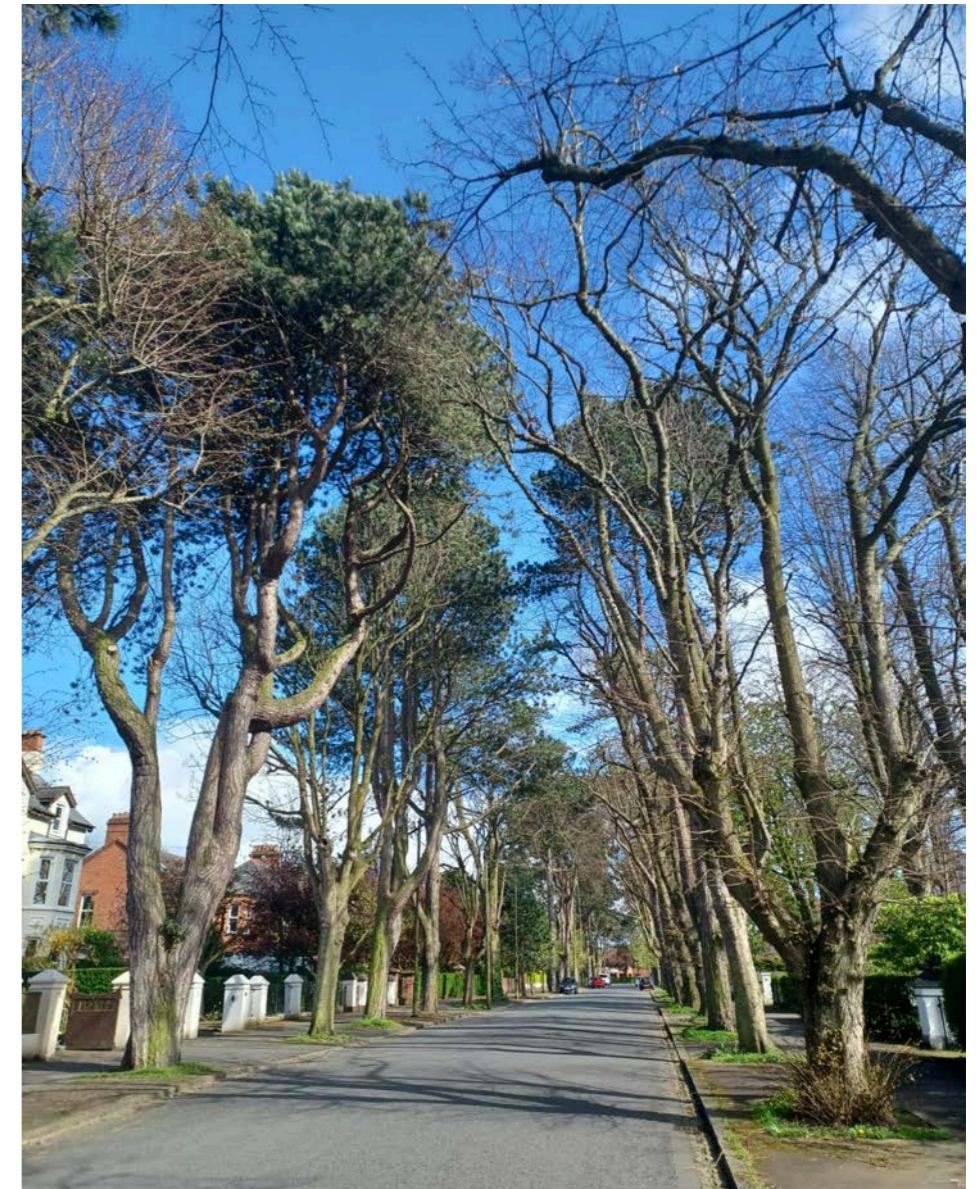
Actions

1. *Add the CAVAT valuation to the council tree inventory system when it is updated.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Open Spaces Strategy

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Low	1-2. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Good	Tree valuation nor assessment management are in place.	Some form of tree valuation is used, at least for key projects involving public trees.	Tree valuation and asset management are implemented across the city, for most public trees.	Tree valuation and asset management are implemented for all public trees - and in some cases also private trees.

R3 Canopy Cover Assessment and Goals

Assessing canopy cover is vital, as this metric is used frequently as a figure which is clear and easy to compare with other areas. Whilst canopy cover is not a thorough study of the health and diversity and therefore overall benefit of the urban forest, it is an important aspect which should not be overlooked simply for its simplicity.

This target involves assessing the existing canopy cover in detail, and setting goals based on reasonable potential canopy cover and achievable steps to maximising cover. This leads into T1-'Relative Tree Canopy Cover'- and would provide the necessary baseline for achieving that target. It is important that any tree canopy target is achievable within a reasonable time frame, and considered within the wider context of the strategy.

Belfast has a target of Carbon net neutrality by 2050, and an increase in canopy cover would contribute immensely. The IUCN Urban Alliance suggest a 30% tree canopy cover target, which has been adopted by many cities around the world. Belfast will adopt this target but needs to set a realistic time frame for when it will be achievable.

It should also be noted that tree planting does not necessarily provide an instant increase to canopy cover; in an urban setting trees are constantly being felled for any number of reasons, so insufficient planting can contribute to making up the deficit without actually increasing canopy cover. Therefore although the Million Trees project will be a much needed boost of Belfasts canopy cover, an assessment of other available plantable space will also need to be carried out.
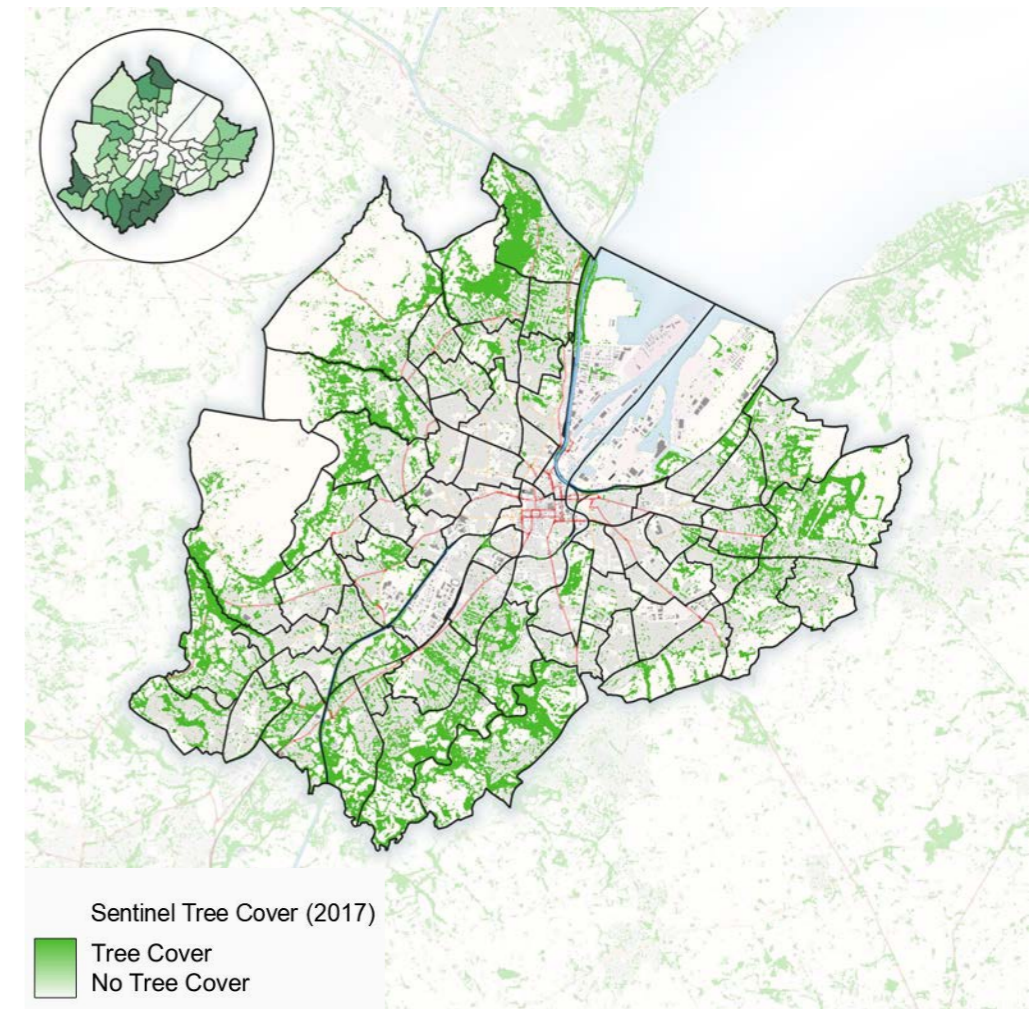

Figure 15: Tree Canopy Cover shown in green across Belfast from Sentinel Satellite data (Inset: Canopy Cover by Ward)

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© contains modified Copernicus Sentinel data (2017), processed by CBK PAN

City	Belfast	London	Bristol	Plymouth	Cambridge	Torbay
Existing Canopy Cover	14.5% (2022)	21% (2015)	18% (2018)	18.5% (2017)	17% (2008)	12% (2011)
2050 Target	30%	30%	30%	20%	19%	20%

Table 3: Comparable Cities' Canopy Cover Estimates and Goals

Actions

1. *Map canopy at the ward level using high resolution data for ward or neighbourhood canopy cover metrics. Where possible differentiate between tree and woodland cover.*

2. *Assess potential plantable space and model canopy growth and planting scenarios to determine suitable timeframe for 30% tree cover.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Transport Policy

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1-2. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium to Long term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Moderate	No assessment or goals.	Low-resolution and/or point-based sampling of canopy cover using aerial photographs or satellite imagery – and limited or no goal-setting.	Complete, detailed, and spatially explicit, high-resolution Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) assessment based on enhanced data (such as LiDAR, Satellite or NTM) – accompanied by comprehensive set of goals by land use and other parameters.	As described for "Good" rating – and all utilized effectively to drive urban forest policy and practice municipality-wide and at neighborhood or smaller management level.

R4 Tree Equity

The urban forest should reflect the diversity of people and cultures at a neighbourhood level, and planting and management should respect the views and values of the many different communities it serves. BCC aims to progress equality in all spheres of social and economic life and empower and engage neighbourhoods.

Urban forests are connected to a range of socio-economic factors, with studies linking canopy cover to health, wealth, education, and crime. Typically, lower income areas have fewer trees, and this inequality should be addressed across Belfast. Lack of tree canopy cover can also be linked to the level of urban intensification and lack of physical space to plant trees (low cost housing with small gardens are not always suitable for trees). Therefore utilising other aspects of the urban forest such as green walls/roofs may be a part of the solution. The benefits of trees should be made available to all people in all areas of the city.

Belfast will recognise that trees and green space should be a right for all people, and environmental exclusion must be avoided.

This target aims to ensure that the planting and management of the urban forest can be focussed in the areas where it will most benefit the local people, by increasing planting in the areas with the lowest canopy cover. Tree management plans in these areas should include community engagement and neighbourhood outreach to maximise the benefits of trees in the area. The multi-faceted meanings of trees to different people should be recognised.

Sources and references:

BCNUEJ, (2021). Policy and Planning Tools for Urban Green Justice-Fighting displacement and gentrification and improving accessibility and inclusiveness to green amenities.

Nesbitt, L., Meitner, M.J., Sheppard, S.R. and Girling, C., (2018). The dimensions of urban green equity: A framework for analysis. Urban forestry & urban greening, 34, pp.240-248.
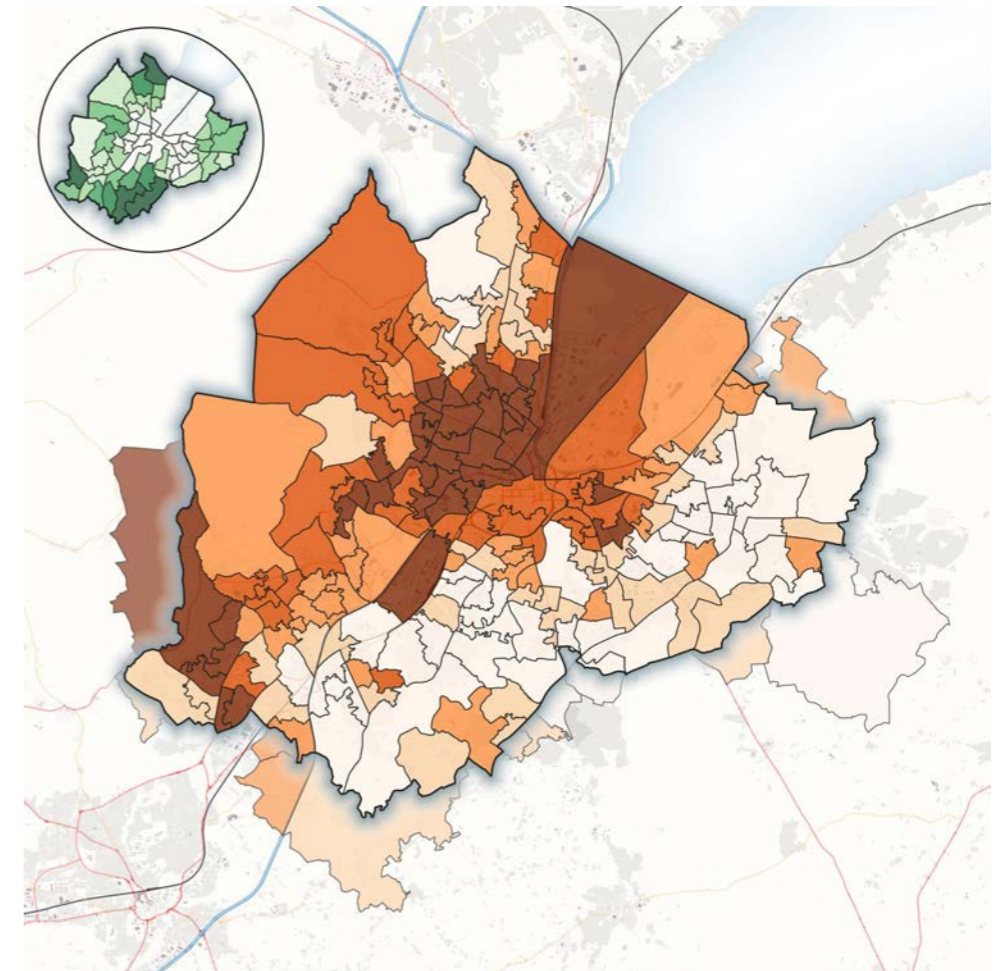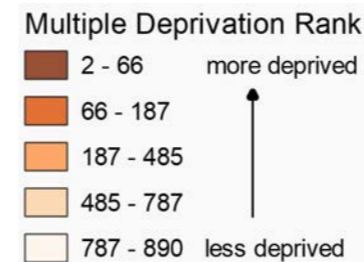

Multiple Deprivation Rank

■	2 - 66	more deprived
■	66 - 187	
■	187 - 485	
□	485 - 787	
□	787 - 890	less deprived

Figure 16: Indices of Multiple Deprivation ranking by ward (Inset: Canopy Cover by Ward)

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Actions

1. *Consider a Tree Equity map for Belfast and focus efforts around tree planting and community engagement in the areas that most need it.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Open Spaces Strategy

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium to long term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	Tree planting and outreach is not determined equitably by canopy cover or need for benefits.	Planting and outreach includes attention to low canopy neighborhoods or areas.	Planting and outreach targets neighbourhoods with low canopy and a high need for tree benefits.	Equitable planting and outreach at the neighbourhood level is guided by strong citizen engagement in those low-canopy/high-need areas.

R5   Reviewing and Improving the Tree Strategy

Belfast is taking a strategic approach to its urban forest, and engaging experts and key stakeholders to help it prepare this Tree Strategy. It follows an action based model more widely used in countries like the US and Canada. The Plan will help Belfast set and work towards a vision for its trees that is sustainable well into the future.

The Tree Strategy outlines a vision for the development of the urban forest. It is area-specific and outlines the aspirations of all stakeholders who enjoy its benefits. It provides a long-term framework in which strategic plans can be developed. Tree-planting programmes are just one element of urban forest management, and long-term management plans are just as important. With an urban forest management plan in place, tree planting programs can be focused and strategised, as well as better guiding the achievement of a long-term vision.

With agreement on an ambitious vision, the Tree Strategy can be divided into management periods, with goals and targets clearly outlined. A series of performance indicators are then be put into place to monitor performance and help progress towards the achievement of goals and the wider vision. It is important that progress is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis, and actions modified as necessary. This way, Belfast can focus on the most relevant and urgent areas going forward.

The Tree Strategy is an ongoing piece of work and this document represents the first step in a new chapter for Belfast's urban forest, and this plan will be subject to ongoing improvement and updating.

For each and every target within the plan further detail will be added, projects will be planned and actioned to take Belfast towards its vision.

Actions

1. *Annual Review of this plan.*

Link to relevant corporate policies

The 25 Year Environmental Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium to long term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	No plan.	Existing plan limited in scope and implementation.	Recent comprehensive plan developed and implemented for publicly owned forest resources, including trees managed intensively (or individually) and those managed extensively, as a population (e.g., trees in natural areas).	Strategic, multi-tiered plan with built-in adaptive management mechanisms developed and implemented for public and private forest resources.

R6   Urban Forestry Funding

Urban forestry in Belfast has largely been funded by Belfast City Council, but it is important to not only secure and grow local municipal funding, but also to expand and diversity finances for urban forestry.

There are several government schemes for funding tree planting of different types, from woodland establishment to urban forestry.

Whilst funding for tree planting is readily available, funding for management and monitoring of the urban forest needs further investigation.

Private-sector funding as well as funding from one-off projects offer additional opportunities. Moreover, as a large share of Belfast's urban forest is owned by private residents and organisations their involvement and support is also essential.

Actions

1. *Complete a Cost Benefit Analysis on Belfasts Urban Forest.*

2. *Ensure Woodlands are included in any budgeting and resource planning.*

3. *Cost up the actions arising from this strategy and seek budget to enable it to be actioned.*

4. *Aim to secure a proportion of funding in the next financial year from private sources (including partnership projects eg - Million Trees).*

Link to relevant corporate policies
The 25 Year Environmental Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Low	1-4. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium to long term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Good	Little or no dedicated funding.	Funding only for emergency, reactive management.	Funding sufficient for some proactive management based on urban forest management plan.	Sustained funding from public and private sources to fully implement comprehensive urban forest management plan.

R7 Urban Forestry Program Capacity and Staffing

Adequate staffing means there are enough staff with the correct training and experience to carry out all necessary tasks relating to the implementation and day-to-day running of the urban forestry programme. This may mean hiring new staff or arranging further training for current staff.

This includes anyone involved in the delivery of tree management and implementation, e.g., Tree Wardens and other volunteers, Tree Officers, Parks and countryside staff, etc.

One of the key limiters of this target is money, therefore fully costing the Tree Strategy and establishing a dedicated and coordinated budget is the first step.

A fully costed budget to deliver this plan can be used to help obtain the necessary funding to deliver the plan. This funding would then allow for the important longer term work, such as researching metrics for biodiversity, integrating hedges and hedgerows into the tree management software as well as building the trees wardens scheme and volunteer network too

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Actions

1. *After costing this plan draft up the program capacity including staffing.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
The 25 Year Environmental Plan
Clean Air Strategy

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Low	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium to long term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Good	Team severely limited by lack of personnel and/or access to adequate equipment. Unable to perform adequate maintenance, let alone implement new goals.	Team limited by lack of trained staff and/or access to adequate equipment.	Team able to implement many of the goals and objectives of the urban forest management plan.	Team able to implement all of the goals and objectives of the urban forest management plan.

R8   Tree Establishment Planning and Implementation

Tree planting is more complex than most people realise; it is more than simply sticking trees in the ground. In order to ensure the trees survive, thrive and reach their full potential in cities, the right tree species must be selected, be planted in the right place, be planted for the right reasons, and planted and maintained in the right way. This way, the trees are given the best chance to survive and avoid being removed again further down the line.

Right reason- Tree planting should focus not just on quantity, but also quality. There is a big push to increase the number of trees planted, but if that is the only goal then how much good will it be when the don't survive to maturity? Belfast want to make sure that these trees can benefit future generations by mitigating climate change, improving biodiversity, and enhancing health and well-being. With this in mind, tree management and post-planting care is vital to reaching the goals of Belfast's Tree Strategy.

Right place- Location is key when planting, particularly in cities where conditions can be less than ideal. Trees require space to grow, both above ground and below. Too close to a building and the tree may block light from windows or interfere with foundations causing subsidence, too close to another tree and there won't be enough root space or enough light. Power lines, drains, pavements and roads can all be adversely affected if the tree isn't given the space it needs.

Right tree- The benefits and drawbacks of different species must be considered, including site suitability, climate tolerance, size, rooting characteristics, aesthetics (canopy, leaves, flowers, etc.), ecosystem service provision, biodiversity, and more.

Right way- How the tree should be planted may vary depending on where the tree is, but all trees need the same essentials; good soil volume for root establishment; water, particularly for young trees which may struggle in hot cities; air and support to keep it upright whilst its roots establish; protection from damage, and maintenance. Hard paved impermeable surfaces present challenges which trees are not adapted to deal with, such as soil compaction, nutrient recycling and reduced water infiltration. These issues should be considered to help establish a healthy, long-lasting urban forest.
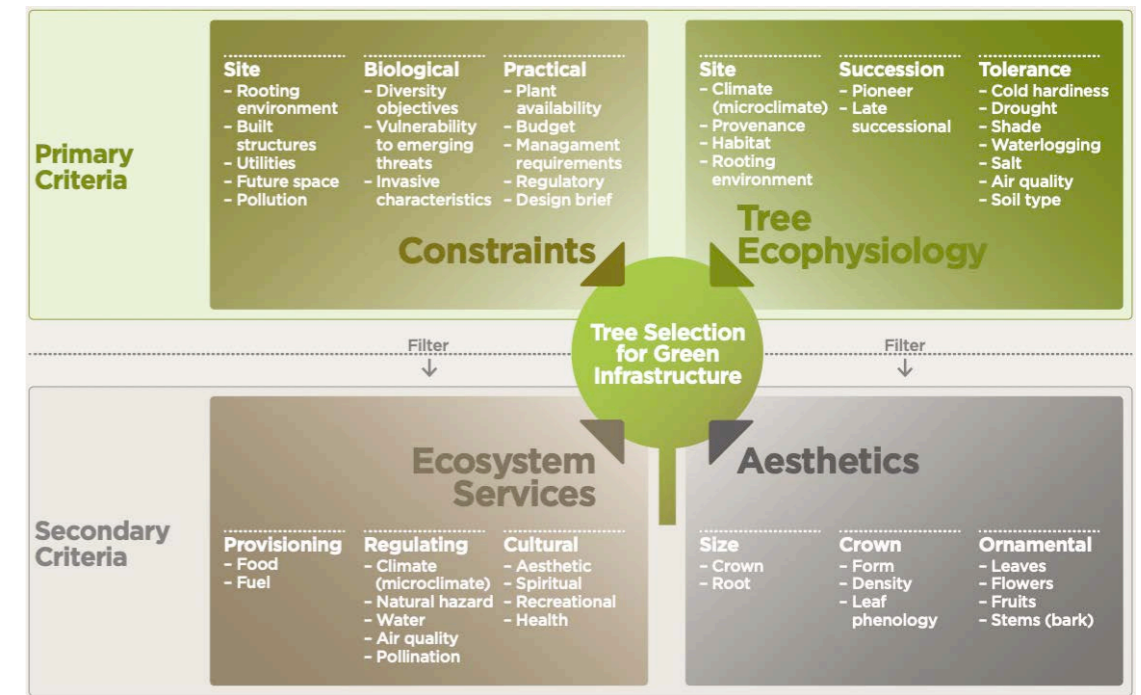

Figure 17: Trees and Design Action Group species selection criteria guide

Sources and references:

Trees and Design Action Group. (2018). Tree Species Selection For Green infrastructure : A Guide for Specifiers: https://www.tdag.org.uk/tree-species-selection-for-green-infrastructure.html

Actions	Link to relevant corporate policies	Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
1. *Complete a comprehensive prioritised tree planting plan and opportunity map.* 2. *Draft up SMART targets for the planting plan including 3rd party planting initiatives.*	UK's Nationally Determined Contribution The UK Climate Change Act The 25 Year Environmental Plan Clean Air Strategy	Medium	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Short term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	Little or no tree planting; tree establishment is ad hoc.	Some tree planting and establishment occurs, but with limited overall municipality-wide planning and post-planting care.	Tree planting plan is guided by municipality-wide goals, with some post-planting establishment care.	Comprehensive tree establishment plan is guided by needs derived from canopy and other assessments, maintains species and age diversity, includes both planting and young tree care, and is sufficient to make progress toward canopy cover objectives.

R9   Growing Site Suitability

This target links to the R8 target, specifically on choosing the right tree. Often trees are selected purely for their aesthetic attributes, however this can mean that the the tree suffers if the site conditions have not been taken into account.

Site suitability should be investigated from the ground up, starting with soil. Urban soils are often very poor or non existent, so it is vital to know what is there and what the tree will need before it is planted. Other site considerations include the amount of light, i.e. if the tree will be in permanent shade from buildings or not; the amount of impermeable surface surrounding the site which would limit the amount of water infiltrating through to the roots, and the amount of space both above ground and below ground to facilitate tree growth. Once these things have been assessed, the right tree can be planted in the space.

Guidelines should be put into place for all tree planting, to ensure that trees can fulfil their maximum potential and provide the maximum benefit for the city. In particular, trees must be a priority in planning and development rather than an afterthought, to ensure they are given enough space to mature. This should be extended for both public and private development and consistently enforced. This links to R10-'Tree Protection Policy Development and Enforcement'.

Sources and references:

Trees & Design Action Group, (2014). Trees in Hard Landscapes; A Guide for Delivery.

A. Hirons & H. Sjoman, (2019). Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure: A Guide for Specifiers

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Actions

1. *Provide tailored tree planting advice to different stakeholders (corporate, utility, community etc) on tree planting to include a list of 'preferred' species, size, planting and maintenance requirements. 04*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Open Spaces Strategy

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Short to medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Moderate	Trees selected and planted without consideration of site conditions.	Appropriate tree species are considered in site selection.	Municipality-wide guidelines in place for the improvement of planting site conditions and selection of suitable species.	All trees planted in sites with adequate soil quality and quantity, and with sufficient growing space and overall site conditions to achieve their genetic potential and thus provide maximum ecosystem services.

R10   Tree Protection Policy Development and Enforcement

City trees are sometimes viewed as irritating and costly, dropping leaves on lawns, causing blocked drains, and damaging foundations and pipes with their roots. They may also be considered hazardous especially if they are not managed. For these reasons and more, people may want to remove trees from public land or private properties.

However, healthy trees can and should be protected, primarily due to the many benefits they provide to society. Belfast seeks to protect trees where appropriate. Conservation areas (CA) and Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) (https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Documents/Guide-to-protected-trees) are just one example of the councils duty to protect trees. Trees may also be protected as part of planning conditions associated with planning approval. Any unauthorised works to trees protected by a TPO, CA (or planning condition) are dealt with by planning enforcement officers when they deem it appropriate. Planning enforcement officers should also liaise with the tree officers, who can provide more detailed guidance and supporting information on tree protection in development.

To carry out works to a tree protected by a TPO, consent from BCC is needed through submitting a tree works application. To carry out works to a tree in a conservation area, a six-week notice of intention must be submitted to the BCC as per the NI Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 – Chapter 3, section 127. BCC can then either accept the notice or make a TPO.

Policies and guidelines set out the framework for planning and development and these apply to all sectors (public, private, voluntary, etc). New policies and guidance are subject to community consultation and are published and promoted on council platforms to raise wider awareness. Copies of all council policies and guidelines can be found on the Belfast City Council website.'

All TPOs are outlined and available to view online by visiting the BCC website Local View Mapping System available online here:

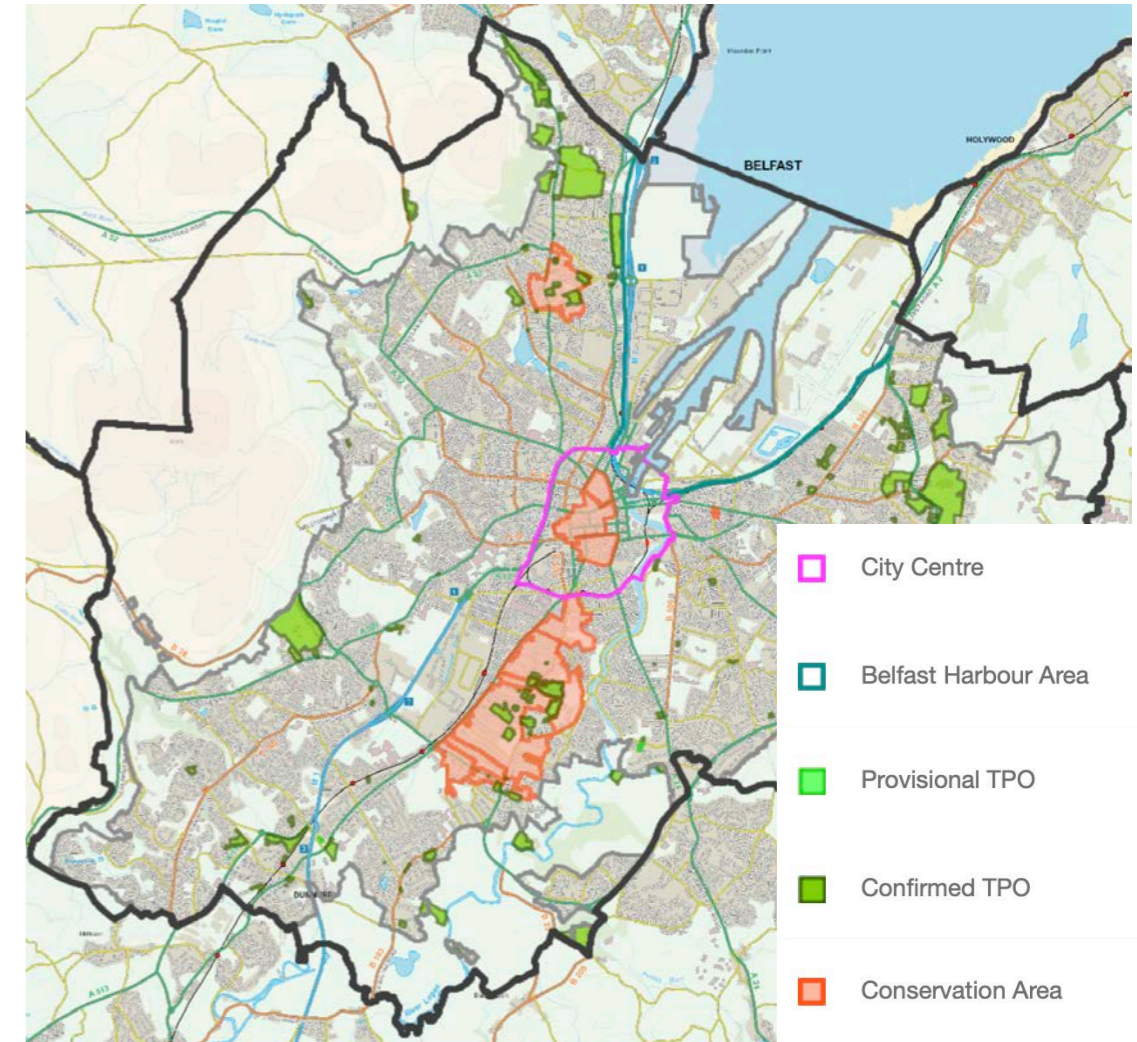https://explore.belfastcity.gov.uk/connect/analyst/mobile/#/main?mapcfg=TPOs and CAs

Legend:
- City Centre
- Belfast Harbour Area
- Provisional TPO
- Confirmed TPO
- Conservation Area

Figure 18: Belfast's interactive online TPO map

Actions

1. *Adoption and implementation of LDP tree policies and publications of additional planning guidance*

2. *Ongoing review of existing Tree Preservation Orders.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Open Spaces Strategy
Belfast Transport Policy

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium to long term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Good	No tree protection policy.	Policies in place to protect public trees and employ industry best management practices, but inconsistently enforced.	Policies and practices in place to protect public and private trees, generally enforced.	Integrated city-wide policies and practices to protect public and private trees, consistently enforced and supported by significant deterrents.

R11   Maintenance of Publicly Owned Trees

Intensively managed trees include street trees and solitary park trees, which require more care and attention due to the additional stresses and challenges of city life. In order to ensure the safety of public trees, routine maintenance must be carried out. This includes planned cyclical inspections and appropriate maintenance. Belfast does not currently hold a full inventory of its publicly owned trees, so this is the first step in ensuring that all trees are maintained. This can also help when recording maintenance schedules and works varied out.

The frequency of land use and target value are key drivers for inspection frequency, therefore an understanding of public land use may be a useful tool in establishing an inspection rota. This could help prioritise monitoring and management.

Monitoring trees could help prevent the spread of diseases, the likelihood of falling limbs, and resolve issues such as roots heaving pavements, or tree guards and stakes being left too long and causing extensive damage.

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Examples of street tree maintenance and pruning

Actions

1. *Develop an overarching audit regime for Tree Risk Management.*

2. *Implement training and standardisation of tree maintenance methods.*

3. *Draft up SMART targets for tree maintenance including 3rd party planting initiatives.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
Belfast Transport Policy

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Low	1-3. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Good	No maintenance of publicly owned trees, or on a reactive basis only.	Publicly owned trees receive only periodic inspection and maintenance.	Publicly owned trees are inspected and proactively maintained on a cyclical basis.	All publicly owned, intensively managed trees are routinely and thoroughly maintained on ongoing basis according to a comprehensive management plan.

R12 Management of Publicly Owned Natural Areas

Extensively managed trees are trees in parks, woodlands and other natural areas which are often allowed to grow more naturally and freely than intensively managed trees. These areas still require management to provide a healthy and diverse green space. They are often used by the public and therefore risk management is a key consideration. The frequency of land use and target value are key drivers for inspection frequency, and any inspection rota should accommodate this to prioritise monitoring and management.

A substantial and highly-valued part of Belfast's urban forest is found in these areas, and efforts should be made to develop and implement good practices, and work in close partnership with land owners, charities, and volunteers.

Currently around two thirds of these parks are already subject of 3 year management plans and work is ongoing with the woodland officers to bring these other natural areas into management or positive non intervention too. Monitoring and managing these areas could help prevent the spread of diseases, reduce the level of risk, and resolve other issues associated with 'unmanaged' areas.
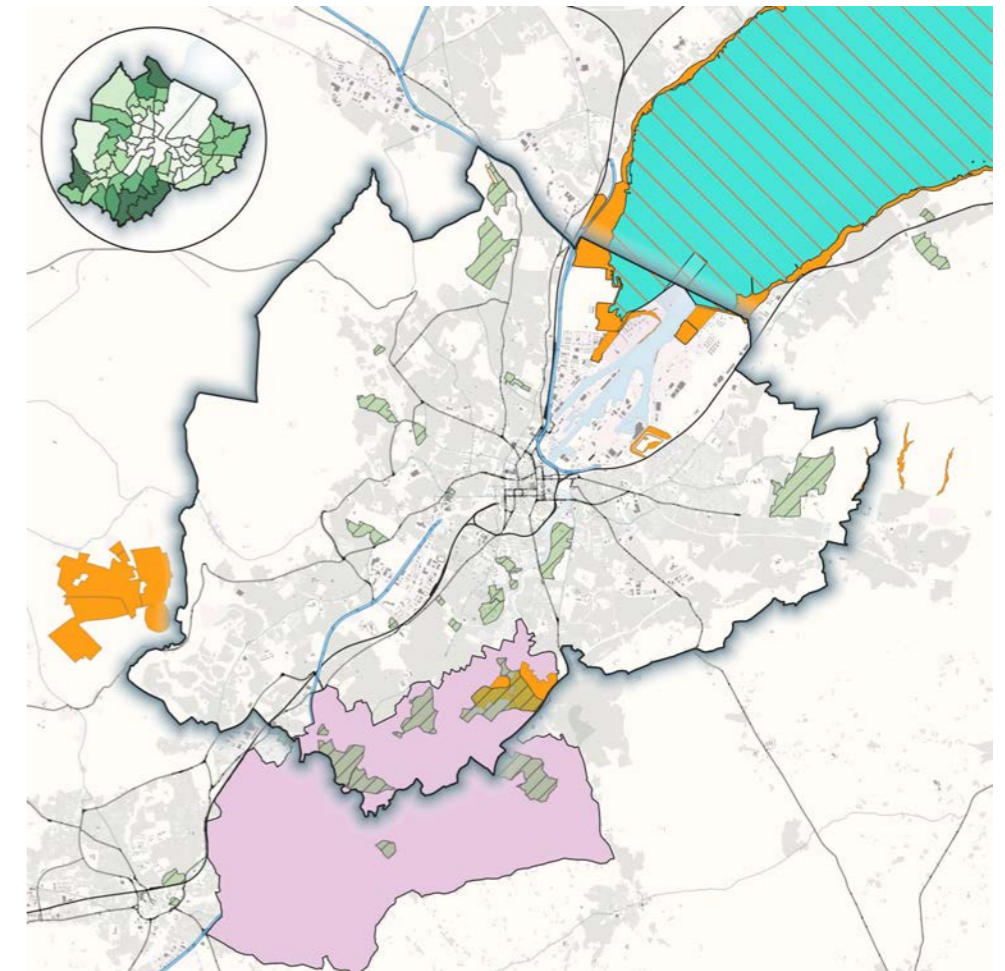

Statutory Designations
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Areas of Special Scientific Interest
- Historic Parks and Gardens
- Marine Protected Areas
- Special Areas of Conservation
- Special Protection Area

Figure 19: Map of Belfasts Nature Reserves, SSSI's and other public areas

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Actions

1. *Continue to map and identify public owned areas, and refine so that there is a consistent idea of what and where public green space is.*

2. *Continue to develop the current system for recording trees in woodlands and groups, assign a management unit to each and develop an appropriate management overarching plan (significant areas may also have or require an individual plan).*

Link to relevant corporate policies	Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
National Planning Policy Framework	Medium	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	No natural areas management plans or implementation in effect.	Only reactive management efforts to facilitate public use (e.g., hazard abatement, trail maintenance).	Management plan in place for each publicly owned natural area to facilitate appropriate public use.	Management plan for each publicly owned natural area focused on sustaining and, where possible, improving overall ecological integrity (i.e., structure and function) – while facilitating appropriate public use.

R13   Tree Risk Management

Risk management is vital in an urban setting; the number of people interacting with trees on a daily basis increases the likelihood of incidents involving trees. Risks of trees include falling branches, toxic/poisonous leaves, berries seeds etc., pollen (inducing hay-fever), roots uplifting pavements (trip hazards) and pests (i.e. Oak processionary moth).

These risks must be assessed and a strategy implemented to minimise the risk to people. Naturally, one of the best ways to reduce risk is to avoid certain situations during species selection and planting. Avoid planting trees with toxic fruits in areas frequented by children and dog-walkers. Some pests can be eliminated before they become a problem using pesticides/fungicides and biological controls. Giving trees a reasonable amount of space and deep soil around the base to allow roots to spread comfortably will reduce the likelihood of upheaval.

Existing trees and new plantings should be monitored to spot these issues early and prevent any further risks developing. A system should be implemented to ensure that all trees have a routine assessment at regular intervals, and methods of risk reduction and management are well known and well executed. Zoning is a practice whereby landowners and managers define areas of land according to levels of use. This prioritises the most used areas, and contributes to a cost-effective approach to tree inspection, focusing resources where most needed. Inspection methods and frequency may vary depending on whether the management strategy is intensive or extensive.

Further detail on Tree risk management can be found in Appendix V.

Sources and references:

National Tree Safety Group. (2011). Common sense risk management of trees. Forestry Commission

Actions	Link to relevant corporate policies
1. BCC to move from a 5 year to 3 year inspection cycle. 2. Subject to DFI approval, street tree surveys will move from a 5 year to a 2 year inspection cycle.	Belfast Transport Policy

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Low	1-2. Belfast City Council and Department for Infrastructure	TBC - Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Optimal	No tree risk assessment or risk management program. Response is on a reactive basis only.	Level I (limited visual assessment) inspection and follow-up conducted periodically.	Level II (basic assessment) conducted periodically, resulting in scheduled follow-ups.	Level II (basic assessment) conducted routinely, according to defined cycle and intensive follow-up (i.e., priorities and timelines for mitigation established based on the characterisation of risk).

R14   Biosecurity

Biosecurity refers to the need to prevent new pests and diseases being introduced into the UK from abroad. This measure is necessary to stop the spread of potentially devastating organisms and protect forestry, agriculture and horticulture. In recent history, the introduction of Dutch Elm Disease (*Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*) killed 20 million mature English elm trees between its introduction in the late 1960's and 1980. By 1990, this figure had risen to 25 million, over 85% of the British population. Now, Ash Dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is sweeping through the country and will likely kill off 80% of ash trees across the UK. In Belfast 11.3% of trees would be vulnerable to Ash Dieback with an amenity value worth £242 million. Greater intra-diversity in Belfast's tree population would make the urban forest more resilient to loosing such a valuable resource.

These diseases and others will continue to have a profound effect on trees and woodlands in NI. Native tree species provide vital habitat for many other species and without them there would be a huge ecological deficit.

The importation of trees, particularly large landscape trees, from across Europe and elsewhere can increase the risk of diseases being introduced to the UK. The Plant Health Regulation and Official Controls Regulation imposed by DAERA provides information and guidance in relation to management and reduction of impacts from pests and diseases within NI. Stringent importation rules are in place to attempt to mitigate this risk factor, and actions needed to protect plant health are set out in 'The Plant Health (Official Controls and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020'. Found online here: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2020/293/contents/made

Belfast must take responsibility for the sourcing of its trees, and actively work to eliminate pests and diseases from its urban forest and prevent new diseases becoming prolific.
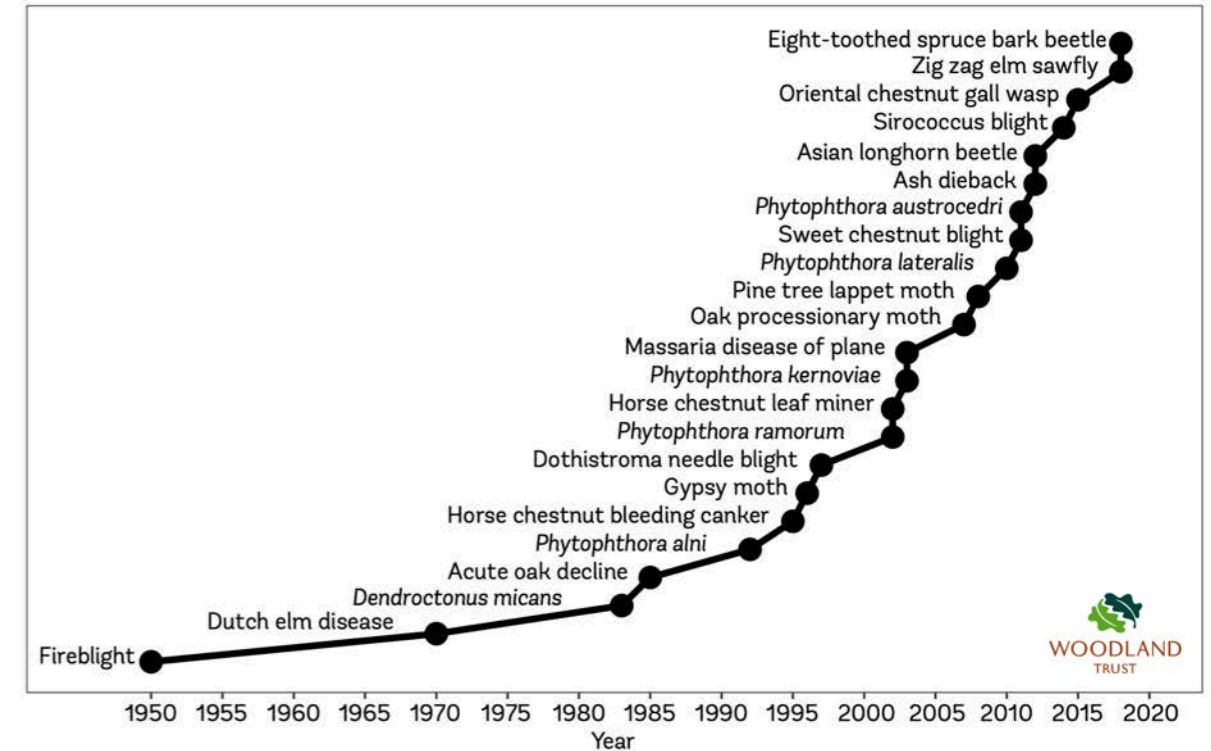
Figure 20: Tree pest and disease introduction in the UK

Sources and references:

Brasier, C.M., 1996. New horizons in Dutch elm disease control;

Defra, 2014; Defra, 2018. A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment;

The Woodland Trust: State of the UK's Woods and Trees 2021.

Actions

1. *BCC will follow current Biosecurity best practice for the urban forest; and will continue ensure that biosecurity measures are included in all tenders for supply of trees.*

2. *Support local community tree nurseries and seed collection.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
National Planning Policy Framework
The 25 Year Environmental Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1-3. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Moderate	No biosecurity strategy nor actions in place for urban trees.	Some consideration of biosecurity aspects, e.g., through pest management.	Biosecurity management actions are integrated in urban forestry.	Biosecurity strategy developed and implemented, with emphasis on urban trees. Integration of this into day-to-day urban forest management.

R15   Urban Wood and Green Waste Utilisation

Trees are a resource in many ways, from providing ecosystem services like carbon storage and pollution removal to bearing fruits and supporting wildlife. Often when a tree dies the branches are chipped and the bigger pieces are used for woodfuel or go to landfill.

However a tree's value as a resource does not necessarily end when the tree dies or requires felling.

Although much of Belfasts green waste is used for composting there is potential to generate income through the by products of urban tree management.

Belfast will asses the potential of the arisings from the management of its urban forest for composting, district heating schemes, urban forest food and timber.

Figure 21: Uses of urban wood

Actions

1. *Commission a feasibility study on utilising Urban Wood and Green Waste.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
The 25 Year Environmental Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	No utilisation plan; wood and other green waste goes to landfill with little or no recycling and reuse.	While most green waste does not go to landfill, uses are limited to chips or mulch.	The majority of green waste is reused or recycled – for energy, products, and other purposes beyond chips or mulch.	Comprehensive plan and processes in place to utilise all green waste one way or another, to the fullest extent possible.

R16 Native Vegetation

The urban forest is a diverse place, consisting of a range of trees and plants from all over the world. Whilst diversity is key to a healthy treescape, native plants should be selected above non-native species whenever appropriate. Native species of trees, shrubs, fungi, ferns, insects, mammals, birds and more have evolved together in the UK, each finding and filling an ecological niche in which to thrive. The balance between species in an ecosystem is delicate, and just one missing link could tip the system out of balance.

Trees provide habitats for a whole range of species. In the UK, English oak (*Quercus robur*) supports more organisms than any other tree; more than 1,000 insect species have been identified to date on oaks in central Europe, with at total of 2,300 different species relying oak in the UK. Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is frequently used as a nesting site for birds such as the redstart, nuthatch and owls, and the bark is important for certain lichen due to its pH. Without native trees, other native species may struggle to find suitable habitats and therefore suffer.

In Northern Ireland, areas of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) are protected by the Forest Service. Unfortunately, these woodlands are now represented by very small fragmented remnants of woodland that once covered most of the country. Only three types of Semi Natural Woodland can be found today; upland oakwoods, upland mixed ashwoods, and wet woodlands. Though these environments are crucial to the overall wellbeing of NI's natural capital, urban forests are very different environments from ancient woodlands, and therefore tree selection should be carefully considered.

Sources and references:

PuRpOsE: Protect Oak Ecosystems, 2019. https://protectouroaks.wordpress.com/work-packages/wp4/purpose-impact-event/

https://herbaria.plants.ox.ac.uk/bol/ancientoaksofengland/distribution

The Woodland Trust. (2022) Ancient Tree Inventory - Tree Search Belfast. Available online: https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/tree-search/?v=2086686&ml=map&z=13&nwLat=54.61186225896415&nwLng=-6.073785637817419&seLat=54.53902816504335&seLng=-5.77938637634281
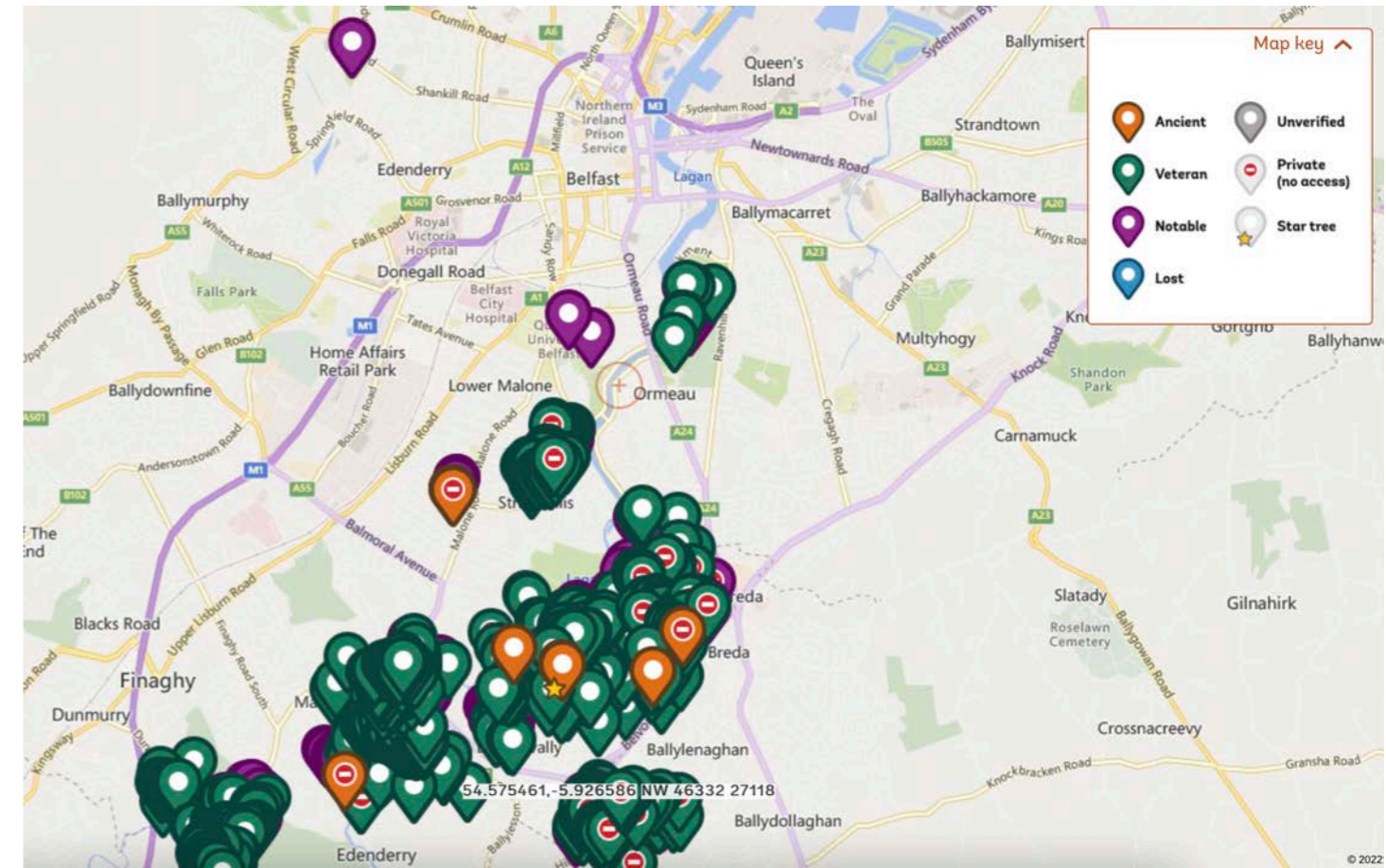

Figure 22: Ancient trees around Belfast from the Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory

Actions	Link to relevant corporate policies	Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
1. *Discuss appropriate quantifiable targets for native vegetation and review this with relevant officers.*	FAO Guidelines on Urban and Peri-urban Forestry	High	1. Belfast City Council	TBC - Medium term project

| Performance level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Good	No coordinated focus on native vegetation.	Voluntary use of native species on publicly and privately owned lands; invasive species are recognised.	Use of native species is encouraged on a project-appropriate basis in all areas; invasive species are recognised and discouraged on public and private lands.	Native species are widely used on a project-appropriate basis.

R17   Research and Development

Belfast's comprehensive tree strategy is the first of its kind in Northern Ireland. This puts Belfast in a unique position to coordinate research into the management of its urban forest as a whole. Developing a working relationship with strong research institutions is an excellent way to further improve understanding of the urban forest and its management, not just in Belfast, but across Northern Ireland and the UK.

Research institutions such as the Nevin Economic Research Institute and universities may have access to additional funding, and be able to commit more time which could help Belfast to achieve the targets, priorities and actions set out in this action plan. They can support urban forestry in the city e.g., by engaging both researchers and students, offering the mutual benefit of developing Belfasts urban forest in a learning lab.

In addition to this, efforts should be made to identify relevant international research that can support Belfast urban forestry program, for example by engaging in international networks like the International Society of Arboriculture, Tree Cities of the World, UN Green Cities network and the Biophilic Cities Network.
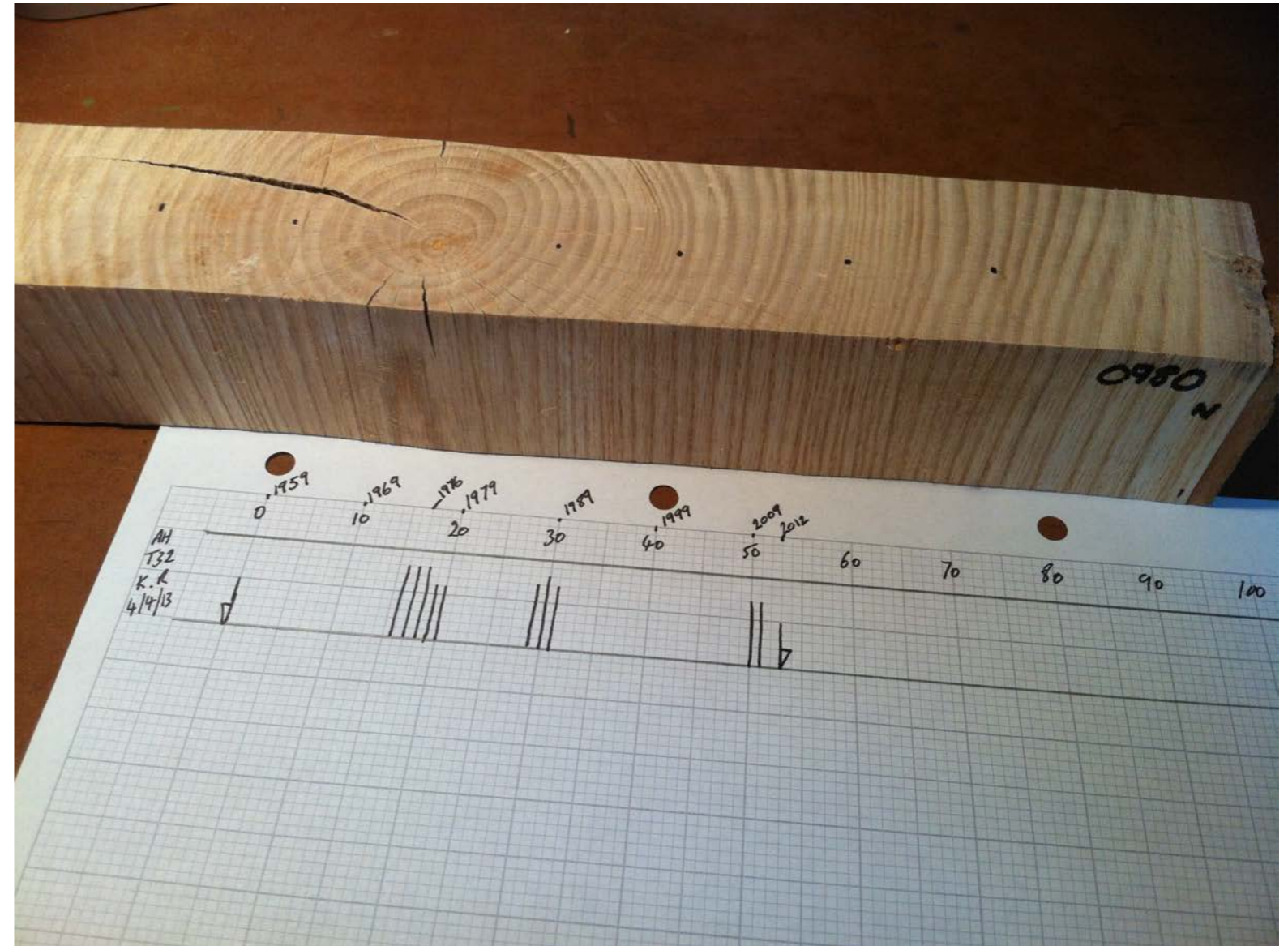
Actions

1. *Liaise with Universities, Forest Research and other agencies on potential joint research projects.*

2. *Create a research agenda that will identify work packages that could go to University students and depts etc.*

Link to relevant corporate policies
The 25 Year Environmental Plan

Priority	Responsibility for Action	For Review:
Medium	1-2. Belfast City Council	TBC - Long term project

Current Performance Level	Performance Indicators			
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**
Moderate	No coordinated focus on research.	Some coordinated focus on research, and participation in / contracting R&D on a case-by-case basis.	Frequent coordination and assigning of research and development in support of urban forestry.	Belfast has a clearly defined agenda for research which it requires to help further its ambitions under the Tree Strategy. It is engaged with other leading institutions on research programs.

Key Performance Indicator	Current Performance Level				Priority
	Low	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Optimal**	
R1 – Tree and woodlands inventory			Good		Low
R2 – Tree valuation and asset management approach			Good		Low
R3 – Canopy cover assessment and goals		Moderate			Medium
R4 – Tree equity		Moderate			Medium
R5 – Reviewing and improving the Tree Strategy		Moderate			Medium
R6 – Urban forestry funding			Good		Low
R7 – Urban forestry program capacity and staffing			Good		Low
R8 – Tree establishment planning and implementation		Moderate			Medium
R9– Growing site suitability		Moderate			Medium
R10 – Tree protection policy development and enforcement			Good		Medium
R11 – Maintenance of publicly owned trees			Good		Low
R12 – Management of publicly owned natural areas		Moderate			Medium
R13 – Tree risk management				Optimal	Low
R14 – Biosecurity		Moderate			Medium
R15 – Urban wood and green waste utilisation		Moderate			Medium
R16 – Native vegetation			Good		HIgh
R17 – Research and Development		Moderate			Medium
R18 – Open Urban Forest data and Web-map	Low				High

"The development of a physiology that made man possible was made possible by trees... that, is our debt"""

- J.S Collins

Section 5
Consultee Feedback

"Tree planting is important, but in the right place. Trees need to be valued and cared for. Education around urban and suburban trees needs to be prioritised."

-Belfast Resident and consultation respondent

Introduction and Background

As an integral part of this strategy, public consultation was sought, in order to gather opinions from a wide section of the community on how trees in Belfast are perceived and managed. The process was undertaken in 2 distinct phases. The 1st phase included an online public survey to gather opinions before any of the strategy was written, helping to inform its scope and direction, whilst the 2nd phase was a series of workshops held in each district of the city after the draft had been presented. This was in order to gather feedback on the strategy and make a series of minor changes.

Phase 1 of the consultation, the public opinion survey, consisted of around 20 questions with quick, selectable answers and additional space for free text on each. Feedback was overwhelming, which saw one of the greatest responses Belfast City had seen in recent times, with 615 respondents taking part and 200 pages of comments.

A key result of the 1st phase highlighted the main themes that members of the public want the Council to focus on. These are:

Environmental and climate change concerns

Protecting Belfast's Tree's, woodlands, and hedges for future generations

Producing a comprehensive tree strategy for the city and moving forward with its delivery

Concerns regarding tree felling, tree management, health and safety, woodland, and hedgerow maintenance

Tree provision and planting to ensure equality of distribution across the city

Planning advice and concerns regarding trees

Biodiversity and concerns for native species

Phase 2, the roadshow, took the completed tree strategy out to the communities in Belfast. City staff were on hand to demonstrate the strategy and request feedback on the draft document. Although it was a much more concise consultation with 5 questions - 119 respondents left their views with an extra 30 pages of comments.
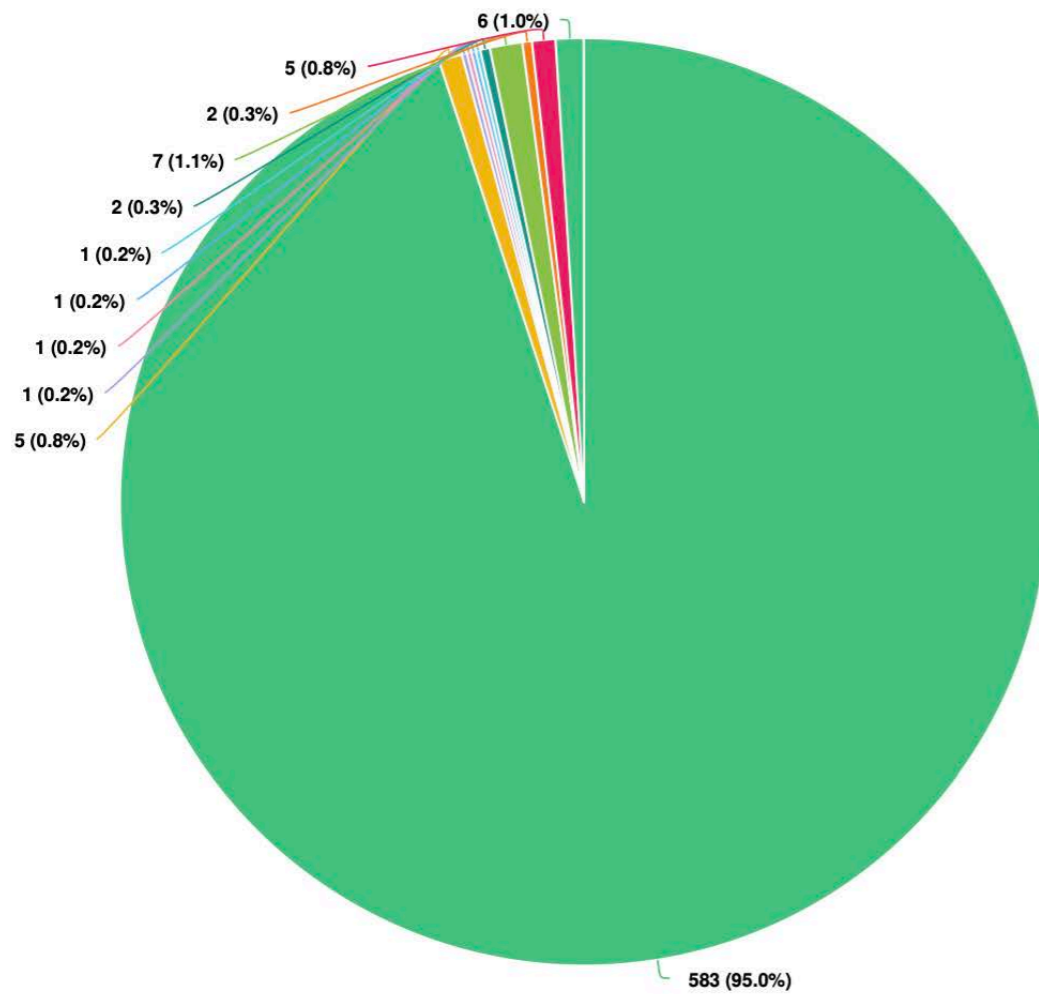
It was very encouraging to see the engagement relating to the creation of a tree strategy explored in Phase 1, becoming overwhelming support for the content of this document in Phase 2.

Officers of Belfast City Council launch the Belfast Tree Strategy Public Consultation - Joe Higginson, Woodland and Recreation Officer (Left) and Alan McHaffie, Senior Woodland and Recreation Officer (Right)
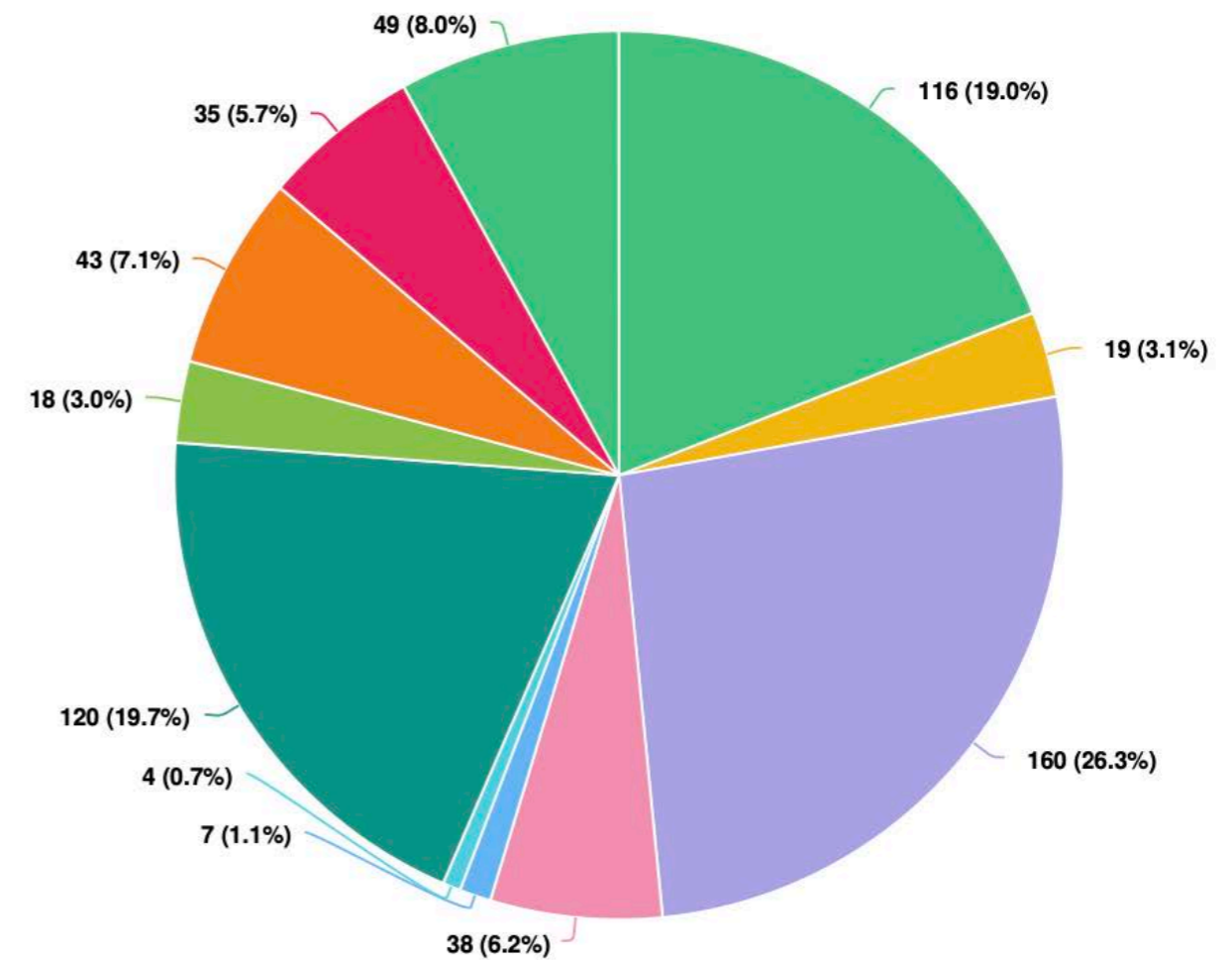
Responses to Phase 1

Q1: Please tell us about yourself (select one option), I am responding as:

Q2: In which area of Belfast do you live ? (District Electoral Area)

6 (1.0%)
5 (0.8%)
2 (0.3%)
7 (1.1%)
2 (0.3%)
1 (0.2%)
1 (0.2%)
1 (0.2%)
1 (0.2%)
5 (0.8%)
583 (95.0%)

Question options

- A member of the public
- A land owner
- A land manager
- A farmer
- A forester
- An association
- A professional body
- Researcher or scientist
- A developer
- An environmental non-government organisation
- Other (please explain)

49 (8.0%)
116 (19.0%)
35 (5.7%)
43 (7.1%)
19 (3.1%)
18 (3.0%)
120 (19.7%)
160 (26.3%)
4 (0.7%)
7 (1.1%)
38 (6.2%)

Question options

- Balmoral [Belvoir, Finaghy, Malone, Musgrave and Upper Malone]
- Blackmountain [Andersonstown, Ballymurphy, Beechmount, Colin Glen, Falls Park, Shaw's Road and Turf Lodge]
- Botanic [Blackstaff, Central, Ormeau, Stranmillis and Windsor]
- Castle [Bellevue, Cavehill, Chichester Park, Duncairn, Fortwilliam and Innisfayle]
- Collin [Dunmurry, Ladybrook, Lagmore, Poleglass, Stewartstown and Twinbrook]
- Court [Ballygomartin, Clonard, Falls, Forth River, Shankill and Woodvale]
- Lisnasharragh [Cregagh, Hillfoot, Merok, Orangefield, Ravenhill and Rosetta]
- Oldpark [Ardoyne, Ballysillan, Cliftonville, Ligoniel, New Lodge, and Water Works]
- Ormiston [Belmont, Garnerville, Gilnahirk, Knock, Sandown, Shandon and Stormont]
- Titanic [Ballymacarrett, Beersbridge, Bloomfield, Connswater, Sydenham and Woodstock]
- I don't live in Belfast

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Q3: Thinking abut Belfast today, do you think there are too many, too few or about the right amount of trees across Belfast?
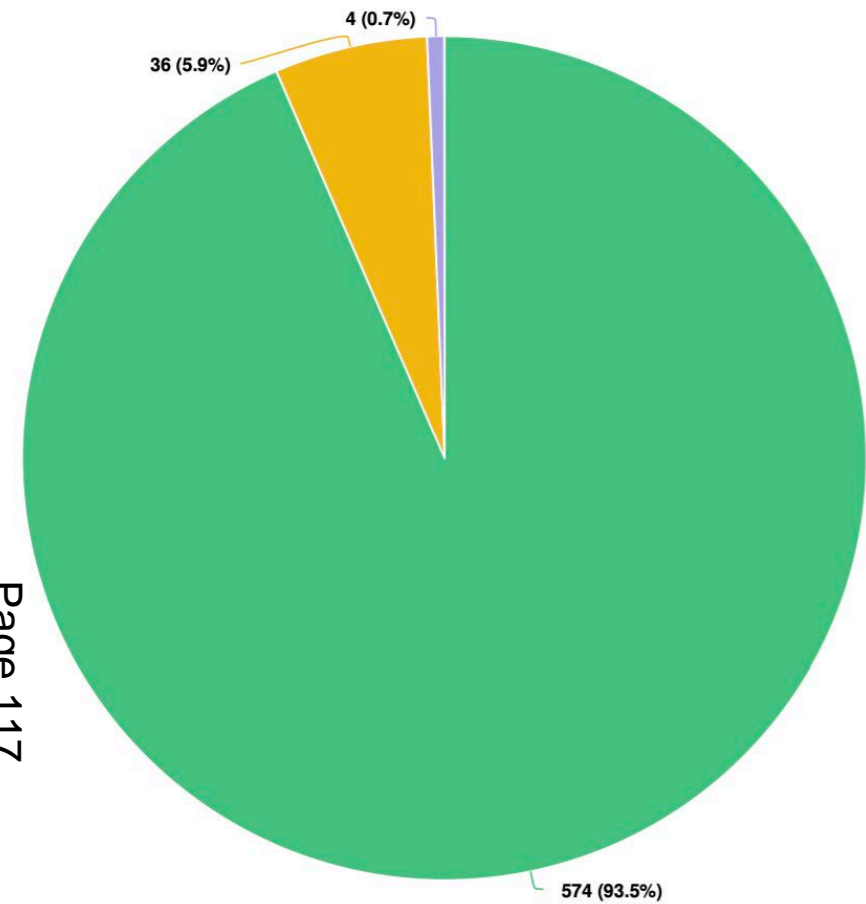
4 (0.7%)
36 (5.9%)

574 (93.5%)

Question options
- Too few trees
- The right amount of trees
- Too many trees

Q4: Thinking specifically about your neighbourhood, do you think there are too many, too few or about the right amount of trees in your neighbourhood?

12 (2.0%)
114 (18.6%)

488 (79.5%)

Question options
- Too few trees
- The right amount of trees
- Too many trees

Q6: Can you see any trees from your property?

115 (18.9%)

495 (81.1%)

Question options
- Yes
- No
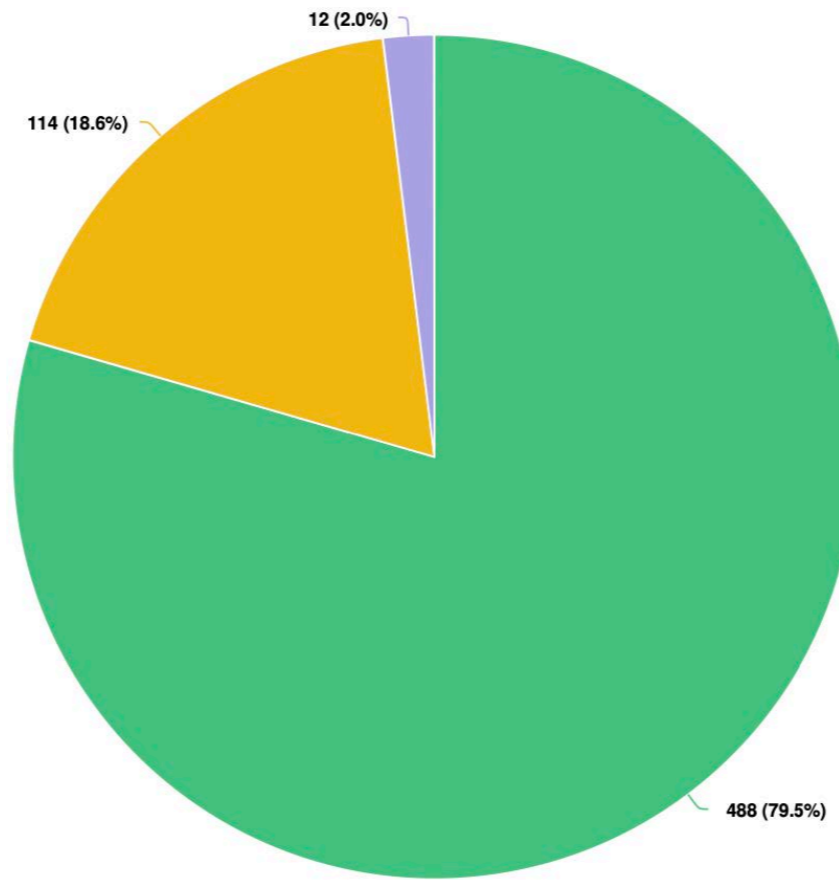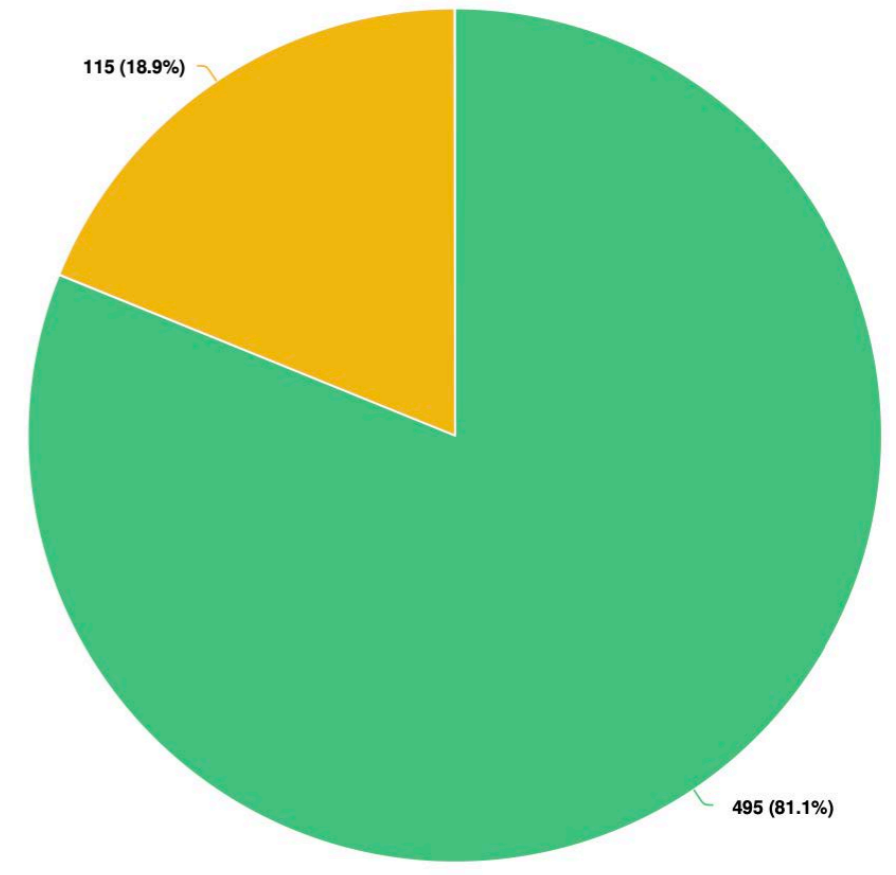
When asked about the number of trees across the city region the overwhelming response is that Belfast has too few trees.

With nearly complete consensus on this matter, this question highlights the need for the strategy being developed here to increase the numbers of healthy trees in the city.

This strategy includes a target of more than doubling canopy cover to 30% which will go a long way to addressing this challenge.

When asked specifically about the number of trees in the respondents own neighbourhood, again the response indicates the desire for an increase in tree population.

Alongside the directed advice on tree planting efforts in this strategy there is also focus on local woodlands and natural areas. At a neighbourhood level a concerted effort to monitor and manage these areas can lead to an increase in quality of these spaces.

The majority of survey respondents (81.1%) state that they can indeed see trees from their property.

This does not necessarily mean that there is an abundance of trees or that these trees are in good health. It does however show that despite being in relatively close proximity to trees, the consultees have a desire to see a more developed urban forest landscape throughout their city and not just around their own properties.
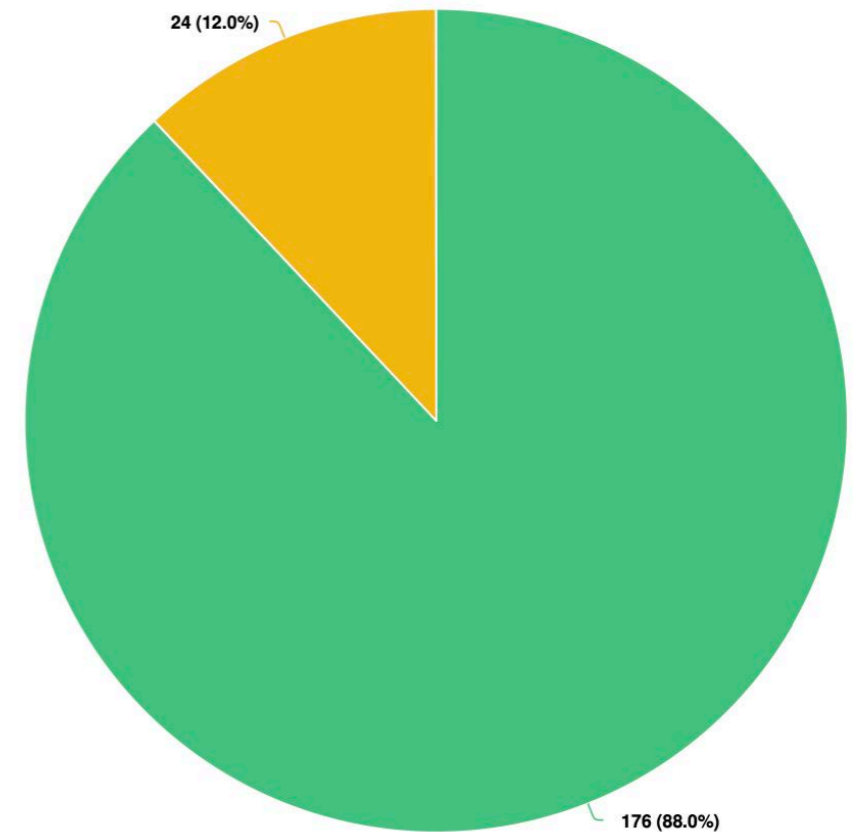
Q8: How do you feel about these trees?

10 (2.0%)

27 (5.5%)

458 (92.5%)
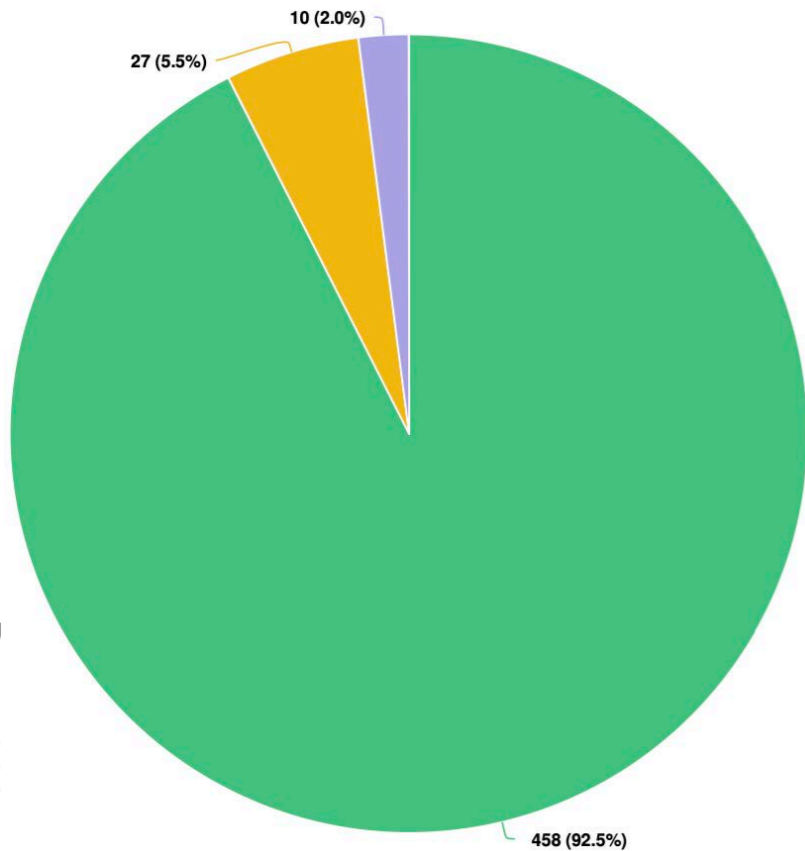
Question options

● I love them   ● They are okay   ● I hate them

Q10: Do you have trees on your own property or on a shared space?

202 (33.1%)

409 (66.9%)
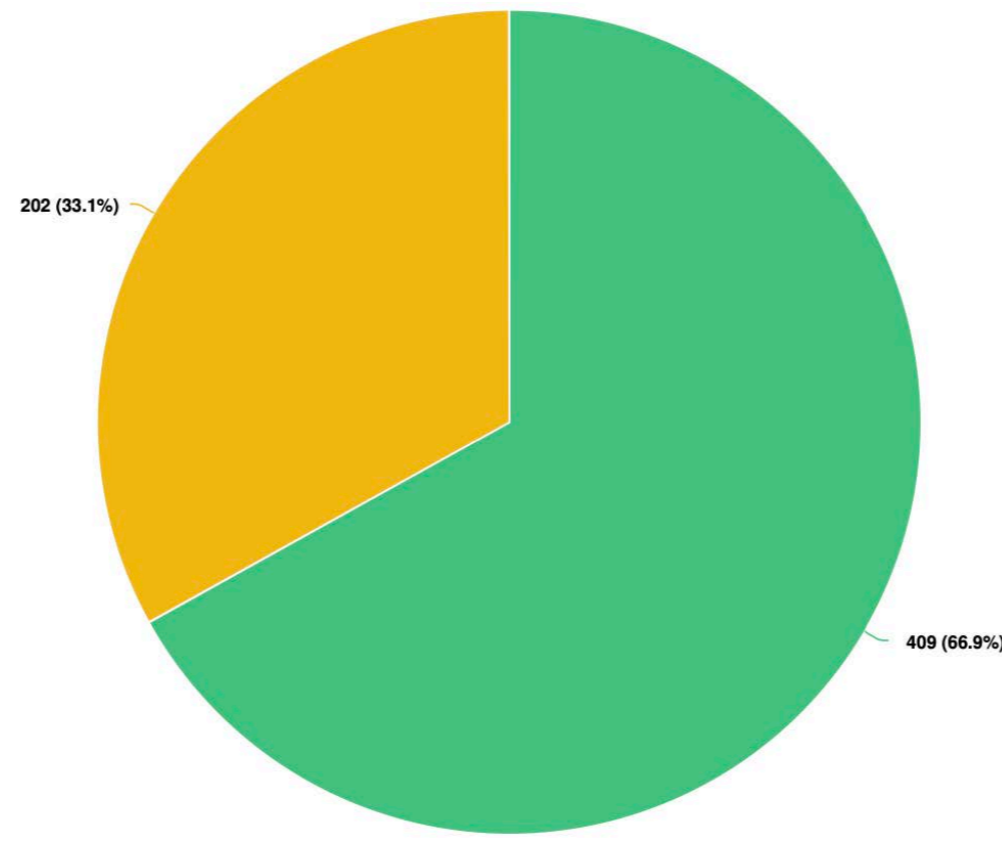
Question options

● Yes   ● No

Q11: Would you like to have trees on your own property or on a shared space?

24 (12.0%)

176 (88.0%)

Question options

● Yes   ● No

The responses to question 8, regarding the feelings towards the trees that consultees can see from their properties are exceptionally positive. The few which are negative are understandable and the comments of the respondents reflect the main themes of a lack of light, excess leaf litter and lack of maintenance.

The positive feedback reflects consultees intrinsic understanding of the value of urban trees, even if they are not directly aware of the specifics. The strategy recommends periodic monitoring of the benefits of the urban forest. As the urban forest grows, these benefits should increase with a larger, healthier and more diverse urban forest treescape.

When asked about the trees in the respondents property or shared space, there is a majority who have direct access to trees.

These trees are much more difficult to record and monitor accurately, however due to the number of private gardens and other privately owned trees these make up a significant proportion of the tree population. The tree strategy emphasises the importance of monitoring trees on private property with a view to enhancing decision making around the urban forest.

Question 11 shows yet another clear desire for trees to remain and play an enhanced role in the urban fabric.

This strategy is clear that site suitability and risk management should always be taken into account when planting new trees, however it also emphasises the possibility of both environmental and social benefits when involving a community in a tree planting project. Shared spaces and private land can be prime examples of where the residents take on projects that increase the strength of the urban forest for all the residents in the area.

Q14: Do you think Belfast would benefit from having a dedicated Tree Strategy in place?

4 (0.7%)

40 (6.6%)

562 (92.7%)

Question options

● No   ● Not sure / don't know   ● Yes
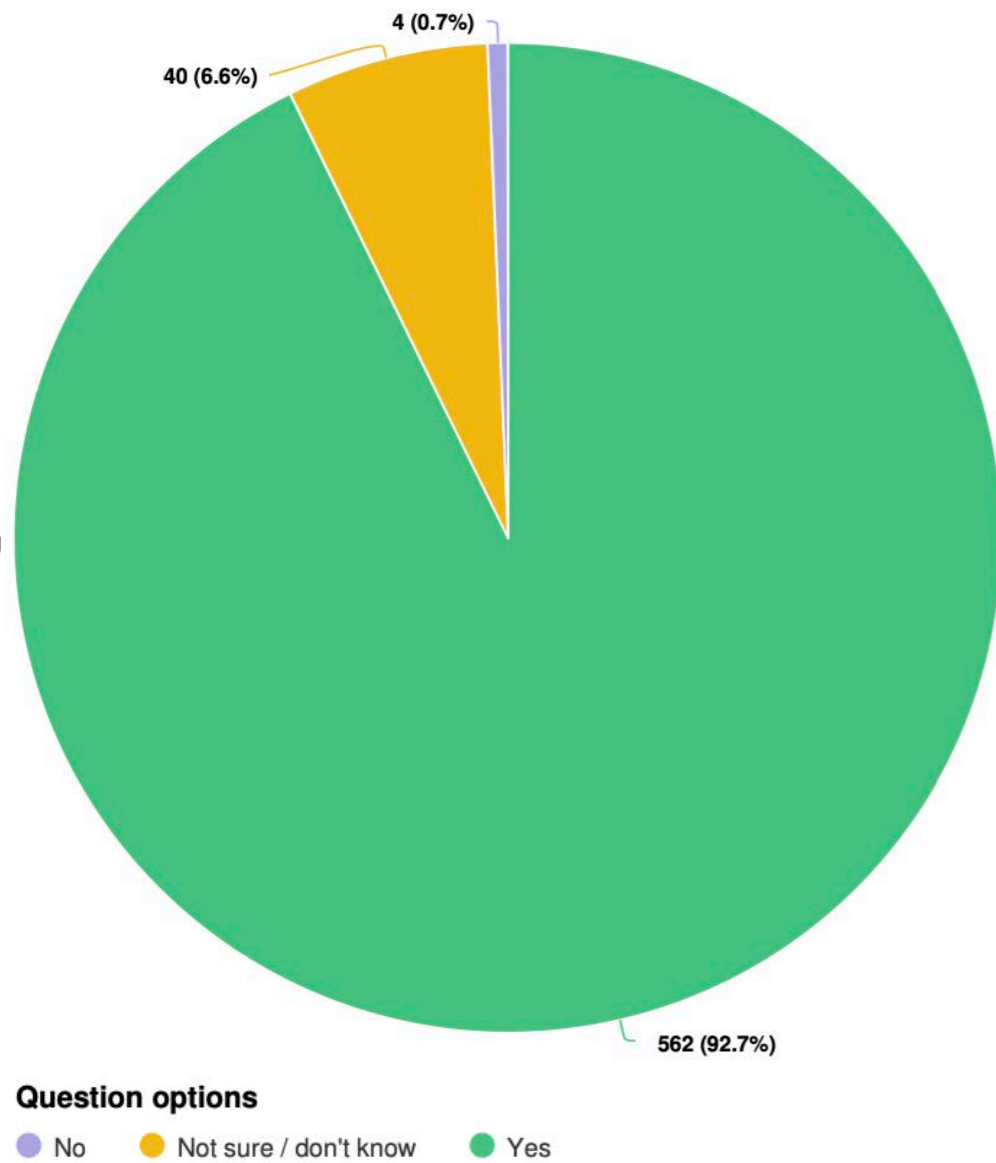
When considering all the previous responses shown in this section it becomes very clear that the consultees, which were primarily members of the public and residents of Belfast, support the development of the urban forest.

The majority believe that there should be more trees in their neighbourhood and city wide. Many can see trees from their property or have trees on their property. With an increase in tree cover comes an inevitable need for maintenance and concerns about their impact, yet the overwhelming majority still want to have trees in these spaces and enjoy their presence.

There is also general recognition in the need for a strategy and a desire for increased maintenance and management of the urban forest, increasing the tree population, maintaining its health and increasing its connection with the community.

BCC sincerely thanks the many respondents who took the time to do the survey and provide extensive feedback and insight about Belfasts trees and what they mean, not just to Belfast's residents, but also its visitors and wildlife.

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Responses to Phase 2

Q1: Please tell us about yourself (select one option), I am responding as:
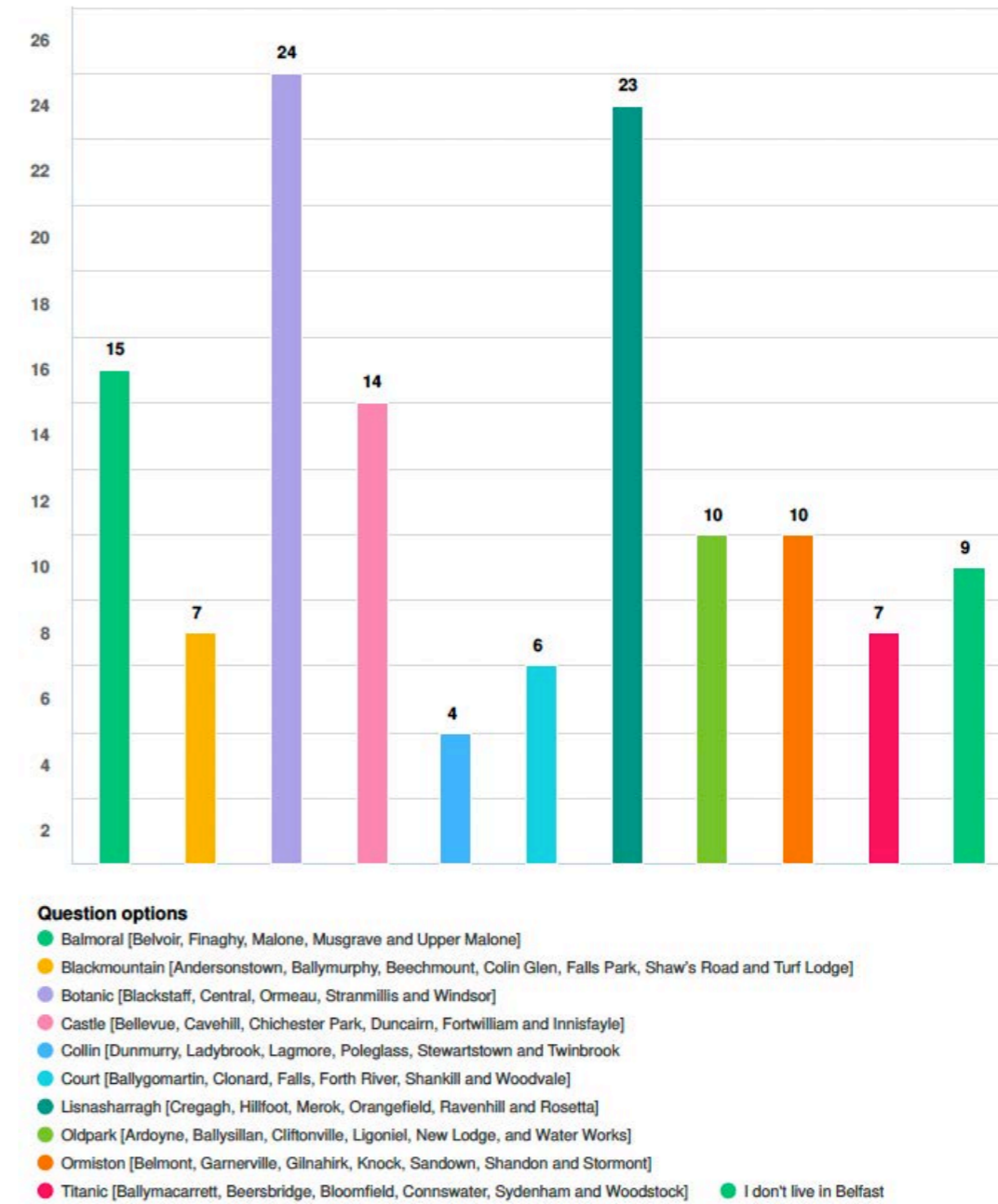
Q2: In which area of Belfast do you live ? (District Electoral Area)

Question options
- A member of the public
- A landowner
- An association
- A professional body
- A researcher or scientist
- An environmental non-government organisation
- Other (Please explain)
- A land manager
- A farmer
- A forester
- A developer

Question options
- Balmoral [Belvoir, Finaghy, Malone, Musgrave and Upper Malone]
- Blackmountain [Andersonstown, Ballymurphy, Beechmount, Colin Glen, Falls Park, Shaw's Road and Turf Lodge]
- Botanic [Blackstaff, Central, Ormeau, Stranmillis and Windsor]
- Castle [Bellevue, Cavehill, Chichester Park, Duncairn, Fortwilliam and Innisfayle]
- Collin [Dunmurry, Ladybrook, Lagmore, Poleglass, Stewartstown and Twinbrook]
- Court [Ballygomartin, Clonard, Falls, Forth River, Shankill and Woodvale]
- Lisnasharragh [Cregagh, Hillfoot, Merok, Orangefield, Ravenhill and Rosetta]
- Oldpark [Ardoyne, Ballysillan, Cliftonville, Ligoniel, New Lodge, and Water Works]
- Ormiston [Belmont, Garnerville, Gilnahirk, Knock, Sandown, Shandon and Stormont]
- Titanic [Ballymacarrett, Beersbridge, Bloomfield, Connswater, Sydenham and Woodstock]
- I don't live in Belfast

Respondents in Phase 2 were still predominantly members of the public (86.6%) similar to the results from Phase 1. Botanic, Lisnasharragh and Balmoral had the highest proportion of respondents in both phases of the consultation. By and large respondents were equally distributed across Belfast. This is very encouraging as no one area was overly dominant in the process. Therefore the consultation took in views from Belfast's leafiest areas and those with least exposure to the urban forest.

Q3: The Belfast tree Strategy's is that "That Belfast is a city which focuses on protecting, enhancing and expanding its woodlands, hedges, and trees, connecting people to nature, and ensuring that these continue to be a major asset to everyone who lives, works, and visits our city."
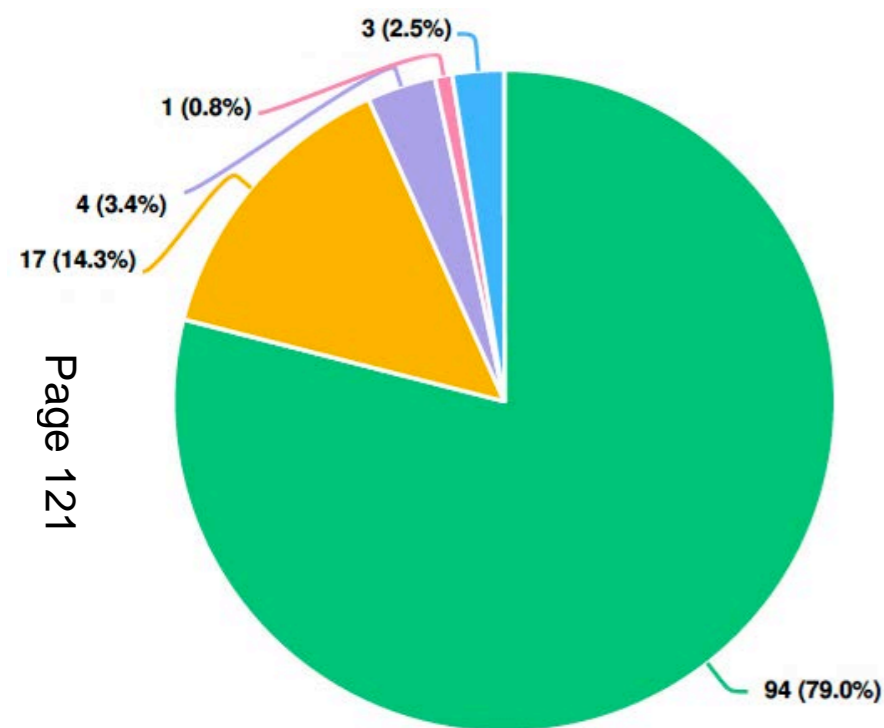
Q4: The Draft Tree Strategy sets out Targets, Priorities and Action on Trees and Urban Forest Structure, Community Framework and Sustainable Resource Management. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed targets, priorities and actions?
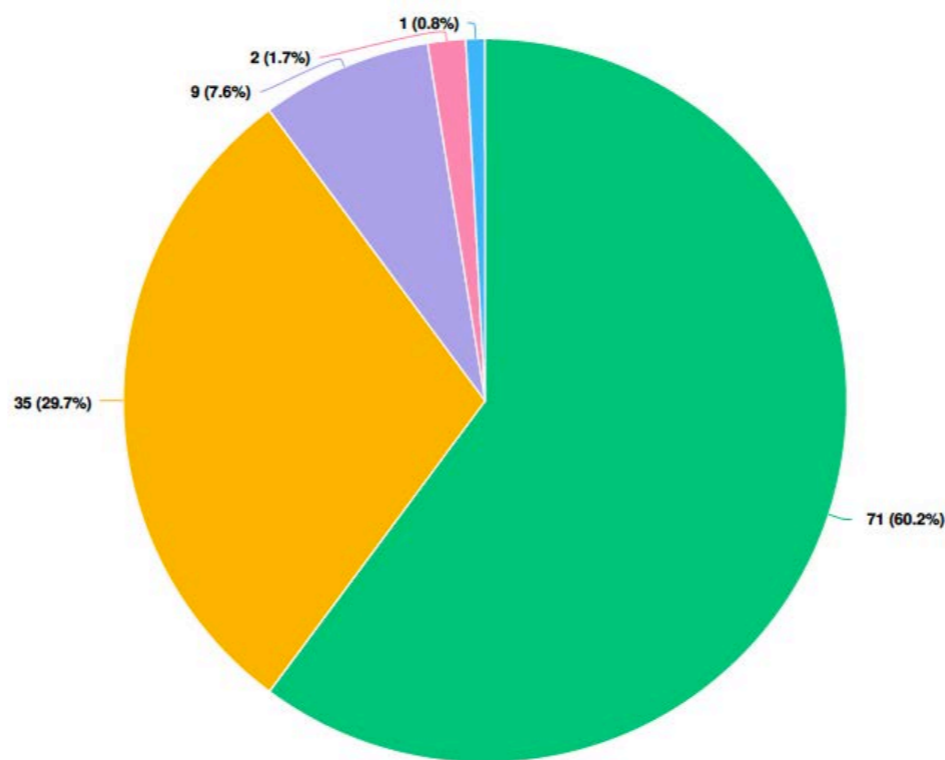
Q5: The Council sets out 23 commitments through its Draft Tree Strategy. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these commitments?
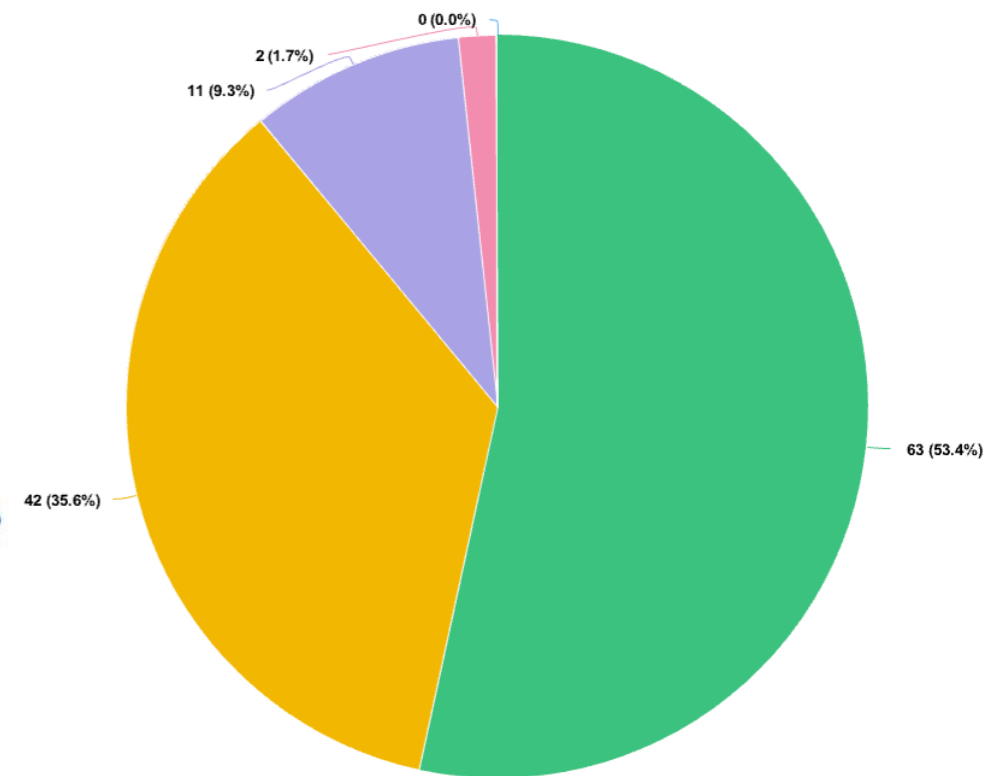
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Q3 pie chart:
- 94 (79.0%)
- 17 (14.3%)
- 4 (3.4%)
- 1 (0.8%)
- 3 (2.5%)

Question options
● Definitely agree ● Agree ● Neither agree or disagree ● Disagree ● Definitely disagree

Q4 pie chart:
- 71 (60.2%)
- 35 (29.7%)
- 9 (7.6%)
- 2 (1.7%)
- 1 (0.8%)

Question options
● Definitely agree ● Agree ● Neither agree or disagree ● Disagree ● Definitely disagree

Q5 pie chart:
- 63 (53.4%)
- 42 (35.6%)
- 11 (9.3%)
- 2 (1.7%)
- 0 (0.0%)

Question options
● Definitely agree ● Agree ● Neither agree or disagree ● Disagree ● Definitely disagree

The initial need for a tree strategy was demonstrated in Phase 1 with 92% of respondents supporting the creation of a dedicated tree strategy for Belfast. It is very encouraging to see the continued support for this, in response to the publication of the draft strategy. The feedback was over 90% positive for both the "Vision" and the "Targets, Priorities and Actions". Belfast City Council is acknowledging and acting on this overwhelming desire for action whilst also embracing the need for a strategic approach to urban forest management.

Section 6

Technical Appendices

Technical Appendices:

Preamble

These policies are intended as guidelines for determining whether requests for the pruning or felling of Belfast Council directly managed trees should lead to action.

It is not possible to anticipate every situation and it is therefore important that whilst these policies guide decisions they should not be considered prescriptive. Furthermore, no one policy should be considered in isolation, but all relevant policies should be considered when reaching a decision.

As trees are individual living biological structures each case will be taken on its own merit and these policies should further be considered in the context of wider strategic aims relating to individual areas, local management plans and the Councils new Tree Strategy.

As a general guideline, trees will not be removed or be subjected to inappropriate Arboricultural management simply for the requirements of their biological function, please see the information contained in the section "Benefits of Trees" in the main strategy.

Safety

Where there is a clear and foreseeable threat to the personal safety of residents or visitors, or to property, that is directly related to the condition of a tree, action will be taken to control that risk.

The Council is currently developing its Tree Risk Management Strategy a summary of which is at appendix V, and all decisions will be taken in accordance with the policies and priorities laid out there.

Risk that is an indirect consequence of a tree (e.g., slippery leaves on the pavement in autumn) will be dealt with through pruning only in unusual circumstances where other options are not available.

Unfounded or perceived fear of a tree or trees will not normally result in action to prune or remove the tree, eg "the tree is too tall".

Financial Constraints

Belfast Council unfortunately does not have unlimited resources with which to manage its tree stock. The resource it does have has to be used holistically in keeping with its management policies and in some cases work simply cannot be justified on the grounds of priority.

Technical Appendix I: Council Owned Trees

1.1 Which Trees are the Councils

This part of the strategy sets out the Council's approach to the management of trees for which it is directly responsible. This work is largely confined to the urban areas of the City

Tree management encompasses the co-ordination of all maintenance operations to existing trees as well as new tree planting. The existing tree population is a valuable resource, which requires more than just maintenance if it is to continue to provide the range of benefits that we expect. Management must include a long-term view of the tree resource, providing for the future as well as for today.

There are five major elements of the Cities tree population:

1 **Street trees** - These are the trees planted in pavements or road verges along the streets. They help to filter air pollution, provide shade for car parking, calm traffic and improve the overall appearance of the street scene. Belfast City Council manage and maintain the street tree population for and on behalf of the Department for Infrastructure who are the "owners" of these trees.

2 **Woodlands and countryside** - Belfast City Council owns or manages a number of sites of ancient semi-natural woodland and other areas of importance to the natural environment. The rarity of this type of woodland and the mosaic it creates makes its preservation very important.

3 **Trees in parks and open spaces** - These are commonly the most significant trees in the area and have a profound effect on its appearance and, consequently, upon the leisure experience of users of the open space as well as for visual amenity for Belfast City Council's residents and visitors alike.

4 **Housing area trees** - These are the trees found in and around housing estates. The trees were often in residential areas to enhance the local environment and landscape. Trees growing within housing estates are owned by and the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

5 **Plantations** - These are significant to the area. These are mostly made up of recent plantings undertaken as part of the the Belfast Million Tree Initiative will greatly increase the number of plantations and all these plantations are a very valuable resource in terms of visual amenity and as a habitat for wildlife and require considerable management input if they are to mature into the woodlands they were intended to be and this is dealt with in more detail in Appendix IV.

Technical Appendix II: Management Standards for Council Owned Trees

2.1 Carriageway Obstruction Due to Trees

The Council will seek to work with DfI who will ensure that adequate clearance of the highway for the type of traffic using that highway is maintained at all times.

This links to DfI Road Order (RO); Article (Art) 48 - Removal of fallen structures, trees etc., Art 88 - Obstruction of roads.

2.2 Drains

Trees do not have the capacity to break into a sound drain, but they will exploit any existing fault. The removal of one tree will not prevent other vegetation from exploiting the same opportunity and clearly will not fix a broken drain! Action may be considered by the Council to secure the repair of any leaking foul water drain in order to protect the groundwater from pollution.

The Council's presumption is that the appropriate way to deal with tree root blockage of drains is to ensure that the drains are watertight. Accordingly, the Council will not normally take action in response to complaints that Council managed trees are blocking drains.

In terms of street trees this links to DfI RO: Art 45.Drainage of roads, Art 46.Obstruction of, interference with, or discharge of material into, a road drain, etc., Art 47.Filling in of roadside ditches, Art 53.Prevention of water falling or flowing on to roads.

2.3 Honeydew

As with leaves, honeydew is not readily controllable by pruning and cleaning of affected surfaces can be considered to be routine maintenance. Pruning will not normally be considered solely as a way of alleviating problems with honeydew.

This links to DfI RO; Art 59 Removal of nuisances

2.4 Leaves, Seeds, Fruit, Nuts & Berries

Leaves and seeds are carried freely on the wind and are largely outside the control of Belfast Council. Clearing of leaves from gutters and pathways and weeding of set seeds are considered to be normal routine seasonal maintenance which property owners are expected to carry out.

Pruning will not normally be undertaken to attempt to reduce the fall of leaves, seeds or fruit.

2.5 Parks and Open Spaces

The City has nearly 50 major parks, including:

- Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park
- Alexandra Park
- Barnett Demesne
- Belfast Castle Estate
- Belfast City Hall Grounds
- Belmont Park
- Botanic Gardens
- Bridges Urban Sports Park
- Carnanmore Park
- Carr's Glen Linear Park
- Cave Hill Country Park
- Clarawood Millennium Park
- Clement Wilson Park
- Dover Street Millennium Park
- Dr Pitt Memorial Park
- Drumglass Park
- Dunmurry Park
- Dunville Park
- Falls Park
- Finlay Park
- Forthriver Park
- Gasworks
- Gilnahirk Park
- Glenbank Park
- Glencairn Park
- Greenville Park
- Grove Playing Fields
- Grovelands
- Jubilee Park
- King William Park
- Knocknagoney Linear Park
- Lagan Meadows
- Lenadoon Millennium Park
- Ligoniel Park
- Loughside Park
- Marrowbone Millennium Park
- Michelle Baird Memorial Park
- Musgrave Park
- Northwood Linear Park
- Orangefield Park
- Ormeau Park
- Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park
- Springfield Dam
- Springhill Millennium Park

- Tullycarnet Park

- Victoria Park

- Waterworks

- Wedderburn Park

- Woodvale Park

Trees and hedges are fundamental to the structure of parks and green spaces. The trees in parks and open spaces are not only important to regular visitors; they are very important contributors to the overall environment of the area. They are a high value resource that requires active management if they are to prosper and bestow the benefits we would hope for.

The nature of tree populations of different parks and green spaces is as variable as the character of the sites themselves. At one extreme there are the older parks, such as Ormeau, with a declining, mature population of trees including a number of rare and interesting specimens. At the other extreme are the newer Urban Parks and Open Spaces, such as Clarawood, Lenadoon and Marrowbone Millennium Parks, with a developing tree population. For this reason the management of park and Greenspace trees has to be planned on a site-by-site basis, seeking a balanced tree population and a character for each.

Some of the newer parts of the Belfast City area contain large open spaces with a very high proportion of short grass, some structure planting and little else, such areas are ripe for enhancement. Creating small, wooded areas in low habitat value areas can create opportunities for wildlife whilst improving the landscape and creating a place of real value for local residents.

2.6 Traffic signal / street sign obstruction

The Council will endeavour to ensure that trees under their management do not obscure road signs or prevent streetlamps from illuminating the highway.

The purpose of streetlamps is to illuminate the public highway and where adequate illumination of the highway is present the Council will not normally take action to improve the levels of illumination of private property.

This links to DfI RO; Art 8 Duty to Maintain, Art 49 Prevention of obstruction to view, etc., Art 50 Removal of potentially dangerous trees and hedges

2.7 Tree and TV / Satellite Reception

There is no right to good reception and in many cases it is possible to resolve issues of poor reception involving trees by finding an engineering solution. Belfast Council will only consider requests to prune trees to improve reception where all the following conditions are true:

- Efforts have been made to find an engineering solution to the problem and have not been successful.

- The work required is consistent with good Arboricultural practice and will not unduly affect the amenity or health of the tree.

- The work required can be executed within current financial constraints (see below)

This links to DfI RO; Art 8 Duty to Maintain

2.9 View and Right to Light

Action will normally only be considered where the separation between the tree and the window of the nearest habitable room is less than 6m for trees with a height of over 12m, or less than half the height of the tree for smaller trees, or

where the separation between the edge of the canopy and a vertical line through that window is less than 2m.

A 'habitable room' means a dining room, lounge, kitchen, study or bedroom but specifically excludes WCs, bathrooms, utility rooms, landings and hallways.

Where a situation falls within these guidelines' cases will be prioritised according to proximity and account will also be taken of the orientation of the affected window. The results of any consultation exercise may modify decisions if it appears that any work would be by and large unpopular with the rest of the community.

2.10 Wild Animal / Insect Pest

As with leaves and honeydew, the actions of the trees associated wildlife, such as birds, squirrels and insects etc. is considered to be beyond the reasonable control of the Council. Pruning or other works will not normally be considered as a means of controlling such nuisance.

Technical Appendix III: Plantations, Shelterbelts & Woodlands

3.1 Plantations and Shelterbelts

Plantations are those groups of recently planted trees, where the intention is to allow them to develop into copse or woodland stands. Often the trees will have been close planted with little or no understorey or edge planting and virtually never any herb layer. Often these plantations are done via a Woodland Grant Scheme or other similar grant aid vehicles. More often these plantations occur in local parks, on open spaces, in countryside areas and Local Nature Reserves where it is relatively easy to establish large areas of closely planted trees with the minimum of consultation and planning.

In order that these plantations can "evolve" into species rich woodland that will be a value to the community they will need substantial additional work, i.e. thinning, additional planting of shrubs, edge planting, addition of herbs and often the introduction of deadwood to speed up the ecological processes. All this has a cost and manpower implication for the owner, whether that be the Council or a private third party and this should be considered in full at the time of planning any new project.

Shelterbelt plantings take the form of strips of trees and shrubs planted for visual screening or windbreak purposes. Such shelterbelts often occur within the area as planting strips on land alongside the newer "parkway" style road systems (eg Motorways, trunk roads and the like) and the adjacent developments, which have been planted with a mix of naturalised and native tree and shrub species to provide 'parkland' like settings. Parkways can be described as highways with relatively wide grass verges or landscape strips adjacent to the carriageway and occasionally as a central reservation. An example of parkway style roads are the M1 or the A2.

Where the shelterbelts are maturing and are performing their designed function of screening and sheltering extremely well then the broad principles are those of woodland management, e.g. thinning, coppicing and selective felling. While management has taken place on many of these sites it has not been carried out strategically. Management must be carried out on a rotational basis to ensure that seriously neglected areas do not occur. Areas that become neglected are difficult to manage in a sensitive or cost-effective manner.

These plantations and shelterbelts provide important wildlife corridors and habitats throughout the Belfast area and link open spaces with blocks of woodland and the rural areas. The Council will ensure that any revision of the management plan for plantations and shelterbelts will include the principles of wildlife protection

3.2 Veteran Trees – Ancients and Pollards

Belfast has few old trees and the areas of remaining parkland and old trees in the area are important. Old, veteran and ancient trees are very important links to historic landscapes and are known to support highly diverse communities of invertebrates and lichens. Areas of the Belfast district are pasture woodland, dating from medieval times. New trees can be established but will not have any great interest for many, possibly, hundreds of years.

Information on the old trees in the area is limited and needs to be increased. It is likely that the number of these trees has declined through neglect in appropriate management or removal. Pollarding is essential in extending the lifespan of old pollards, which may disintegrate without active pollarding. Old trees are prone to damage through changes in land use, particularly, conversion of surrounding grassland to arable. In addition their wildlife value is reduced by the removal of dead wood from within the crown or fallen branches.

3.3 Woodlands

It is evident that Belfast City still contains a significant number of woodlands. This section deals with woodlands, both those in Council control and those in private ownership.

There are fragments of ancient and long-established woodlands within the City including Belvoir Forest Park, Ormeau Park and Throne Wood. These and other sites can be viewed on the Woodland Trust's Ancient Woodland Inventory.

Ancient woodland is defined as land that from archive evidence alone would appear to have been continuously wooded since 1600. Long-established woodland is defined as land that from map evidence would appear to have been continuously wooded since the first edition OS maps of 1830-44, but for which no positive evidence of antiquity has been found in older documentation.

There are several woodlands in the Council's ownership that have not been identified in the Inventory but are nonetheless remnants of ancient semi-natural woodlands.

The Council's management objectives are landscape, nature conservation and recreation. Other objectives such as timber production are very limited but should be pursued where appropriate and do not conflict with the primary objectives. Where deemed appropriate the Council uses Tree Preservation Orders to help ensure no inappropriate works are carried out to woodlands.

The composition of the typical ancient woodland of the eastern side of the Belfast area is Oak and Birch, National Vegetation Classification (NVC) W10 or W16 dependent upon geographical location and soil type. The remaining area of the city is predominantly W8, which is an Oak Ash mix.

The traditional and most common form of management of woodlands in the area was the system known as coppice with standards. This involves periodic cutting back of the woodland understorey (coppicing) to produce smallwood material for hurdle fencing, thatching spars etc.; larger trees (standards) were retained at wide spacing and were grown on to produce timber for a variety of uses. This historic form of management has produced woodlands of tremendous value for nature conservation with a wide number of species being supported in the variety of microhabitats created. Such management ceased early this century and many woods have since become neglected and have reverted to high forest.

Many of the woods in the Belfast area are now managed with nature conservation objectives as a priority. Those managed by wildlife groups, such as TCV, Belfast Wildlife Trust, the Forestry Commission or the Belfast Hills Partnership have started to re-introduce coppicing as a form of management where appropriate. The future management of woodlands must address the problems of neglect, which have afflicted many woodlands nationally over the past 75 years or more. It must also take into account the multi-purpose objectives, which woodlands today must fulfil. Some traditional management is carried out by conservation volunteers on a number of sites in order, primarily, to retain the conservation value of the wood. This work helps to keep the basic skills in use and also acts as an example to other woodland owners interested in bringing their woods back into management, which benefits wildlife.

Nationally, as well as locally, traditional woodland management has declined since the First World War, mainly due to increasing labour costs, overseas supplies and the introduction of plastics and other materials. The loss of market for traditional woodland products has resulted in little or no management works being carried out. This has left woods neglected; the wildlife habitats that depend on the management system suffer, as does the age structure of the wood making it a vulnerable landscape feature.

Commercial coppice management is very rare in the Belfast area, although there has been something or a resurgence of interest in coppice products (for example, hurdle fencing, weaving, hedging materials and thatching spars), however, the market is underdeveloped and in some instances under supplied, probably due to a lack of coppice managed in rotation. Neglected coppice can take up to three years to produce useful material following post neglect cutting.

Woods give the Council opportunities to display best practice of management in pursuit of a number of objectives. The Council's management objectives are landscape, nature conservation and recreational access. Other objectives such as timber production are limited and are usually only pursued when the other criteria are met.

Many of the woods in the area are of significant interest both locally and nationally. As such some have been identified as Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), Areas of Outstanding natural Beauty (AONB) Local Nature Reserves (LNR) or Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINC). This indicates that some form of protection already exists on many woodlands, i.e. prior to carrying out management operations on a CSAC or SSSI the consent of the Council is required if they do not already manage the site.

The remaining areas of woodland are secondary woods generally having been planted since the first edition of the Ordnance Survey maps in 1876. These woodlands can have high landscape value and provide new habitat and useful links between existing sites. Most of these woods are in private ownership and not accessible to the general public. Main reasons for planting include timber production, recreation (sporting), amenity and wildlife habitats

3.4 Hedgerows

Hedgerows are given three broad definitions. Those that fall under the Hedgerow Regulations (see below) those that are on private domestic property and those managed and maintained by the City Council.

The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 came in to force in March 1997. They protect "important hedges" from removal. Important hedges are defined in the regulations. The regulations apply to any hedgerow growing in, or adjacent to, any common land, protected land (local nature reserves and SSSI's), or land used for agriculture, forestry or the breeding or keeping of horses, ponies or donkeys, if it:

(a) has a continuous length of, or exceeding 20 metres; or

(b) it has a continuous length of less than 20 metres and, at each end, meets another hedgerow. The regulations do not apply to hedgerows within the curtilage of, or marking a boundary of the curtilage of, a dwelling house.

If natural light is being blocked by the growth of a hedge then action may be taken to reduce the problem under the High Hedges Act, Northern Ireland 2011.The Council does not provide a mediation service so you should try to resolve a dispute between yourself and your neighbour amicably or seek advice from a solicitor or Citizens Advice.

The hedgerows under the council's management remit will be maintained in accordance with good horticultural practice in keeping with the landscape function the hedge supports.

The management and the timing of operations to maintain any hedges will adhere to the requirements and restrictions of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

Technical Appendix IV: Hazards and Safety

The Council has a statutory duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1999 to ensure that members of the public and staff are not to be put at risk because of any failure by the Council to take all reasonable precautions to ensure their safety.

A Risk Assessment is required under the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999. There is a need to inspect trees in, on or near public places, or adjacent to buildings or working areas to assess whether they represent a risk to life or property, and to take remedial action as appropriate.

This document sets out minimum standards of inspection, competence and record keeping that the council will commit to and is in accordance with the industry guideline document The Tree Risk Management Manual.

4.1 Hazard and Risk

In order to arrive at a reasoned Risk Assessment for Belfast's Urban Forest the two separate factors of Hazard and Risk must be addressed.

Hazard is the potential to cause harm.

Like all living organisms, trees are subject to decline, senescence and collapse and they can be damaged physically or invaded by pathogenic organisms. As trees deteriorate so they are increasingly likely to shed limbs or fail in strong winds and the potential to cause harm increases.

Ancient and decaying trees are often beautiful and uniquely valuable as habitat for wildlife and, however poor the physical condition of a tree, remedial action is only necessary where there is a clearly quantifiable risk to life or property. This might mean removing part of the tree, the whole tree, or reducing the level of public access in the vicinity.

Risk is the level of likelihood that a hazardous tree will cause actual damage.

Risk is related to the location of the tree. It reflects the intensity of use of the immediate surroundings of the tree and the proximity of the tree to people, buildings or other structures (targets).

4.2 Safety Inspections (Trees)

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that tree inspection procedures are in place and that they are undertaken only by staff or others who meet the requirements of competence set out in section 5.5.

The tree inspection programme has four stages;

· an assessment of hazard;

· an assessment of risk;

· a prescription for remedial action.

· A plan for the recording and the re-inspection process

These actions need not all be undertaken by the same person.

This links to Health and Safety Executive: Management of the risk from falling trees and branches SIM 01/2007/05.

4.3 Record of Inspections

All trees within red and amber zones will have the inspection recorded in an appropriately accessible electronic tree management package. Trees in green areas may be grouped and/or receive a lower level of inspection at the discretion of the Councils Principal Arborist.

Records must be retained for these inspections in perpetuity.

4.4 Determining Remedial Action

The appropriate remedial action must be prescribed by a competent person.

A record of action proposed and action taken must be maintained within the tree risk database.

The priority for implementing remedial action will depend on both the assessment of risk and hazard and related to the subsequent risk score.

In a high-risk area trees which show obvious signs of imminent collapse or are otherwise seriously hazardous should be dealt with immediately on the best advice of the inspector.

Provision must be made in departmental budgets for the implementation of tree inspection programmes and necessary remedial action on an annual basis as revenue expenditure.

4.5 Competence

The rating of target area's (zoning) must be done in accordance with the guidelines in table 4 below and by a member of staff or volunteer with specific local knowledge.

Those trees that influence high risk (red) areas should be inspected by a professionally trained Arboriculturalist at the prescribed intervals.

Similarly any recommendations for remedial work must come from an appropriately qualified Arborist.

4.6 Assessing the level of risk

This is undertaken by the appropriate Council Officer with sufficient local knowledge and with advice from relevant on-site staff and colleagues.

For a programme of tree inspection to be manageable, most resources need to be directed to areas where there is potentially most risk to people and property. This is initiated by designating each part of a site to one of three Risk Zones. These should be clearly documented.

These zones will reflect normal usage but must be kept under review. The level of risk changes over time. For example, plans to hold an event involving many people in a medium risk zone will change its status to high risk for the duration of the event; new facilities or activities may more permanently change the patterns of public usage and hence necessitate a review of the designated risk zone.

The designation of Risk Zones is a matter of informed judgement and periodic review. It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that Risk is periodically reviewed, realistically assessed and decisions documented.

4.7 Assessing hazard

This is undertaken in high occupancy zones by an arboriculturaly qualified Officer or external contractor who is able to inspect trees at least to level 2.

It is the responsibility of the inspector to ensure that hazard is assessed to the best of his/her ability and recorded accurately.

Many trees are potentially hazardous but only the conditions most likely to lead to injury or damage to people or property can reasonably be addressed by inspectors. These are physical or physiological conditions which might lead to a breakup or collapse of the tree. They are identified and recorded during a programme of inspection.

In practice only visible defects are likely to be identified. Techniques available to assess the structural integrity of standing trees, such as electronic sensors and hand operated borers, will not be used as a matter of course. Rather they will be used only where it is necessary to assess the extent of decay in particularly important trees already showing visible symptoms of decline.

Knowledge of the propensity of some species to break up or decay more rapidly than others is necessary but most site-based staff who routinely work with trees would be competent to undertake this inspection after receiving a course of basic training.

The frequency and method of inspection will reflect the designated Risk Zones.

4.8 Commissioning Tree Works

Recommended remedial tree works will be undertaken by the Councils nominated and approved arboricultural contractor.

Work must be carefully specified and will be subject to relevant BS 3998 or the European Tree Pruning Standard.

Hazard Zone Categories	Colour Codes	Examples
High Occupancy	Red 'A' zones	1. All emergency access routes. 2. Overhead utility lines, especially Electricity (LV or HV) and alarm systems. 3. Playgrounds. 4. In High-use parks/public areas: Permanent structures with a constant target. 5. Permanent structures with a value in excess of £50,000 or are habitable. 6. Seating areas. 7. Known informal recreation "hotspots" used for impromptu "gatherings" of school age children. 8. Car park areas adjacent to high use public areas. 9. Footpaths/access ways with greater than 36 pedestrians per hour. 10. Individual trees or neighbourhoods with very high-risk tree characteristics such as: - standing dead trees or those with very poor condition class ratings severely storm-damaged trees. - trees that visually obstruct traffic signs, traffic lights, or street lamps. - tree roots causing severe footpath buckling. 11. Railway lines. 12. Trunk roads (all areas) & above. 13. Principle Roads in built up areas. 14. Guide: Pedestrian rates over 36 per hour, Structures over £50,000.
Moderate occupancy	Amber 'B' zones	1. Main Roads: Congested junctions and visually obstructed traffic lights/signs. 2. In High use Parks/Public areas: informal play areas, minor paths, grass recreation areas. 3. Golf Courses (excluding areas in red zone). 4. Car parks adjacent to moderate/low use areas. 5. Bus stops in high use thoroughfares. 6. Individual trees of neighbourhoods with high risk tree characteristics, such as: - old and veteran trees. - high density of large, mature or "problem" tree species. - areas of recent root disturbance such as footway reconstruction, trenching, drainage etc. 7. Storm damaged trees. 8. Guide: Pedestrian rates between 1 – 36 per hour, Structures 2,000 – 50,000.
Low occupancy	Green 'C' zones	1. Secondary and low use roads: congested junctions and visually obstructed traffic lights/signs. 2. Neighbourhoods with moderate to low canopy densities of large diameter, mature or "problem" specie trees. 3. Moderate to low use parks, playgrounds and picnic areas. 4. Public areas with dispersed recreation eg. Fishing pegs. 5. Open areas, woods, riparian and peripheral areas with limited use or access. 6. Guide: Pedestrian rates lower than 1 per hour and structures up to 2,000.

Table 4: Hazard Zone Categories - Occupancy

Hazard Zone Categories	Colour Codes	Timing of Inspections	Recommended Inspection Methods
High Hazard	Red 'A' zones	3 yearly	Arboriculturalist - detailed tree inspections
Moderate Hazard	Amber 'B' zones	3 yearly	Arboriculturalist - detailed tree inspections
Low Hazard	Green 'C' zones	3 yearly	Arboriculturalist - detailed tree inspections
All Zones	N/A	After storm conditions occur	Walk by survey by park staff

Table 5: Hazard Zone Categories - Hazard Level

Technical Appendix VI: Commitments Adopted by this Strategy

Commitment 1:

The Council will ensure that the tree population across Belfast continues to be protected, developed and expanded where appropriate.

Commitment 2:

The Council will aim to provide a sustainable, high quality tree population. Where appropriate the Council will aim to plant trees of local provenance. These will be planted to maximise habitats for wildlife and to encourage biodiversity.

Commitment 3:

The Council will, through the release of educational material and consultation, endeavour to further the understanding of Tree Management in order to promote a greater sense of community ownership and awareness.

Commitment 4:

The Council will aim to set the very highest possible standards of modern tree care and urban forestry practice in dealing with trees on its own land in order to act as an example of Best Practice for others to follow.

Commitment 5:

The Council will foremost consider its obligation to ensure the health and safety of both people and property when undertaking management decisions in relation to trees.

Commitment 6:

The removal of any tree will be resisted unless there is a sound arboricultural, silvicultural or safety reason to indicate otherwise, or in the case of development sites appropriate mitigating measures are taken in accordance with current planning policies.

Commitment 7:

Belfast City Council will seek to develop sustainable practices in all its operations in respect of tree management and maintenance.

Commitment 8:

In all its tree planting and management activities the Council will support the aims and objectives of the million trees campaign

Commitment 9:

Belfast City Council will seek to establish new areas of urban woodland within its parks and open spaces only as long as this is in keeping with the parks original design and/or present management plan, subject to the availability of sufficient resources to meet planting and future maintenance costs. Where appropriate mowing will be minimised to encourage the introduction of native meadow flowers.

Commitment 10:

The Council will target poor quality open spaces within areas of high deprivation which currently lack tree cover as priorities for landscape improvements to aid improvement of the Quality of Life for the residents.

Commitment 11:

Belfast City Council as directed by by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) will place a priority on the replacement of

any of its ageing street trees. This is particularly important where they adjoin major transport routes. Large growing trees will be given a higher priority for replacement on a like for like basis if it is seen fit.

Commitment 12:

Belfast City Council will, through its Officers and Contractors, consult with all interested parties of proposed tree works. If in the event of a majority dissenting against the professional recommendation the matter will be referred to Members for a final decision.

Commitment 13:

Belfast City Council will endeavour to ensure that all its trees and woodlands within its control have up to date management plans in place.

Commitment 14:

Nature conservation, biodiversity and user safety will be the primary objectives in all woodland management within the Belfast City Council area.

Commitment 15:

Whenever appropriate the Council will strive to retain standing deadwood. When sound reasons dictate that deadwood cannot be left standing then the wood should be retained in a fallen condition in log piles so as to encourage the biodiversity of the site.

Commitment 16:

Belfast City Council will actively encourage community involvement in its woodland management initiatives.

Commitment 17:

Belfast City Council will encourage the restoration and the expansion of woodlands within the urban and peri-urban environment and endeavour to ensure that the selection of species reflects the local character of the woodlands.

Commitment 18:

The Council will manage its woodlands and others in its charge, ensuring that its duty of care under the Occupiers Liability (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 to ensure the safety of people and property is given full consideration within the context that woodlands are natural places and the level of acceptable risk must reflect this.

Commitment 19:

Belfast City Council will introduce a risk management criterion into its contract administration of Urban Forestry, in order to ensure the elimination of high risk trees.

Commitment 20:

The Council will aim to continue applying woodland management principles to its plantations with the aim of developing the plantations into woodland as well as increasing opportunities for wildlife, public enjoyment, environmental benefits, landscape and screening.

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Commitment 21:

Belfast City Council will actively engage with owners of old and ancient trees which have historic landscape significance and will encourage these owners to manage these trees to secure their longevity and wildlife value.

Commitment 22:

Tree Preservation Orders – General; the Council will make Tree Preservation Orders in order to secure the retention of existing trees of amenity value on proposed development sites and in other situations as a precautionary measure. New tree planting forming part of landscape schemes implemented with development proposals which are intended to provide a significant contribution to the amenity value of the landscape will be made the subject of Tree Preservation Orders. Belfast City Council will continue to ensure that all trees are adequately protected by means of TPO's and planning conditions where appropriate.

Commitment 23:

The removal of any hedge or its inappropriate management will be resisted unless there is a sound Arboricultural or safety reason to indicate otherwise, or in the case of development sites appropriate mitigating measures are taken in accordance with current planning policies. All hedgerow management will be the subject of appropriate legislation.

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Acronyms

BCC - Belfast City Council

BSI - British Standards Institution

CAVAT - Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees

DBH - Diameter at Breast height

ISA - International Society of Arboriculture

LPA - Local Planning Authority

NFI - National Forest Inventory

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

NTSG - National Tree Safety Group

NTM - National Tree Map

RTC - Relative Tree Canopy

TB - Tree Board

TPO - Tree Preservation Order

TDAG - Trees and Design Action Group

USDA - United States Department of Agriculture

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Glossary of terms

Arboriculture- The selection, production, planting, maintenance, and removal of all woody plants for amenity purposes.

Biodiversity- A measure of biological variation, wether represented by gene, species, habitats or ecosystems.

Biosecurity- A set of precautions to reduce the risk of accidentally introducing or spreading alien invasive species, including potential pests and pathogens.

Canopy Cover- A 2-dimensional metric quantifying the area of ground covered by tree canopy when viewed from above, where tree canopy is the collective branches and foliage of the tree.

Carbon sequestration- Processes that remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Carbon storage - The amount of carbon bound up in the above-ground and below- ground parts of woody vegetation.

Community forestry- Addresses the social benefits of the urban forest: community pride, community planting and care projects, reduction of violent crimes and a sense of safety.

Conservation- Use, management and protection of natural resources that insures use and enjoyment for future generations

Diameter, breast height (DBH)- The diameter of a tree at around 1.5 metres above ground level.

Ecosystem Services- The ways in which humanity relies on ecosystems for the continued provision of clean air, drinking water, an equitable climate, the productivity of agriculture, forestry and oceans, control of flooding, soil erosion, coastal erosion, carbon sequestration etc.

Ecosystem- A unit of ecology consisting of a more or less discrete community of species, interacting with each other and their physical environment.

Environment- The prevailing conditions which reflect the combined influence of climate, soil, topography and biology (other plants and animals) present in an area.

GIS (Geographic information system)- A collection of computer hardware, software, and geographic data for capturing, storing, updating, manipulating, analysing and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information.

Green infrastructure (GI)- An interconnected network of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, greenways, parks, forests, and other open spaces that support native species, maintain natural ecological processes, sustain air and water resources and contribute to health and quality of life. Includes parks, parkways, riparian buffers, residential landscaping, street trees, rain gardens, green roofs, and window boxes.

Green roof- A specially designed roof that incorporates plants. Depending on the structural capacity of the building, depth and type of soil, and desired maintenance. Green roofs can be planted with anything from sedums to trees.

Green space- Any vegetated land or water within an urban area that serves as recreation or open space. This includes neighbourhood and regional parks, gardens, cemeteries, playing fields, bike and walking paths, and urban landscaping.

Greenway/green corridor- Corridor composed of natural vegetation. Greenways can be used to create connected networks of open space that include traditional parks and natural areas.

Habitat- Food, water, shelter and space that supports plant or animal life.

Impervious surface- A hard surface (such as a car park or rooftop) that prevents infiltration of water into the ground, causing water to run off the surface.

Infiltration- The downward movement of water from the land surface into the soil.

Inventory, Tree- Gathering of accurate information on the health and diversity of the community forest which can include: listing and description of trees and planting sites.

Microclimate- The climate of a site as modified by local site factors.

Native Species- Species present in a defined region for a certain amount of time without having been brought by humans (cf. exotic), for instance in Britain since the English Channel was flooded around 6,000 years ago.

Non-native species- A species that due to direct or indirect human activity occurs in locations beyond its known historical or potential natural range. Refers to species from another continent, region, ecosystem, or habitat.

Pollution- Substances introduced into the environment by human actions that contaminate the environment.

Stormwater runoff- Precipitation that falls on impervious surfaces (such as roofs and roads). Because it is not absorbed by soil and vegetation, it flows into storm drains.

Subsidence- In relation to soil or structures resting in or on soil, a sinking due to shrinkage when certain clay soils dry out, sometimes due to the extraction of moisture by tree roots.

TDAG - The Trees Design Action Group

Tree Protection Order (TPO)- A legally enforceable document made by the local planning authority to protect trees and woodland in the interests of public amenity. While trees in conservation areas are automatically protected, individual trees outside these areas may be protected with a Tree Preservation Order.

Urban Forest- Trees, woody shrubs, hedges, herbaceous plants, waterways, wildlife, grasses, and other green infrastructure (including green roofs, green walls etc.) within the built environment, considered collectively over an extensive area.

Urban heat island effect- A phenomenon where air temperatures in urban areas are 2-10°F hotter than surrounding rural areas due to the high concentrations of buildings and pavement in urban areas.

	Category	

Trees and Urban Forest Structure

| Targets | T1 – Relative tree canopy cover
T2 – Size (Age) diversity
T3 – Species diversity
T4 – Species suitability (including allergenicity and ESD's)
T5 – Publicly owned trees (trees managed "intensively")
T6 – Publicly owned woodlands and natural areas (trees managed "extensively")
T7 – Trees on private property
T8 – Other Elements of the UF (including Biodiversity); Shrubs, Hedges, Green Walls and Roofs, Plants, Animals and Water.
T9 – Tree Benefits
T10 – Wider Environmental Considerations (including Climate Change, Air quality and Water) | |

Community Framework

| | C1 – Governance and Leadership
C2 – Belfast Council Departmental Co-operation
C3 - Utilities Co-operation
C4 – Green industry Co-operation
C5 – Involvement of large private and institutional landholders
C6 – Community Involvement and Neighbourhood Action
C7 – General appreciation of trees as a community resource | |

Sustainable Resource Management Approach

| | R1 – Tree and Woodlands Inventory
R2 – Tree valuation and asset management approach
R3 – Canopy cover assessment and goals
R4 – Tree Equity (links to C6)
R5 – Reviewing and improving the Tree Strategy
R6 – Urban forestry funding
R7 – Urban forestry program capacity and Staffing
R8 – Tree establishment planning and implementation
R9 – Growing site suitability
R10 – Tree protection policy development and enforcement
R11 – Maintenance of publicly owned trees
R12 – Management of publicly owned natural areas
R13 – Tree risk management
R14 – Biosecurity
R15 – Urban wood and green waste utilisation | |

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Last update: BC - 20/12/22	Indicator	Performance level	Priority
Trees and Forest Structure	**T1 - Relative tree canopy cover**	Good	**High**
	T2 - Size (age) diversity	Moderate	Medium
	T3 - Species diversity	Moderate	**High**
	T4 - Species suitability	Moderate	Medium
	T5 – Publicly owned trees	Good	Low
	T6 – Publicly owned woodlands & natural areas	Good	Low
	T7 – Trees on private property	Good	Low
	T8 – Other elements of the UF; shrubs, hedges, green walls and roofs, plants, animals and water	Moderate	Medium
	T9 – Tree benefits (including biodiversity)	Optimal	Low
	T10 – Wider Environmental Considerations (including Climate Change, Air quality and Water)	Moderate	Medium
Community Framework	**C1 – Governance and leadership**	Moderate	Medium
	C2 – Belfast Council departmental cooperation	Good	Low
	C3 – Utilities cooperation	Moderate	Medium
	C4 – Green industry cooperation	Moderate	Medium
	C5– Involvement of large private and institutional landholders	Moderate	Medium
	C6 – Community involvement and neighbourhood action	Good	Low
	C7 – General appreciation of trees as a community resource	Moderate	Medium
	C8– Regional collaboration	Good	Low
	C9 - International Reputation	Moderate	Medium

Last update: BC - 20/12/22	Indicator	Performance level	Priority
Sustainable Resource Management Approach	**R1 – Tree and woodlands inventory**	Good	Low
	R2 – Tree valuation and asset management approach	Good	Low
	R3 – Canopy cover assessment and goals	Moderate	Medium
	R4 – Tree equity	Moderate	Medium
	R5 – Reviewing and improving the Tree Strategy	Moderate	Medium
	R6– Urban forestry funding	Good	Low
	R7 – Urban forestry program capacity and staffing	Good	Low
	R8 – Tree establishment planning and implementation	Moderate	Medium
	R9– Growing site suitability	Moderate	Medium
	R10 – Tree protection policy development and enforcement	Good	Medium
	R11 – Maintenance of publicly owned trees	Good	Low
	R12 – Management of publicly owned natural areas	Moderate	Medium
	R13 – Tree risk management	Optimal	Low
	R14 – Biosecurity	Moderate	Medium
	R15 – Urban wood and green waste utilisation	Moderate	Medium
	R16 – Native vegetation	Good	**High**
	R17 – Research and Development	Moderate	Medium
	R18 – Open Urban Forest data and Web-map	Low	**High**

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Targets	Priority HIghMedLow	Current Performance Level	Action - Work packages	Roles and Responsibility EG: BCC, Volunteers, University, Tender. Action Plan to be reviewed again in 5 years time.	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Notes
T1 - Relative tree canopy cover	High	Good	Carry out a detailed canopy cover assessment including woodland and hedges							Y1 Costs included and coming out of existing budget as part of R8 Tree Planting plan Work
			Review every 5 years by carrying out a canopy cover assessment	Consultants						Ward level Canopy cover assessment could be carried out in house using the Tree Equity Map proposed by Woodland Trust which is due to begin at the end of 2023.
T2 - Size (Age) diversity	Med	Moderate	Seek advice/report on the implications of BCC's Tree age diversity	BCC with City Council and other Partners eg: Belfast 1 Million Trees and Woodland Trust						Y1 Tree Age Diversity Metrics included as part of R8 Work Y2 for Operations
			Identify prioritised parcels (wards) where data followed by action could be stimulated quickly	BCC using Woodland Trust Tree Equity Map		4				
			Assess current replacement requirements to achieve the target	BCC						Initial requirements can be scoped as part of R8 work
T3 - Species Diversity	High	Low/Moderate	Assess current diversity on private ownership	Consultants						Y1 Costs included as part of R8 Tree Planting Plan Work
			Seek advice/report on the implications of BCC's species diversity	Consultants						Y1 Costs included as part of R8 Tree Planting Plan Work
			Identify prioritised parcels (political ward) where action could be stimulated quickly	BCC using Woodland Trust Tree Equity Map						
			Assess current replacement requirements	BCC and Consultants	4					Y1 Costs included as part of R8 Tree Planting Plan Work
T4 - Species suitability	Med	Moderate/Good	Use eco data to fully assess	Consultants						Y1 Costs included as part of R8 Tree Planting Plan
			Establish Native - Non Native % Guidelines Rural and Urban	BCC		5				Initial requirements can be scoped as part of R8 work
			Explore use of metrics to include Intra Diversity	BCC with A Research Institute						Treeconomics can advise and signpost
			Assess the potential for the introduction of new species	BCC with A Research Institute	6	6	6	6	6	Treeconomics can advise and signpost
T5 – Publicly owned trees	Low	Good/Optimal	Move to an integrated GIS based tree inventory system	BCC	6					Cost to provide Tree Inventory system. Options available from various providers. Treeconomics can advise
			Co-ordinate all surveys, establish standards of surveys and reporting		3	3	3			Develop protocol to ensure consistency in standards for surveys and reporting for all BCC trees
			Assess current management practices and stress levels found in the existing tree population		6	6	6	6	6	Then add to the VTA assesments
			Priorities within the population to be identified where management impact might be greatest		1	1	1	1	1	Work included as part of R13 VTA regular inspections. 1 Day to review

Targets	Priority HighMedLow	Current Performance Level	Action - Work packages	Roles and Responsibility EG: BCC, Volunteers, University, Tender. Action Plan to be reviewed again in 5 years time.	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Notes
T6 – Publicly owned natural areas	Low	Good/Optimal	Carry out surveys on usage level and patterns, ecology and function of natural areas	BCC		30				
			Migrate current data to a webmap							Include in T2 Woodland Trust Equity Map
			Identify parcels of land where natural regeneration might be possible		5	5	5	5	5	Initial requirements can be scoped as part of R8 work
T7 – Trees on private property	Low	Good	Continue to collate data on TPO's and Conservation Areas - Google or publicly accessible web-map	BCC						Links to R18
T8 – Other elements of the UF	Med	Moderate	Information may be available from other 3rd parties - needs enquiring, collating and reviewing find the gaps	BCC		5				
			Commit to developing a new biodiversity action plan and set targets				30			
T9 – Tree Benefits	Low	Optimal	Resurvey in 10yrs	BCC						
			Biodiversity data will also come through T6 and T8 work							
			Prioritised zones to be identified where specific benefits can have the highest impact			5	5	5	5	Initial requirements can be scoped as part of R8 work, but reviewed and updated therafter
T10 – Wider Environmental Considerations	Med	Moderate/Good	Complete an urban forest risk assessment to assess the risk from Flooding, Climate change, Pest & Disease etc.	BCC with support from others		5	2	2	2	Initial requirements can be scoped as part of R8 work, then reviewed/updated
			Prioritised zones to be identified where specific benefits can have the highest impact							Initial requirements can be scoped as part of R8 work
C1 – Governance and leadership	Med	Moderate/Good	Set up and establish a Tree Wardens Scheme			75	75	75	75	
			Review the need for a Stewardship map of Belfast.	BCC						Requires a full-time Woodland/Project officer to set up and manage the Tree Warden scheme as well as other duties as set out within the Action Plan
			Tree Forum feasibility study							Do in year 6
C2 – Departmental co-operation	Low	Good	Set Up dedicated interdepartmental/interagency working teams to facilitate the work packages & set up bi-monthly meetings. Link into 1 Million Trees	BCC						Ongoing work already undertaken with current staffing remit
C3 – Utilities co-operation	Med	Moderate	Compile list of relevant Utilities and contacts & set up initial engagement workshops on trees in the built environment			3				
			Coordinate collaborative arrangements to meet the objectives of the plan (e.g. a tree charter that businesses, training courses on trees for employees in these businesses)	BCC		12	2	2	2	Set up in Yr 2 then 2 days of training every year eg on NJUG guidelines

Targets	Priority HighMedLow	Current Performance Level	Action - Work packages	Roles and Responsibility EG: BCC, Volunteers, University, Tender. Action Plan to be reviewed again in 5 years time.	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Notes
C4 – Green industry co-operation	Med	Moderate	List representatives and contact details for each relevant business or organisation	BCC		3				
			Coordinate collaborative arrangements to meet the objectives of the plan. Include skills building: potential courses and apprenticeship schemes	BCC		5	5	5	5	
			Tie in with green infrastructure, other key initiatives, and the way tree benefits play in			2	2	2	2	
			Demonstrate trees role in carbon zero/retrofitting opportunities; looking into urban greening factor as delivery tool							
			Set up a Tree Business of the Year Award to encourage best practice				5	2	2	
C5– Involvement of large private and institutional landholders	Med	Moderate	List landholders and contact details for each and update each year			3	1	1	1	Inclusion in bids e.g. Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCF). Volunteer planting opportunities
			Coordinate collaborative arrangements to meet the objectives of the plan	BCC, 1 Million Trees						
			Mobilise wider network and the respective contacts of partner organisations							
			Communicating about e.g. health benefits to support partnerships and enhance tree protection.			3	3	3	3	
C6 – Community involvement and neighbourhood action	Low	Good	List reps and contact details for key groups			3	1	1	1	
			Create database of community groups			3				See C1
			Create a tree equity (equality & diversity) map	BCC and NGO. NGO's will need support for funding						Include in T2 Woodland Trust Equity Map
			Link to other, wider initiatives and awards			5	1	1	1	
			Publicise events and launches			3	3	3	3	
			Agree proposals and coordinate the planting of living Christmas trees within the city				10			
C7 – General appreciation of trees as a community resource	Med	Moderate	Set up local tree awards schemes and run	BCC		10	5	5	5	
			Identify ways to gauge and demonstrate the full-spectrum of support: tree celebrations, recognition awards, environmental designation, programs addressing problems, tree giveaways			7	7	7	7	
			Build greater confidence and empower people to manage trees they own			2	2	2	2	
C8– Regional collaboration	Low	Good	Work with BCC Comms team to be made aware of plan and ongoing initiatives	BCC	3	3	3	3	3	
C9 - International Reputation	Med		Research UF International initiatives, awards and schemes		3					

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Targets	Priority HighMedLow	Current Performance Level	Action - Work packages	Roles and Responsibility EG: BCC, Volunteers, University, Tender. Action Plan to be reviewed again in 5 years time.	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Notes
		Moderate	Continuous horizon scanning for new initiatives, techniques and awards	BCC - Adaption and Resilience Climate team						
			Organising visits with other exemplar urban forest eg: Birmingham and UNECE							
R1 – Tree and woodlands inventory	Low	Good	Review current Tree Management software additional; data on Street Trees and Woodlands.	BCC	5					
			Establish a protocol to ensure there is parity with data collection methods across Belfast		5					
			Investigate feasibility of including hedges and hedgerows within a tree management system			2				
R2 – Tree valuation and asset management approach	Low	Good	Add CAVAT to council tree inventory system	BCC			5			
R3 – Canopy cover assessment and goals	Med	Moderate	Map canopy at the ward level using high resolution data	BCC						Costs included as part of R8 Tree Planting Strategy Work
			Assess potential plantable space, model canopy growth and planting scenarios; timeframe for 30% tree cover							Costs included as part of R8 Tree Planting Strategy Work
R4 – Tree Equity	Med	Moderate	Complete tree opportunity map and focus efforts around tree planting and community engagement in the areas that most need it	BCC - Woodland Trust						Costs included as part of R8 Tree Planting Strategy Work and Tree Equity Map work from Woodland Trust
R5 – Reviewing and improving the tree strategy	Med	Moderate	Annual Independant Review of this plan	BCC	£2900			£2900		
R6 – Urban forestry funding	Low	Good	Complete a CBA and Asset Register on UF and ensure woodlands are included in any budgeting and resource planning	BCC			10			
			Cost up the actions arising from this strategy and seek budget to enable it to be actioned	Treeconomics						
			Aim to secure a percentage of funding in future financial years from other sources eg: grants (this also includes partnership projects like 1 Million Trees)	BCC, 1 Million Trees	5	5	5	5	5	
R7 – Urban forestry program capacity and staffing	Low	Good	Draft up the program capacity including staffing	BCC	5					
R8 – Tree establishment planning and implementation	Med	Moderate	Complete a comprehensive prioritised tree planting strategy and opportunity map	BCC						
			Draft up SMART targets for the planting plan							

4

Targets	Priority HighMedLow	Current Performance Level	Action - Work packages	Roles and Responsibility EG: BCC, Volunteers, University, Tender. Action Plan to be reviewed again in 5 years time.	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Notes
	Med		Tree Planting and Establishment							Tree establishment covered in existing budget. Any extra budget covered in new grants see R6
R9– Growing site suitability	Med	Moderate	Provide tailored tree planting advice to different stakeholders on tree planting; include a list of 'preferred' species, size, planting and maintenance requirements	BCC						Some overlap with T8 and C3,4,5 6 and 7
R10 – Tree protection policy development and enforcement	Med	Moderate	Adoption and implementation of LDP tree policies and publications of additional planning guidance. Potential Tree Warden advise and monitoring of developments	BCC	5	2	2	2	2	Workshops with enforcement team and Tree Officers to facilitate interdepartmental working and foster good working relationships
R11 – Maintenance of publicly owned trees	Low	Good	Develop an overarching audit regime for the Tree Risk Management Strategy	BCC			5			Initial review carried out as part of tree strategy. After Yr3 audit repeat every 5 years
			Training and standardisation of tree maintenance methods		5					
R12 – Management of publicly owned natural areas	Med	Moderate ?	Map and identify public owned areas, and refine					2	2	Initial requirements can be scoped as part of R8 work
			Develop an overarching system for recording trees in woodlands and groups, assign a management unit to each and develop an appropriate management overarching plan	BCC	10	5	5	5	5	
R13 – Tree risk management	Low	Good/Optimal	BCC move from 5yrs to 3yrs inspection cycle	BCC						40% increase in inspection resources
			DFI move from 5yrs to 2yrs inspection cycle (Street Trees)	DFI						60% increase in inspection resources, this is being directly funded by the DfI
			Inspections	BCC & DFI						
R14 – Biosecurity	Med	Moderate - Good	Write a Biosecurity Policy for the urban forest	BCC		10				
			Support local community tree nurseries	BCC study on What and How			5	5	5	5	
			Work closely with tree nurseries to develop a 20 year tree supply goal based on the tree planting plan	BCC to define needs and tender for nurseries			5	5	5	5	
R15 – Urban wood and green waste utilisation	Med	Moderate	Commission a feasibility study on utilising urban wood and green waste	BCC			30			
R16 – Native vegetation	High	Good	Discuss targets and review for this KPI and strengthen the wording - Forum for Debate on this	BCC		10				
R17 – Research and Development	Med	Moderate	Liaise with Universities and Forest Research and other agencies on potential joint research projects;			2	2	2	2	In part with existing job role
			Create a research agenda that will identify work packages that could go to Masters students, PHD's, etc.	BCC			8			

Targets	Priority	Current Performance Level	Action - Work packages	Roles and Responsibility						Notes
	HIghMedLow			**EG: BCC, Volunteers, University, Tender. Action Plan to be reviewed again in 5 years time.**	**Y1**	**Y2**	**Y3**	**Y4**	**Y5**	
R18 – Open Urban Forest data and Web-map (management and assessment tools)	**High**	Low/Moderate	Review Queens University Webmap with a view to combining layers in a single open access site or commission a new bespoke web map for the city	BCC		5				
				Total Person Days	77	268	265	163	163	Assumed day rate equals to £350
				Total Estimated Cost £	£26,950	£93,800	£92,750	£57,050	£57,050	
				Total 5 Year Cost Estimate	£327,600					

PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Resources and Fleet Waste Update
Date:	12th September 2023
Reporting Officer:	Cathy Matthews Director (Resources and Fleet)
Contact Officer:	John McConnell, City Services Manager (Resources and Fleet)

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X

     If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

        After Committee Decision
        After Council Decision
        Some time in the future
        Never

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To provide an update to members on Waste Collections Management and performance.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to: • Note the contents of the report. • Provide feedback on the current consultation on the draft regulations for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR for packaging scheme.

3.0	**Main report**
	Key Issues
	Waste Performance & Recycling Rates – 2022/23 Year to Date
3.1	DAERA has recently published the Northern Ireland, Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics for Q4 (Jan-Mar'23) 2022/23. The general picture is one of a stagnant recycling rate (46%) combined with a slightly increased energy recovery rate (28%) and corresponding decreasing reliance upon landfill (24%) as a disposal route.
3.2	An examination of the 12-month rolling figures for Belfast City Council, which in this instance can act as a proxy for the annual figures, indicates the following;
	Municipal Waste Arisings – the total tonnage of all types of waste collected by the Council was 158,000 tonnes. This is a reduction of 10,000 thousand tonnes (6%) on the previous year.
	• **Municipal Waste Recycling Rate –** the percentage of all types of waste collected by the Council which was re-used, recycled or composted, declined by 1% to 37%.
	• **Household Waste Recycling Rate**– the percentage of household waste only collected by the Council which was re-used, recycled or composted, remained unchanged at 41%.
3.3	The validated annual figures will be published by NIEA later in the year and an analysis will be provided to Members following their publication.
3.4	As noted within this report, there are a number of legislative, strategic and financial drivers which are going to shape future waste management arrangements. Until there is sufficient clarity around this environment, radical, systemic change aimed at delivering significant improvements in the recycling rate are unlikely.
	In the interim the Service is exploring initiatives which could be delivered, such as communications campaigns and doorstep engagement, aimed at reversing the trend, aligning with policy drivers and improving performance.
	Waste Framework Update
3.5	At the People & Communities Committee meeting of June 2017, Members approved the Waste Framework document. It provides an overview of options on how waste could be managed within the city over the next decade. It was developed to align with the objectives of the Belfast Agenda and Resourceful Belfast (Circular Economy), designing out waste, improving the quantity and quality of recycling and supporting local jobs.
3.6	The Waste Framework focuses on four themes (i) Collection Arrangements, (ii) Infrastructure, (iii) Behaviour Change and (iv) Technology.
3.7	Resources and Fleet continue to look at initiatives and opportunities to develop methods of collection and introduce new schemes to encourage the reuse and recycling of waste as a resource. The following provides an insight on the work and initiatives currently being undertaken under the 4 main workstreams.

Persistent Organic Pollutants

3.8 Members will be aware that at the February 2023 meeting of the Committee the issue of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPS) was discussed. These are chemicals which can remain intact in the environment for long periods, and if not disposed of properly can have harmful impacts on human health and on the environment. In relation to the handling and treatment of waste these pollutants are to be found in many types of soft furnishings such as chairs, sofas etc as fire retardants or indeed within clothing items with water /fire resistant properties.

3.9 In 2022, the Environment Agency in England issued a Regulatory Position Statement (RPS) lasting until end of December 2023 informing Local Authorities that it would be implementing a more robust enforcement regime regarding the treatment of POPs in such waste streams. This is an issue which continues to exercise English Local Authorities as they consider the collection, storage and treatment of these materials, as the RPS states that items with these materials (suspected or otherwise) should be collected, stored internally and transported separately from other waste streams and cannot be put into landfill but be destroyed by permanently changing their chemical make-up i.e through incineration.

3.10 In Northern Ireland, the NIEA has yet to issues a Regulatory Position Statement in regard to POPs. Council Officers have requested clarity at several meetings of the Government Waste Working Group, but still await definitive guidance on the matter. The lack of an RPS is of concern to officers as there may be serious consequences in terms of lack of Council infrastructure (collection and storage facilities) and additional costs in relation to the final treatment of the particular waste – in all likelihood the transport to mainland UK or abroad for incineration, hopefully as part of a Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF).

3.11 Until such times as a Regulatory Position Statement is issued by NIEA, all identified POPs items collected by the Council will be dealt with under the new Interim Residual Waste Contract which commenced on 1st July 2023, i.e. all residual waste is being pre-treated before export as RDF to energy from waste plants in Europe.

(i)   Collection Arrangements

Inner City Recycling Scheme Update

3.12 The aim is to transition to a weekly, segregated collection of dry recyclables and food waste, combined with a restriction on residual waste. This was arrived at based on the NI Recycling Gap analysis (WRAP) and BCC bespoke options appraisal (Resource Futures).

3.13 A detailed financial evaluation (green book appraisal) on the Council's kerbside recycling collection schemes was completed in October 2021. This was considered at the Waste Programme Board meeting of 8th November 2021 and subsequently presented to Party Group Briefings/Leaders and SP&R Committee in June 2022.

3.14 Members requested that Resources and Fleet conduct a feasibility study regarding Option 5 of this report, namely the in-housing of all kerbside recycling, while at the same time commencing a procurement exercise to ensure service continuity in the 'inner city' area beyond August 2024, which is the expiry date for the Bryson contract. The transition from the current two box scheme to the 'wheelie box' solution for the inner city is also considered within this work. The feasibility study on Option 5 is well progressed with an indicative completion date of September 2023, following which it will then be subject to normal governance arrangements.

3.15	Resources and Fleet has also initiated the procurement exercise for the continuation of kerbside recycling provision in the inner city. The market engagement exercise has been concluded and officers are developing the contract specification document with the intention to issue Sep/Oct 2023.
	Carpet Recycling
3.16	In November 2021, supported by capital funding from the DAERA Collaborative Change Programme, Resources and Fleet initiated separated collection arrangements for carpets at all Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs).
3.17	The contract for treating the carpet was provided by USEL Recycling Solutions, an organisation specialising in employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Carpets were brought back to the USEL site in Belfast for quality checking and baling. Before being shipped for further reprocessing with the resultant material being sold into the equine sector as flooring / bedding, across the UK and Ireland. In the first year of operation the target was exceeded with 406 tonnes captured.
3.18	Following on from the emerging issues around POPs the contractor for carpet recycling has informed BCC that their treatment outlet is no longer accepting this material if it cannot be declared as free of POPs. Despite seeking alternative arrangements, the contractor has to date been unsuccessful at sourcing an alternative provider as there is a view within the marketplace that carpets will be included in the next tranche of POPS related enforcement and as such companies are seeking to disengage from the recycling of this material. Officers continue to liaise with USEL and DAERA (funding provider for the carpet skips) regarding this matter, but it is envisaged that the solution may result in this material being sent for energy recovery. While this is disappointing, it should be noted that it would be an improved situation vis-a-vis the pre-pilot disposal route which was a mixture of landfill and energy recovery.
	Reuse of Laptops & electrical equipment
3.19	In December 2021, in collaboration with colleagues in Community Services, a small trial of reusing unwanted smart technologies commenced at Ormeau Household Waste Recycling Centre.
3.20	Resources and Fleet has taken on board the learning from the pilot scheme and is now, with the assistance of Climate Change funding, looking to expand the duration of the initiative while at the same time develop a more sustainable model not solely reliant upon external funding. The scheme was launched at Ormeau recycling centre on 5 September 2022.
3.21	Despite the efforts of Corporate Communications at promoting the scheme, uptake remains much slower than anticipated. This could be down to a number of factors; cost of living crisis with people holding on to their technology for longer and also the increased number of retail outlets now providing incentives on second hand technology. The Service will assess this scheme at the end of the 2023/24 financial year.
	Pre-loved Toys
3.22	Given the resounding success of this scheme last year, at the March 2023 committee meeting, Members agreed to run the pre-loved toys scheme again this year. In line with the

	recommendations of the report, planning work has commenced earlier this year to explore the general approach and delivery model.
	Kerbside Glass
3.23	A feasibility study on the expansion of kerbside collection of glass was reported to committee in June 2022. Internal discussions are ongoing regarding the financing and delivery plan for such a scheme and will need to be considered in the revenue estimates and rates setting process for 2024/25.
	Community Repaint Scheme
3.24	The Service is exploring the potential for a Community RePaint scheme at HWRCs. Not only would this seek to reduce the amount of paint being treated and disposed of through the sites but it may provide a useful resource to community groups.
3.25	In January 2023, Members agreed to the establishment of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in principle with the Community RePaint scheme. The service has launched phase 1 of this initiative which is an assessment of the preferred approach and level of demand. It is anticipated that phase 1 will be completed by October 2023 and phase 2 will then commence, a procurement exercise to appoint the delivery partner, implement communications and launch. This scheme is also supported by the Council's climate fund for 23/24.
	(ii) Infrastructure
	Recycling Centres & Dargan Road WTS
3.26	The Service has identified the need for capital funding to replace aged containers (compactors & skips) at recycling centres. A sum of £160k of non-recurrent funding was allocated to commence this project and the Service purchased six compactors for cardboard which were installed by 1 April 2023. An application for tranche 2 funding has been submitted to the Financial Oversight Board.
	Recycling Centres and Pedestrian Access
3.27	A detailed feasibility study on the potential for pedestrian access to Alexandra recycling centre was presented to Committee in September 2022.
3.28	An additional site visit was conducted to assess the potential impact on the trees within the vicinity of the proposed works. This tree study has been completed and the access point has been agreed. The Service is liaising with colleagues in Property & Projects to obtain a time frame for the works.
	arc21 Residual Waste Project and Interim Residual Waste arrangements
3.29	Following the refusal of planning permission by the Minister for Infrastructure in April 2022, arc21 submitted an application for judicial review against this decision. On 31 May 2023, the High Court issued an agreed Order reflecting that the Department for Infrastructure had conceded that this decision to refuse the proposed development of residual municipal solid waste treatment infrastructure was unlawful (on the grounds of irrationality) could not be sustained and was therefore to be quashed with immediate effect. Ecological surveys required by the Habitat Directive are being updated as is other information supporting the

	application. Clarification on the administrative process for getting the re-determination process underway is currently being sought by arc21.
3.30	Due to the prolonged timescales regarding the residual waste treatment facility at Hightown, arc21 initiated a procurement exercise to secure future services for the treatment and/or disposal of constituent councils' residual waste. This service was broken down into a number of lots to reflect the different time scales and material requirements of the constituent councils.
3.31	Arc21 awarded the Belfast City Council lot to ReGen with an effective contract commencement date of 1 July 2023. The Council's contractor at that time, River Ridge Recycling challenged this decision through the courts and sought an injunction. On the 26 June 2023, the court refused to grant an injunction to stop the implementation of the contract and the contract for services related to interim residual waste disposal for use by Belfast City Council commenced as planned on 1 July 2023. It should be noted that while the injunction to prevent commencement of services was not successful, there is still a legal challenge by River Ridge against the award of this contract by arc21. The time frame for this case has still to be determined.

Connected Circular Economy - Shared Island Project

3.32	The Service continues to work with colleagues in the Economic Development Unit and Climate Team along with Dublin City Council to deliver a feasibility study into a "Connected Circular Economy." This will include the sharing of knowledge and good practice initially, with the ambition for the development of hubs in Dublin and Belfast to support the growth of the circular economy island -wide, leading to a Connected Circular Economy. The final report is due November 2023.

(iii)   Behaviour Change

Recycling Communications Campaign

3.33	Following a request at Party Group Leaders in December 2022 to look into the possibility of a recycling campaign the Marketing and Corporate Communications team has developed an integrated campaign to create awareness around recycling. The campaign "Be Bincredible Belfast" is positioned to inspire and energise people to consider recycling as a mature and responsible act. The campaign messaging sets about getting citizens to think about recycling as a social responsibility, not just a personal one.
3.34	The campaign call to action is to make recycling feel like a larger, community-wide effort and encourage people to do a little bit more and recycle the right way. "Be Bincredible Belfast" is very much about celebrating those who have already been putting in the work and letting them know that their efforts are appreciated. The second phase of the campaign is based on increased education and a "back to basics" approach to getting recycling right first time, delivering increased capture of materials and improved quality from an operations point of view. Marketing and Corporate Communications have been working closely with both the educational team and the operations team in the development of the campaign.
3.35	The first phase of the campaign will be delivered via an integrated advertising campaign encompassing outdoor, radio, digital (video on demand) and social media and will go live w/c 25th September and will run for approximately 3 weeks. In terms of the educational piece and encouraging citizens to recycle correctly, this will be delivered beyond the initial advertising campaign using channels such as social media and assets such as City

	Matters and will be supported via roadshows delivered by the Environmental Outreach Team.
	Waste Access & Acceptance Policies at HWRCs
3.36	A Service Working Group was established with the primary aim of improving the recycling rates achieved at the recycling centres and CA sites. This group looked at the development of effective, Waste Access & Acceptance Policies to assist staff in managing waste on site.
3.37	The draft policy has been developed and provided to Legal Services and we await a formal response. Once this has been received, engagement with the Departmental Policy team will take place to carry out an equality assessment and determine the level of public consultation required.
3.38	Before this document is finalised, the Resources and Fleet will seek to engage with Members to visit recycling centres and see first-hand the positive work which goes on at the sites and the challenges encountered by staff.
	Tackling multiple black (residual) bins.
3.39	Through previous Committee reports, Officers have asked for support from Members to tackle the complex issues around collections and recycling, and to be aware of the current Waste Collection Policies as Officers look at how these can be applied effectively.
3.40	Current policy is that BCC will collect one residual waste bin per household unless an assessment of further need has been carried out and approved by officers. Multiple studies have recognised that one of the most effective ways to increase domestic recycling is to limit the volume of residual waste capacity (per week equivalent) to 'encourage' residents to divert their waste towards recycling waste streams (blue, brown or glass receptacles, including bring banks). Indeed, this is likely to be a major recycling improvement initiative in the DAERA considerations around their proposed Common Collections Guidance, to be published for consultation in due course during 2023.
3.41	A working group within the Service carried out a project to target, on a crew-by-crew basis, those addresses identified as presenting multiple bins. To date, several small pilot areas have been completed and learning captured. In recent months this project has been suspended due to other competing priorities (Full Shift cover and Report-It APP). It is envisaged that this project will re-commence following the DAERA public consultation and the working group will consider how the exercise could be suitably scaled up and accelerated to deliver the anticipated benefits.
	(iv) Information Technology
	In-Cab Technology
3.42	Following the successful deployment of the Report IT App, Resources and Fleet are currently looking to build on the opportunities modern software systems can deliver. A project is currently underway to potentially procure a system which can: • Hold all safety information on vehicles and routes. • incorporate live time information flows to and from the operating centre to crews and vice versa. • capture all the functionality of the Report IT App

		• optimise routes as the city grows to ensure operational efficiency. • link in with Customer Hub software to deliver customer service. • monitor vehicle condition and driver behaviour.
3.43		An Outline Business case will be presented to the Financial Oversight Board in September for consideration of capital requirements for 2023/24 financial year. **Operational update - Access Issues**
3.44		Members may be aware of 2 ongoing pieces of ongoing work to look at addressing the issues around access to certain streets for our collection vehicles.
3.45		Following the single item Committee meeting in March 2023 to discuss access issues, officers have engaged with officers from the PSNI and DFI to look at what measures might be available within their remit to assist collection crews. BCC officers have identified the most affected streets, based on crew reporting and residents' calls. These streets have been prioritised by difficulty and sorted by post code for the other agencies to consider how to move this forward.
3.46		These streets have also been presented to the Waste Collections operations team in a high level assessment to identify, in their opinion if • they have current parking restrictions that are not being adhered by motorists or • they have no current / insufficient parking restrictions where the addition of same might be of benefit.
3.47		We will continue to engage throughout the autumn to develop a targeted action plan. This will involve a stepped process that might include member engagement, leafleting of impacted streets, enforcement support and further work on those streets that are difficult to access but do not currently have any parking restrictions.
3.48		Secondly, we are in the final stages of agreeing a final report on the possible costs and benefits of utilising smaller refuse collection vehicles within these narrow streets across the city. We intend to have the final report approved in time for consideration within this year's estimating process to bring forward as a potential growth proposal for the 2023/24 financial year. **Inter Council / DAERA Collaboration**
3.49		Council Officers continue to engage with DAERA counterparts in the formulation of policy required to deliver the legislative targets set by Central Government. It has recently been announced that the introduction of the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme (EPR) for packaging has been delayed for at least 1 year and that the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) has been delayed likewise following the difficulties incurred in its introduction in Scotland.
3.50		In England, the delay in the EPR scheme also means a delay in the introduction of Common Collections Guidance (CCG) for Local Authorities in England, i.e., EPR is a precursor to CCG. As it currently stands, however, DAERA continues to develop its policies on Common Collections Guidance for NI Councils and officers await notification of a final timetable for any proposed Guidance.

	Carbon Budget
3.51	The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 received Royal Assent on 6th June 2022. It provides Northern Ireland with its first climate change legislation.
3.52	The Act contains a legal requirement for all NICS Departments to ensure that targets and carbon budgets are met. This legal duty is the first of its kind in Northern Ireland to recognise the need for strong collaboration in tackling climate change.
3.53	The headline elements of the Act are: • Net zero target by 2050 • Carbon Budget to be set every 5 years. • Climate Action Plan to be published every 5 years. • Establish a NI Climate Commissioner (being led by TEO) • Just Transition Commission and a Just Transition Fund for Agriculture • Sectoral Plans (not timebound) • Requirement to bring forward Public Body Reporting legislation.
3.54	Officers from Resources and Fleet (along with other Councils counterparts) have been attending DAERA stakeholder workshops to contribute to a response to the DAERA consultation on Northern Ireland's 2030 and 2040 Emissions Reduction Targets and First Three Carbon Budgets. The process is also aimed at informing DAERA on Councils views on the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) Advice Report: The Path to Net Zero Northern Ireland published on 2 March 2023.
3.55	This 16-week exercise, running from 21 June to 11 October 2023, aims to receive feedback on the proposed first three carbon budgets 2023-2027, 2028-2032 and 2033-2037 as well as 2030 (48%) and 2040 (77%) interim targets.
3.56	DAERA has stated, 'This consultation provides an opportunity to talk about what we need to do to respond to the threat presented by climate change and about the opportunities that might emerge. Work is progressing at pace in developing Northern Ireland's first ever Climate Action Plan and all NICS departments have a legislative duty to set out how they will reduce emissions. This consultation and the conversations that will take place will be used to help inform the draft Climate Action Plan.'
3.57	The following informative slides are taken from the DAERA stakeholder workshops.
3.58	As demonstrated in the graphic below, it is estimated that the Waste Sector in Northern Ireland is responsible for approximately 4% of current NI emissions and has reduced its emissions by 61% since 1990 base year. However, the Waste sector is still responsible for approximately 799 CO_2e kilo tonnes of emissions each year. It is clear that the waste sector still has an important part to play in the reducing emissions overall.

Waste Sector - Current Emissions

Sector	Total CO₂e Emissions		
	Base Year	2020	Change
Agriculture	5,503	5,865	+7% ↑
Business	3,924	2,773	-29% ↓
Energy Supply	5,307	2,847	-46% ↓
Industrial processes	722	221	-69% ↓
Land Use	2,844	2,389	-16% ↓
Public	429	141	-67% ↓
Residential	3,704	2,868	-23% ↓
Transport	3,445	3,378	-2% ↓
Waste Management	2,023	799	-61% ↓

NI's 2030 and 2040 Emissions Reduction Targets and First Three Carbon Budgets & Views on the CCC's Path to Net Zero

3.59	In terms of what the remaining emissions consist of, we can see that the vast majority from the slide below that Methane (CH4) has the lion's share of the total amount of GHG's attributed to the waste sector at just over 94%, the majority of which originates from the landfilling of waste, especially biodegradable waste. This makes tackling these types of GHG's a priority for the first carbon budget.
3.60	The next largest contributor is Nitrous Oxide (N2O) at 5.3%, Nitrous Oxide is a key challenge for the wastewater sector as it represents a significant component of 'Scope 1' type emissions for the mechanical treatment and storage of wastewater treatment. However, solutions to dealing with this GHG are presently cost prohibitive.
3.61	Carbon dioxide (CO2) represents only a small fraction of the total GHG emissions within the waste sector.

Waste Sector – Current Emissions
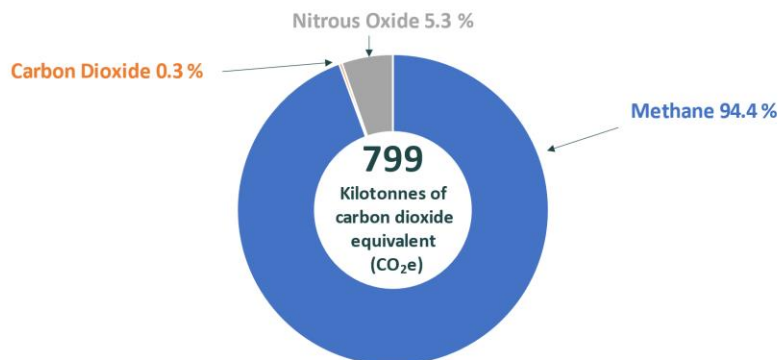
Nitrous Oxide 5.3 %
Carbon Dioxide 0.3 %
Methane 94.4 %

799
Kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e)

NI's 2030 and 2040 Emissions Reduction Targets and First Three Carbon Budgets & Views on the CCC's Path to Net Zero

3.62	Finally, it can be seen that the source of these emissions are primarily from Managed Waste Disposal Sites, i.e. landfill
3.63	This will inevitably reinforce the demand to reduce the amount of waste to landfill in the future through new policy, but there is also the need to address the emissions that are already there, exploring new technologies and innovations to help deal with that.
3.64	These challenges will feed into DAERA prioritisation of policy making in the short and medium term. Stakeholders were informed that it is likely that DAERA priorities will be as follows:
3.65	**Immediate actions** • Legislate and implement a ban on all landfilling of biodegradable municipal and non-municipal waste from 2025. • Accelerate investment plans for councils to put in place universal municipal waste recycling collections (Common Collections Guidance) • Set the 70% NI recycling target for recycling.
3.66	**Medium Term Actions** • Mandatory business food waste reporting by 2022 (Overdue) • Phase Out Waste exports by 2030. • Eventual diversion of all wastes from landfill • Increased methane capture and oxidation • Examine the impact of waste reduction and recycling targets on the utilisation of (and need for further) EfW plants. • New waste conversion plants must be built with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) or CCS ready. **Consultation**
3.67	DEFRA has launched a public consultation on draft regulations for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging scheme.
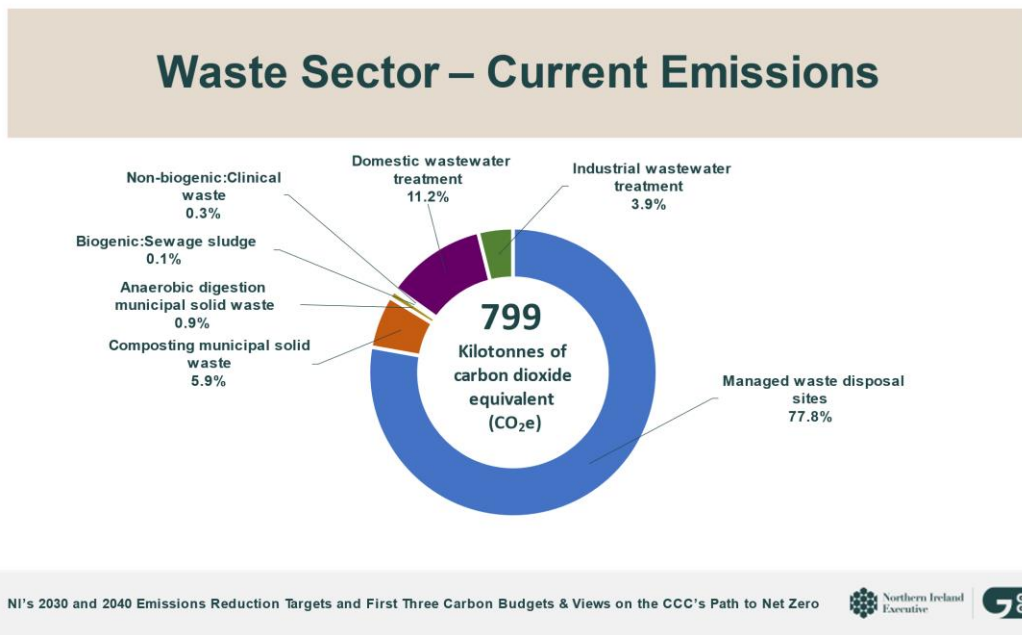
3.68	The link to the consultation is as follows https://consult.defra.gov.uk/extended-producer-responsibiity-team/consultation-on-the-draft-producer-responsibiity/
3.69	This consultation seeks views on how well the proposed 2024 Regulations reflect the Gov response published in March 2022 (which was generated by 2019 consultation on reforming UK Packaging Producer Responsibility System and the 2021 Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging). Please also use in conjunction with the impact assessment published in March 2022 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1063588/epr-final-impact-assessment.pdf
3.70	The 2024 regulations will revoke and replace the 2023 Regulations as well as PRO Regulations 2007.
3.71	The draft Regulations also include provisions to: • Enable the appointment of a Scheme Administrator. • Allow a Scheme Administrator to raise fees from obligated producers to cover local authority costs for the management of household and binned packaging waste, the costs of public information campaigns, and its operational costs. • Set recycling targets on producers covering all types of packaging waste (i.e., primary, shipment, secondary, tertiary; household and non-household). • Require certain types of packaging to be labelled to indicate recyclability. • Introduce a mandatory takeback and recycling requirement for fibre-based composite cups. • Require all reprocessors and exporters of packaging waste to register with a regulator and to report data, and, for those that choose to, to become accredited and issue recycling evidence. • Enable regulators to effectively monitor compliance and enforce the draft Regulations.
3.72	The consultation closes on 9th October and our response is being coordinated by our Waste Officer (Compliance and Research), Jennifer Stephens. The questions within the consultation are quite technical and relate to draft legislation. These technical questions are laid out in **Appendix 1**. Officers will formulate and submit the response and report back to members at the October P&C Committee meeting. However, should any member wish to contribute any views on the questions, please contact Jennifer via email in the first instance to ensure that these views are full captured stephensj@belfastcity.gov.uk . **Financial & Resource Implications**
3.73	There are no financial implications associated with this report. **Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments**
3.74	There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.

4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - draft regulations for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging scheme.

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Appendix 1 - draft regulations for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging scheme.

(Q1-5 are questions about the respondent and are not included here)

Questions

What is not included in the draft Regulations and future reforms?

Q6. Do you agree that we should work towards excluding packaging that is designed only for use by a business from the payment of household disposal cost fees?

Obligations on producers

Q7. Do the draft Regulations ensure all types of packaging, which is not exempt packaging, are subject to recycling obligations?

Q8. Are producers recycling obligations clear?

Q9. Are the obligations on each type of producer clear?

Q10. Are the obligations on all types of packaging clear?

Q11. Are there any areas in which two producers may be obligated for the same item of packaging?

Q12. Is the relationship between a Packaging Compliance Scheme and its members clear?

Q13. Are the obligations that a Packaging Compliance Scheme assumes on behalf of its members clear?

Provision of recycling information and labelling

Q14. Are the requirements for the provision of recycling information and packaging labelling clear?

Recyclability assessments

Q15. Are you likely to use a third-party organisation to conduct packaging recyclability assessments?

Q16. If you answered yes to Q14, should there be a mandatory accreditation scheme for third-party organisation(s) who undertake recyclability assessments?

Mandatory takeback and recycling of fibre-based composite cups
Scheme Administrator establishment
Q17. Are the functions of the Scheme Administrator as outlined in the draft Regulations clear?

Scheme Administrator calculation of producer disposal and administration fees
Q18. Do the draft Regulations allow for the Scheme Administrator to accurately apportion fees to producers?

Q19. If your organisation collects and recycles packaging waste, do you understand if you would qualify for off-setting under the draft Regulations?

Q20. Do you think the offsetting provisions should be extended as part of future reforms to EPR?

Q21. Do the draft Regulations provide appropriate safeguards for compliant producers, including with regards to the impact producer non-compliance may have on producer disposal fees?

Scheme Administrator's calculation of disposal costs and scheme administrator costs to be recovered from producers
Q22. Do the draft Regulations make it clear what the Scheme Administrator is required to do and consider in assessing local authority efficient net disposal costs and service effectiveness?

Q23. Do the draft Regulations make appropriate provision for how the Scheme Administrator will incentivise the delivery of efficient and effective packaging waste management services by local authorities?

Q24. Do the draft Regulations make it clear what the Scheme Administrator is required to do and consider in assessing Scheme Administrator public information costs and administration costs?

Q25. Do the draft Regulations make appropriate provision for how the Scheme Administrator will distribute disposal cost payments to local authorities

Q.26 Do the draft Regulations make it clear how the Scheme Administrator will adjust (modulate) fees to account for the environmental sustainability of household packaging

Q27. Do you have views on any materials that should be exempted from the scope of modulating fees?

Reprocessors and Exporters

Q30. Are the new registration requirements for reprocessors and exporters handling packaging waste clear?

Q31. Are the new conditions and reporting requirements for accredited reprocessors and exporters clear?

Appeals
Q32. Do the draft Regulations adequately capture the decisions that can be appealed?

Q33. Do the draft Regulations set out an adequate appeals process?

Future development of EPR for packaging
Q34. Please raise up to three areas of EPR packaging policy that you would like us to consider in the first review and rank in order of priority.

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Subject:	2023-24 Draft People and Communities Committee Plan
Date:	12th September 2023
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
Contact Officer:	Ann-Marie Mervyn, Performance and Improvement Manager

Restricted Reports					
Is this report restricted?		**Yes**		**No**	X
	If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
	After Committee Decision				
	After Council Decision				
	Some time in the future				
	Never				

Call-in					
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?		**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	This report provides a draft People & Communities Committee Plan summarising the Committee's key priorities for 2023-24.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Approve the draft People and Communities Committee Plan priorities for 2023-24.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	The 2023-24 draft P&C Committee Plan has been developed in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan and the Belfast Agenda and considering the Belfast Agenda Refresh. Consequently, the new Committee Plan contains the commitments within the Corporate Delivery Plan, which fall under the remit of this Committee, plus additional deliverables that have been agreed by the P&C Committee throughout 2022-23 and are relevant to the Standing Orders. The draft Plan sets out the main priorities and

programmes of work that the Committee oversees to maximise the Council's contribution to the Belfast Agenda.

3.2   At the SP&R Committee on 18th August 2023 the Corporate Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24, setting out the in-year deliverables against the priorities, was agreed as part of the four-year corporate plan.

3.3   The structure of the delivery plan is themed under the following groupings:
- Our services
- Inclusive economic recovery
- Community recovery
- Environmental recovery
- Strategic Planning frameworks, and
- Organisational Foundations.

3.4   A series of priorities fall under each theme, each with a number of committed deliverables for 2023-24.

3.5   Members will recall that the People and Communities Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects aimed at improving life at a local level in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy. This includes:

- Developing and delivering programmes, events and activities to promote health, safety and well-being at a local level

- Administering and enforcing the Council's powers and duties under the Public Health Acts and all environmental health and building related legislation and regulations

- Securing and providing adequate provision for the recycling, treatment and disposal of commercial and domestic waste including bulky waste and the collection and disposal of abandoned motor vehicles.

- Exercising the Council's powers for improving local environmental quality in relation to housing legislation, managing controlled waste, emergency planning and

community safety and anti-social behaviour, clean neighbourhoods and other environmental or regulatory issues not falling within the remit of any other Committee

- Managing, maintaining and maximising the benefit of the Council's parks, pitches, playgrounds and other public spaces as well as community centres and other indoor facilities

- Developing and implementing activities to ensure the delivery of corporate strategies and initiatives in respect of the promotion of health and physical activity, environmental protection, community safety and other such areas under the domain of this Committee

- Overseeing the delivery of the Council's frontline services and associated community assets including: Environmental Services; Cleansing; Waste Management; Parks and Cemeteries service, Neighbourhood and Development Services; Community Services, Community Safety and Emergency Planning

3.6 **Summary of Committee Plan Priorities**

The draft Committee Plan priorities have been summarised into a 'plan on a page' (see Appendix 1) to identify key areas of focus for the Committee in 2023-24. The plan locates priorities within the framework of the relevant Belfast Agenda themes (Our Services; Inclusive Economic Recovery; Community Recovery; Environmental Recovery; Strategic Planning Frameworks; and Organisational Foundations) and the CNS Departmental key priority areas (Open Spaces & Streetscene; Community Provision; City Protection and Bereavement; and Resources & Fleet). The plan identifies the following key areas of focus:

- Neighbourhood working & regeneration
- Improve our open spaces
- Implementation of Biodiversity duty
- Improve our community provision
- Work in partnership to address health priorities
- Enhance the delivery of council's sport & leisure provision
- Supporting Children & Young People
- Good relations & Community Safety
- Enhance the management & utilisation of CNS assets
- Improve our City Protection services
- Improve urban air quality

	• Port Health improvements
	• Improve and extend recycling opportunities
	• Improve our Resources & Fleet service
3.7	It is likely many of these areas of focus will take several years to deliver. The draft plan includes and outlines the key deliverables for 2023-24 that we are working towards achieving.
3.8	It is proposed that Committee receive a 6 monthly progress update regarding the priorities. This will be in addition to usual reports that will be brought to Committee regarding individual priorities & deliverables.
3.9	The departmental Business Plan on which the committee plan is based reflects that the department is continuing to focus on the delivery of business-as-usual services while progressing the transformation and improvement agenda.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.10	The Committee Plan and annual programme of work aligns with the budget agreed by Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 20 January 2023, for 2023-24 for the People and Communities Committee, of £98,901m.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessments
3.11	There are no implications directly relating to this report however individual strategies, programmes and actions will be subject to the council's equality, good relations and rural needs requirements.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – 2023-24 Draft People and Communities Committee Plan: 'Plan on a page'

Resources and Fleet Directorate Actions	
Strategic Theme: Performance	
Action	**SRO**
Agree a digital/technological solution for waste collections, to integrate the customer experience, improve speed and quality of service and optimise routing and efficiency	J McConnell
Strategic Theme: Place	
Agree council approach to funding for a fleet replacement strategy in order to transition to an alternative fuel	J McConnell
Agree the way forward for the expansion separate Glass Collection services	J McConnell
Agree the way forward for the expansion of the Kerbside Sortation model for recycling	J McConnell
Develop proposal for single use plastics policy for the council	J Stephens
Review and make recommendations on the pilot activity to support the circular economy projects	B Murray

City Services Directorate Actions	
Strategic theme: Performance	
Action	**SRO**
Review BCC Port Health IT systems requirements in context of emerging EU/UK system solutions and IT automations under development regionally and nationally to support NI Protocol implementation and service functionality	D Cuthbert
Recruit and retain sufficient staff to deliver the Port Health service	D Cuthbert
Work with DAERA and FSA to develop a sustainable funding model to secure necessary funding for the Port Health service, and obtain assurance for the 2024/25 financial year as a priority	D Cuthbert
Review and update the resourcing/staffing model to reflect any new arrangements for the NI Protocol following UK/EU discussions	D Cuthbert
Consider options to identify a resource to review the Pest Control appointment system	H Morrissey
Continue to work towards responsible dog ownership, engaging with all Council internal stakeholders	H Morrissey
Continue to develop the Bereavement Transition and Improvement plan	S McBride
Continue to work with the Department for Infrastructure on taking forward the Belfast off-street Parking Order for the city	S McBride
To explore community arrangement with external providers to assist ambitions for heritage tourism within the context of the tourism strategy for historical cemeteries and city cemetery visitor centre to increase visibility and footfall.	S McBride
To work with Physical Programs to support the identification, acquisition and development of new burial land provision	S Toland
Procure the new software system for regulatory services with a single modern and intuitive case management system that embraces mobile technology	D Bone

To implement an Operational Crematorium Board to plan and prepare for the effective service delivery of the new crematorium	D Bone
Complete the review of the HMO service function and implement required changes	V Donnelly
Strategic theme: Place	
Continue to delivery Air Quality Action Plan 2021 – 2026	V Donnelly

Neighbourhood Services Directorate	
Strategic theme: Customer	
Action	**SRO**
Establish service standards across all of Neighbourhood Services, communicate to service users and embed within each management unit's business plan	NSMs
Strategic theme: Performance	
Develop an assurance framework with AGRS, Departments and SCM and continue to deliver the corporate safeguarding policy and related procedures and provide assurance for CP service delivery	C Taggart / DMT
Produce the Belfast Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy	C Taggart, C McCann
Deliver Boxing Strategy Action Plan	C Taggart, C McCann
Develop a new Pitches Strategy	C Taggart, C McCann
Review capacity to ensure compliance with Statutory Biodiversity duty	S Leonard
Ensure effective facilitation of relevant partnerships to deliver on agreed action plans and respond to relevant identified community issues for example (D)PCSPs, Shared City Partnership, Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership, Belfast Area Outcomes Group, etc.	M Higgins, N Lane, C McCann, J Girvan
Implement a 2-year health/condition tree survey cycle of inspections on mature street trees, on behalf of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), as part of the Council's Project Management Agreement with DfI	S Leonard
Strategic theme: Place	
Support the development of Belfast One Million Trees Programme	S Leonard, E Mullan
Development and delivery of a Belfast Tree Strategy, with a 10m year lifespan, and a commitment to deliver key priorities and actions over the next 3 years	S Leonard
Continue to work on actions identified in the Good Relations Strategy, particularly those which relate to emerging priority issues	J Girvan
Complete development of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan	S Leonard
Continue to deliver the Council's Alleygate Programme	S Leonard
Develop a 5 year action plan for the delivery of the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy, and continue to work in partnership with Planning to secure/deliver Section 76 developer contributions for council maintained open space	S Leonard
Continue to develop and support the Playground Improvement Programme	S Leonard
Continue to support the delivery of the Climate Action Programme	S Leonard

Continue restoration of Templemore Baths and work with GLL for the opening of Templemore	N Lane
Complete pilot approach for Community Management of Assets	C Taggart, J Stewart

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PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC) Terms of Membership and Recruitment
Date:	12 September 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager, CNS Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, CNS

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	Yes		No	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?				
After Committee Decision				
After Council Decision				
Some time in the future				
Never				

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	X	No	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to;
	• Seek members approval to amend the Terms of Reference of the Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC).
	• Provide an update on the upcoming recruitment exercise for new members to the BCYC
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to:
	• Approve the revised terms of membership of the Belfast City Youth Council
	• Note the proposed recruitment exercise process for new members to the BCYC
3.0	**Main report**
	Overview
	Background
3.1	Members will recall at a previous Committee they received an update on the work of the Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC) and the recruitment exercise which will begin in October

	to select the next cohort of young people to the Council. Members asked for further information to be provided in relation to the operation of the BCYC and recruitment exercise.
3.2	The Young People's Coordinator, Stevie Mulholland, was appointed in November 2022 and part of the role involved revisiting the Terms of Reference of BCYC as these had not been reviewed for some time. In addition, since the Terms of Reference were drafted, the Education Authority has developed Youth Assemblies in each Council area but noted that BCC had already established the BCYC. In preliminary discussions, it had been agreed that BCYC would complement the work being undertaken by EA but that the BCYC would retain its own governance and identity.
3.3	The Terms of Reference 2020-23 are attached at Appendix 1.
3.4	The Young People's Co-ordinator is the only dedicated officer to the BCYC. To deliver the programme, work with up to thirty young people at a time and maintain safeguarding standards required, additional support is sought from several sessional contracted Youth Workers.
3.5	**Recommendations** Based on a number of discussions with the young people, officers and the sessional contracted youth workers, two recommendations on improving the functioning of the BCYC are proposed for consideration which would be reflected in a Revised Terms of Reference:

Current Position	Proposed Change	Rationale
Number of Members: 40 4 young people from each of the 10 DEAs	Reduce the number from 40 to 30. Target: 3 young people per DEA	• Logistically managing and delivering a programme with 40 young people- facilitating discussions, maintaining effective groupwork practice, organising activities, ensuring everyone has an opportunity to effectively participate is difficult with such a large group. Reducing the number of participants will increase opportunities for members to engage more effectively and receive a more quality experience. • Staff Resources- There is one dedicated officer allocated to the BCYC. In order to be

			safeguarding compliant, additional support needs be brought in. The service also requires consistency of leaders/facilitators. Thus we need to ensure that the delivery team is consistent and maintains effective relationships with the young people. Reducing the number of participants should enable a more consistent support team to be engaged which leads to positive relationship building.
			• Resources Programme Delivery. The BCYC meet twice per month. Costs are incurred for transport, food, refreshments, venue hire. Reducing the numbers will contribute to more effective allocation of the budget towards programming.
	Duration. Membership of BCYC is for 2 years.	Increase duration to be coterminous with Council- 4 Years. When selected, the new BCYC intake in 2023 will be in place until the June 2027	• Experience of delivering the BCYP programme shows that it takes a year for the members to form into a working group and plan their programme. Programme delivery is therefore restricted to less than 1 year.
			• Previous Belfast Youth Forums have sought additional time to deliver their programme. Requests were considered and approved by Council.
			• Being coterminous with Council provides more opportunity for BCYC members to grow into the role, build capacity and leadership skills, build relationships with Councillors and officers and input into our longer-term plans e.g. Belfast Agenda

Therefore, Members are asked to approve the proposed changes presented above.

- BCYC shall have 30 members – 3 from each DEA.
- The duration of the term of the BCYC will be 4 years to ensure it is coterminous with Council term.

3.6	**Recruitment and Selection**

The Young People's Co-ordinator is currently working with Council's Corporate Communications team to finalise the comprehensive marketing and communications plan, to underpin our recruitment and selection process. However, he has also been engaging with a wide range of youth organisations in advance of the recruitment phase.

The timeline for recruitment is as follows:

Month	Actions
September	• Initial engagement and contact with a wide range of organisations to raise awareness of the BCYC and promote the recruitment and selection process. This will be primarily face to face meetings within neighbourhoods and with city-wide organisations. The list for this direct engagement includes the following organisations; − Youth Work Alliance − EA Youth Service − Voluntary Sector Youth Providers − R City − NIYF − Street Beat − NICCY − Community Restorative Justice − Extern − Volunteer NOW − Shankill Alternatives − Cara Friend − Common Youth − Belfast Met − Transgender NI − VOYPIC − ACT Initiative − Disability Action − Rainbow project • Prepare all media and promotional materials- Corporate Communications • Design website and social media • Set-up Online application • Meet with Council's Youth Champions

October	• Publicity campaign and promotion events
	  o Launch the Recruitment process 4th October.
	  o Dedicated Web-page designed and promoted
	  o Social Media
	  o Press releases
	  o Eshots

		o Advertising
		• Deliver 6 Area-based Roadshows between 9th -30th October.
		• Deliver 3 Online information sessions between 9th -30th October
		• Ongoing face to face contacts with organisations
		• Application process opens 16th October with online applications. Provision for hardcopy applications will also be made available at the engagement meetings and Roadshows if requested.
	November	• Publicity and promotion activities continue. • Online application process closes, 17th November. • Assessment of applications W/B 20th November • Interview Process begin 27th November.
	December	• Interview process ends 13th December. • Belfast City Youth Council members selected and notified before 20th December.
	January	• Welcome event organised with the new BCYC members, parents, Lord Mayor/Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillors, and Officers- January 2024- Date TBC

3.7

Please note that Members can contact the Young People's Co-ordinator at mulhollandstevie@belfastcity.gov.uk to suggest specific youth organisations or clubs that should be contacted or if they have other queries about the youth council.

3.8

Financial & Resource Implications

All costs associated with the Youth Council have been agreed in the budget setting process. A dedicated Young People's Co-ordinator has been assigned to facilitate the Youth Council, however, as outlined further costs are incurred to ensure safeguarding requirements are met by having sufficient staff on site.

3.9

Equality or Good Relations Implications

Recruitment for the Youth Council seeks to ensure representation for young people from all sections of society, particularly relevant Section 75 groups and promotion and engagement is designed to support this.

4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: Current Terms of Reference for Belfast Youth Council

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Appendix 1

Belfast City Youth Council Terms of Reference 2020-23

Background

The Belfast Youth Forum was established in 2006 to act as the voice of young people in Belfast City Council. Belfast has one of the most significant young populations in Europe. The recent census figures show that Belfast is home to a young population with under a fifth of the population aged 14 years or younger and approx. 12% aged 0 – 9 years of age and 42 % of the population aged 30 years or younger (NISRA, 2021).

In recognition of this fact, the Youth Forum was set up to engage young people in the democratic processes of our city and to promote active citizenship from a young age.

In 2020 the Belfast Youth Forum was renamed the Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC). The Terms of Reference was produced in order to clearly articulate the function of the BCYC and ensure a shared understanding of its role.

Aim of Belfast City Youth Council

To lead on priority issues affecting Children & Young People in Belfast and influence city/local and regional planning in terms of issues affecting Children & Young people

Objectives:
- To provide its members with the opportunity to share their views and directly influence decisions taken by the Belfast City Council and partnerships that it facilitates when/where appropriate.
- To inform, influence and support the thematic and cross cutting work of Belfast's Community Planning Partnership with a focus on those areas of work that impact on children & young people in Belfast.
- To provide a source of intelligence and networking on children & young people issues in Belfast including commissioning and reviewing research on matters affecting children & young people in the city
- To support children & young people to be actively involved in the activities of the Belfast City Youth Council

Principles:

- Promote partnership working and collaboration among all those with an interest in, and contribution to make on issues affecting children & young people, especially other Children & Young People's Forums
- Create an environment that supports innovation and a problem- solving approach to issues affecting children & young people in Belfast
- Support the voice of children & young people, including hard to reach groups, to influence matters that affect all children & young people

Organisation:

- The group will meet at least once a month in City Hall and in other venues as required to deliver on their action plan/Programme of activity.
- Where possible meetings should be arranged for one year ahead.
- Subgroups or task and finish groups will be established and meet as needed

Commitments from Youth Council members:

- Attend at least 50% of meetings to ensure active participation and consistent membership
- Agree to code of behaviour that will ensure best practise in operation of the youth council

Commitments From Belfast City Council:

- Provide access to monthly meetings in City Hall
- Provide opportunity for youth council to meet with elected members at least 4 times per year
- Provide opportunities for social engagements and best practice learning
- Provide Refreshments and Transport to meetings and activities

Accountability:

Decisions will be made by consensus at full Forum meetings in the Council Chamber and other venues. If consensus cannot be reached a vote will be taken. Meetings are informal and all Youth Council members and external partners appointed to the Working Party are entitled to vote.

The youth council will attend special meetings of the Council's People & Communities committee on a quarterly basis. At these meetings the youth council will give an update on its work and the priority issues that it has identified. If there are issues for Council to consider these can be addressed at these meetings.

Membership:

Officers will actively engage with all areas to encourage applications from across the city. If applications of a sufficient standard are not received for all DEAs, officers will engage with organisations and elected members in that area to encourage more applications and fill vacancies.

When a membership term finishes, existing members will have the opportunity to reapply providing that they are within the age range and have attended at least 50% of activities in the previous term. Members will be able to remain on the Forum for a maximum of 3 x 2 year terms.

The Youth Council shall seek in its membership a diverse representation and Members will be selected with sensitivity toward gender, race, and geographic area represented.

- The forum is made up of 40 young people.

- Young people must live within the Belfast City boundary area.

- 4 young people are recruited from each of the 10 District Electoral Areas

- Young people are aged 13-18 (21 if they are disabled or have just left care).

- Young people serve a two year term on the Youth Council.

- **Qualifications** Youth (13-18 years of age, increase to 21 for those members with a disability or referred through social services) with or without disability who have desire in leading and directly influencing decisions to make a difference in their community.

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PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Response received from DAERA re Detailed Assessment Report
Date:	12th September, 2023
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
Contact Officer:	Sara Steele, Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	
After Council Decision	
Some time in the future	
Never	

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To note the correspondence received from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Note the correspondence as set out in the report and that the Air Quality officer will look at the program of monitoring in year and update members in a future report.

3.0	**Main report**
3.1	**Key Issues**
	The Committee will recall that, at the July meeting of Council, it was agreed that a letter be forwarded to DAERA seeking Air Quality Monitoring stations to be erected around Primary Schools.
3.2	The Committee is advised that a response had been received from Ms. Amy Holmes, Head of Air and Environmental Quality.
3.3	In her response, she advises that the Air and Environmental Quality (AEQ) Unit have considered the Council's request for funding support for a dedicated ambient air quality monitoring programme to be implemented outside of schools as part of the councils 2023/24 LAQM Grant application. It fully recognised the importance of monitoring, and indeed this had been reflected in the revised priorities for the new grant.
3.4	She goes onto refer to the increased rates of funding available for some aspects of the grant which had been determined in an effort to assist all Councils as much as possible, at this time of both financial and funding pressures and within the correspondence she sets out, in detail, the priorities for this year's grant, which included the following measures: • Maintenance of existing monitoring; • Staff costs; • Expansion of monitoring; and • Behavioural change/education campaigns
3.5	The correspondence concludes by stating that she hopes that the funding offered this year, in particular for the Schools 'idling vehicle' air pollution monitoring, and awareness raising project, would go some way to help obtain a better understanding of ambient air quality in the vicinity of schools and to assess the beneficial impacts of mitigation measures.
3.6	**Financial and Resource Implications** None associated with this report.
3.7	**Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment** None associated with this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 – Response from DAERA.

From the Head of Air and Environmental Quality
Amy Holmes

Department of
Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Ms. S. Toland
Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Belfast City Council

By email via steelesara@belfastcity.gov.uk

Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue
Gasworks Business Park
Lower Ormeau Road
Belfast
BT7 2JA

Tel: 028 90 569 543
Email: amy.holmes@daera-ni.gov.uk

30th August 2023

Dear Ms. S. Toland,

Thank you for your recent correspondence dated 8th August on behalf of Belfast City Council following the People and Communities Committee meeting and ratification of the Detailed Assessment report by Council.

It is positive and across the Department we very much welcome that Councillors acknowledged the valuable air quality assessment work and the additional ambient monitoring that has been undertaken as components of the Detailed Assessment. I personally recognise the considerable work that Alistair and the team in the council have put into this project and am very grateful for this.

The Air and Environmental Quality (AEQ) Unit has considered the Council's request for funding support for a dedicated ambient air quality monitoring programme to be implemented outside of schools as part of the councils 2023/24 LAQM Grant application. We fully recognise the importance of monitoring, and indeed this is reflected in our revised priorities for the new grant, detailed in Annex A of my letter to the Councils dated February this year (please see attached). You will have noted the increased rates of funding available for some aspects of the grant which have been determined in an effort to assist all councils as much as possible, at this time of both financial and funding pressures. The priorities for this year's grant as set out in my letter are:

1. Maintenance of existing monitoring;
2. Staff costs;
3. Expansion of monitoring; and
4. Behavioural change/education campaigns.

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INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

For the last five years the total of the LAQM Grant budget has been fairly consistent and in the region of £188-256,000 with Belfast City Council being a major recipient of this grant as compared to the other 10 councils. I can confirm that the funds that the Council received for the Detailed Assessment, which were considerable, were both additional and necessitated a separate financial bid by the AEQ team.

We have noticed an increase in staff costs and the cost of gasses in applications, this year, and there are a number of councils which are expanding/increasing monitoring. Despite obtaining a considerable increase in budget for the LAQM Grant this year, it has not been possible to fund all requests from all councils in our initial Letters of Offer. While I appreciate that this may come as a disappointment to the Council, I would like to reassure you that the team is fully committed to protecting human health and the environment and we monitor spend very closely to ensure maximum benefit for air quality and value for money for the public purse. On occasion, additional funds can become available mid-year and additional bids can be made in-year, and in the event of this occurring, the team will look very closely at the options for how this money can best be passed on to the councils via the LAQM Grant.

Within the Department I have submitted proposals for additional funding for the next two years and will be bidding for a further and considerable uplift in funds next year. It would be helpful if, the Council could, when submitting an LAQM Grant application for 2024/25, provide detailed proposals on the monitoring programme to be implemented outside of schools. My colleagues can outline the information that would be required in a follow up email, if this would be helpful? The team would also be very happy to meet to discuss any programmes in advance of an application made next year.

Despite being unable to fund all the council's requests, I trust the Council will find the funding assistance we have offered this year to be helpful. We have offered all of the £4,050.00 requested funding for, "Schools 'idling vehicle' air pollution monitoring, and awareness raising project. Purchase of 2 no. additional Zephyr small sensor air quality monitors." Having further reviewed the Council's application we have also been able to offer £72,496.98 of the £77,443.44 that was requested, an offer of almost 94%.

It may be helpful for you to consider that the Department of Infrastructure are required under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, to develop sectoral plans for transport which set a minimum spend on active travel from the overall transport budgets of 10%. DfI can advise further and have a central email point of contact for queries of this nature: ClimateChangeStrategies@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk . You may wish to consider development of a pilot programme which involves active travel at the school, and incorporates air quality monitoring 'before', 'during' and 'after' the pilot.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Council Officers for their support as well as their diligent and ongoing work to tackle air pollution.

I hope that the funding offered this year, in particular for the Schools 'idling vehicle' air pollution monitoring, and awareness raising project, will go some way to help obtain a better understanding of ambient air quality in the vicinity of schools and to assess the beneficial impacts of mitigation measures.

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We look forward to working with you further next year regarding this project.

Yours sincerely

Amy Holmes
Head of Air and Environmental Quality

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INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

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PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Proposal for dual language street signs
Date:	12th September, 2023
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer:	Ian Harper, Building Control Manager Roisin Adams, Property and Legal Coordinator

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	Yes		No	X

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	
After Council Decision	
Some time in the future	
Never	

Call-in				
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	X	No	

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To consider applications for the erection of dual language street signs for six existing streets within the city.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to agree to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at, Stockmans Drive, Whiterock Gardens, Dermott Hill Drive, Dermott Hill Park, Linview Court and Thornberry Glen.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Key Issues The Council may erect a second street nameplate in a language other than English pursuant to Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.

	3.2	Members are asked to consider the following applications to erect a second street nameplate showing the name of the street expressed in a language other than English. The second language is Irish.

3.4

The translations were authenticated by Queens University, the approved translator for Belfast City Council.

3.5

In accordance with the Council's policy for the erection of dual language street signs, surveys of all persons appearing on the electoral register plus owners or tenants in actual possession of commercial premises, for the above streets were carried out and the following responses were received.

3.6	**Stockmans Drive, BT11**
	• 24 occupiers (32.43%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate
	• 2 occupiers (2.70%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate
	• 1 occupier (1.35%) had no preference either way
	• 47 occupiers (63.51%) did not respond to the survey
3.7	**Whiterock Gardens, BT12**
	• 45 occupiers (28.30%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate
	• 114 occupiers (71.69%) did not respond to the survey
3.8	**Dermott Hill Drive, BT12**
	• 23 occupiers (62.16%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate
	• 14 occupiers (37.83%) did not respond to the survey
3.9	**Dermott Hill Park, BT12**
	• 28 occupiers (43.75%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate
	• 36 occupiers (56.25%) did not respond to the survey
3.10	**Linview Court, BT12**
	• 12 occupiers (63.16%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate
	• 7 occupiers (36.84%) did not respond to the survey
3.11	**Thornberry Glen, BT14**
	• 10 occupiers (35.71%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate
	• 18 occupiers (64.28%) did not respond to the survey
	Assessment against policy
3.12	The Council's policy on the erection of a second street nameplate requires that at least fifteen percent (15%) of the occupiers surveyed must be in favour of the proposal to erect a

	second street sign in a language other than English, to progress to Committee for consideration.
3.13	All of the surveys listed above demonstrate compliance with the threshold contained within the Policy. However the Committee is reminded that the Council retain a residual discretion under the Policy to decide to erect or not to erect a street sign in a language other than English in certain circumstances. This will be done on a case by case basis.
3.14	The Policy states that it may be appropriate to depart from the procedures in this Policy when there are clear reasons for doing so. This may include taking into account: (a) the views of the Occupiers of the street; (b) the results of the initial assessment for the application, including any identified potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs; (c) consideration of the local context of the application; (d) any other Council policies or strategies related to the application; and (e) all material considerations relating to the application. Financial & Resource Implications
3.15	There is a cost of approximately £1,100 to cover the cost of the manufacturing and erection of approximately 8 dual language street signs. The cost for these street signs has been allowed for in the current budget. Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.16	Each application for a dual language street sign is subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs. The initial assessments and elected member notification carried out for the 6 applications being considered did not identify any potential adverse impacts to prevent the surveys being carried out.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	Proposal for naming a new street
Date:	12th September, 2023
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer:	Ian Harper, Building Control Manager Roisin Adams, Business Coordinator

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?　　　　　　　　　　　　　Yes ☐　　No ☒

　　　If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

　　　　　After Committee Decision ☐
　　　　　After Council Decision ☐
　　　　　Some time in the future ☐
　　　　　Never ☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?　　　　　　　　Yes ☒　　No ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	To consider an application for the naming of a new street in the city.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	Based on the information presented, the Committee is required to make a recommendation in respect of an application for naming a new street in the city. The Committee may either: • Grant the application, or • Refuse the application and request that the applicants submit other names for consideration.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> The power for the Council to name streets is contained in Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.

3.2	Members are asked to consider the following application for naming a new street in the city. The application particulars are in order and the Royal Mail has no objections to the proposed name. The proposed new name is not contained in the Council's Streets Register and does not duplicate existing approved street names in the city.
3.3	

Proposed Name	Location	Applicant
Black Ridge View	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association

3.4	Apex Housing Association have advised that Black Ridge View is derived from Divis (from Irish Dubhais 'black ridge'). The Divis mountain is situated north of the development. The second and third proposals are Black Ridge Heights and Black Ridge Green. This street contains 93 residential properties and is part of the overall housing development that is known as Glenmona. The entire Glenmona site is a new mixed use urban development which will contain over 650 social and affordable homes.
3.5	In support of their application Apex have advised that they have maintained regular communication and productive community engagement with both local councillors and the community group, Upper Springfield Development Trust, regarding the Glenmona site. Through this engagement, it was proposed and agreed that it would be beneficial to have St Teresa's Primary School involved in the street naming of the development as the school is located next to the southern boundary of the site. Apex therefore worked with the School Principal and with the assistance of a local historian, they organised a competition involving Primary 6 pupils for the street naming of the site.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.6	There are no Financial, Human Resources, Assets and other implications in this report.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.7	There are no direct equality implications.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Belfast City Council

Subject:	St. Oliver Plunkett FC Container Request
Date:	12th September 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales Operational Director Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	David Sales Operational Director Neighbourhood Services

Restricted Reports					
Is this report restricted?		**Yes**		**No**	X
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?					
After Committee Decision					
After Council Decision					
Some time in the future					
Never					

Call-in					
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?		**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	To advise members of a successful funding application made by St Oliver Plunkett FC to the Irish Football Association/DCMS Grassroots scheme and to seek approval for a one-off funding contribution by Council to help secure the drawdown of this external funding.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	That the Committee note the successful application and agree to permit the installation of a container at Lenadoon Millennium Park for exclusive use of SOPFC for the storage of equipment purchased using the IFA funding. The proposal is that the costs of the concrete base to support the container (Circa £5k) would be provided from revenue budgets as a funding contribution from Council, while the Club will meet the costs of the container itself and that this approach will enable £25k of external funding to be secured.
3.0	**Main report**
	Key Issues
3.1	St Oliver Plunket FC has been successful in an application to the Irish Football Association/DCMS for sporting equipment at a value of £25,000. The majority of the club's

	bookings are made at Councils Lenadoon Millennium Park which is managed under a FMA by the Lenadoon Amateur Sports Community Interest Company. The CIC were supportive of the application.
3.2	The club's award is conditional on adequate secure storage being provided and to satisfy this condition the club is requesting permission to install a container on council land at the site. The container would be purchased by the club and placed in a location to be agreed between the club, Council and the CIC. Given ground conditions at the site enabling works will be required to support the container and it is proposed that Council will meet these costs (circa £5k) from current revenue budgets.
3.3	Members may recall that at a previous meeting of this committee in December 2022 it was agreed that no further requests for the installation of club owned containers would be considered until a formal policy had been adopted. Unfortunately, a resource to take forward this work has not yet been identified and in the interim, East Area Working Group made an award of £30k LIF funding to eight soccer clubs in East Belfast for containerised storage in March 2023.
3.4	Members are therefore asked if they would wish to accede to the request from St Oliver Plunkett FC to help secure the clubs draw down of the external IFA funding.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.5	The cost of providing the container at Lenadoon would be met by the club. The cost for the enabling works (£5k) would be met by Council from existing revenue budgets. This approach will secure £25k of external funding for the club.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.6	None.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None