



Subject:	Belfast Tree Strategy Update/Notice of Motion – Community Orchards
Date:	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2026
Reporting Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Director, Resources Fleet, Open Spaces & Streetscene
Contact Officer:	Alan McHaffie, Senior Woodland and Recreation officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members regarding progress on several key actions associated with the Belfast Tree Strategy and the successful launch of the Community Orchards Programme.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	Members are requested to note the great progress made with the Belfast Tree Strategy since its launch in October 2023 and an update on Notice of Motion – Community Orchards.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>

## Key Issues

3.1 The Belfast Tree Strategy was produced with the aim of managing and improving the city's tree-scape over a ten year period, up to October 2033, focussing on protecting, enhancing and expanding the Council's woodlands, trees and hedges, connecting people to nature, and ensuring that they continue to be a major asset to everyone who lives in, works in and visits Belfast.

3.2 The Belfast Tree Strategy objectives are broken into three main categories:

- **Trees and Urban Forest Structure**
- **Community Framework**
- **Sustainable Resource Management Approach** (see appendix 1)

### 3.2 **Community Framework' - International Reputation**

Belfast City Council has for the third year in succession been awarded 'Tree Cities of the World' status, strengthening its position as a leading urban forestry champion.

3.3 Currently, Belfast is the only city in Northern Ireland to achieve this accreditation and stands alongside Rio de Janeiro, Auckland, Washington and Toronto – 283 other cities across 24 countries that have met the programme's rigorous standards.

The initiative, co-founded in 2019 by the Arbour Day Foundation and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, celebrates cities that show exemplary commitment to nurturing their urban tree canopy.

3.4 In earning 'Tree Cities of the World' accreditation, Belfast City Council has consistently met the five internationally recognised core standards of urban forestry management:

1. Clear responsibility for tree care through dedicated city leadership and governance.
2. Establish tree management objectives that guide long-term planning and tree protection.
3. A continually updated inventory of local tree resources to inform strategic decision-making.
4. A dedicated budget for planting, maintaining and protecting trees.
5. An annual tree celebration, strengthening public engagement and environmental stewardship.

3.5	<p><b>Trees and Urban Forest Structure / Community Framework (New Tree/hedge planting 2025/26)</b></p> <p>The Council continues to work in partnership with organisations such as the Woodland Trust, Belfast Hills and the National Trust in the delivery of new tree planting across the city, with the objective of increasing tree canopy cover, addressing tree equity and supporting the One Million Tree initiative which runs to 2035.</p>
3.6	<p>Since the establishment of the One Million Tree initiative in 2020 the Council and its partners have planted a total of <b>293,516</b> new trees and <b>4,232</b> linear metres of hedging, what is more the Council remains committed to achieving 30% canopy cover by 2050.</p> <p>It should be noted the National Trust were a major contributor to the 2025/26 tree planting figures, which came about from their successful application for funding from the Forest Service, as part of the Afforestation Project in the Glencairn and Ballygomartin area.</p>
3.7	<p>The Council continues to collaborate with existing partners and is similarly striving to establish new partnerships, all of which is essential if the Council is to increase tree canopy cover across the city, however Members are reminded that whilst the Council is committed to increasing tree canopy cover, it should be stressed the One Million Tree initiative is a city wide project, which will necessitate increased engagement with other land owners to ensure the Council achieves its objectives, as set out within the Belfast Tree Strategy.</p>
3.8	<p><b>Notice of Motion – Community Orchards</b></p> <p>Following a NOM moved by Councillor Bower and seconded by the High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer, the Council launched its first Community Orchard project on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026 with members of the Malone Tornadoes who planted fourteen fruit trees and were assisted by several Elected Members (see appendix 2)</p>
3.9	<p>Since the launch of the Community Orchard project the Council has delivered several small community orchards in Ardoyne, one in the grounds of a local day nursery and another in the neighbouring community centre. The Council has also planted a small community orchard with the L'arche organisation in the east of the city, a group which work directly with a network of communities of people with and without learning difficulties.</p>

3.10	The Council will continue its work on the establishment of small community orchards across the city at the beginning of the next tree planting season which runs from November to March each year.
3.11	<u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u>  None
3.12	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u>
3.13	None
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	Appendix 1 – Belfast Tree Strategy, 37-point Action Plan Appendix 2 – Photograph of the Community Orchard launch