



Tree Planting and Resilience Strategy

Adopted 6th April 2020



Norfolk County Council

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Arabia Tree © Ed Stocker

Introduction

Trees, hedgerows and woodlands are some of the earth's oldest living organisms. They provide multi-functional benefits and are one of nature's greatest sources of natural capital.

In our urban areas they cool us down, absorb pollutants, improve our well-being and increase property values. In the wider environment they provide oxygen, combat climate change, reduce the risk of flooding and slow rain water run-off. Trees also provide food for people and wildlife, are a habitat for animals, fungi and other plants, are an important source of pollen and nectar for insects and help form our landscape and sense of place.

Our nation's tree stocks are under threat from pests and disease, climate change, development and population increase.

The UK has only 13% tree cover, compared with 31% in France or 72% in Finland! The Government's Committee on Climate Change wishes to increase the UK's tree cover to 17% by 2050 (this equates to approx. 1.5 billion trees).



Ash Dieback (c) Tom Russell-Grant



Construction site at Martham (c) Anne Crotty

Pests and diseases

Tree pests and diseases are increasing rapidly in the UK. Of particular concern at present are ash dieback, Dutch elm disease, acute oak decline, oak processionary moth, sweet chestnut blight, and *Phytophthora* diseases including *P.ramorum* and *P.kemovia* which affect a wide range of trees including larch and beech.

Other serious diseases or pests yet to arrive in the UK (some of which are already in Europe) include emerald ash borer beetle, bronze birch borer beetle, oak wilt fungus, Asian and citrus longhorn beetles and *Xylella fastidiosa* - the last three can affect a range of broadleaved hosts.

Climate change and development

Trees help fight climate change. They remove carbon dioxide from the air, store carbon in their timber and the soil, and release oxygen into the atmosphere.

Increasing development across Norfolk is changing our land use and impacting on existing trees and hedges. Norwich, Broadland and South Norfolk Districts have 35,000 new homes allocated by 2036, this is expected to rise to around 44,000.

In 2018 the population of Norfolk was 904,000. It has increased by 100,000 since 2002 which is a 12.5% population growth. It is expected to increase by another 50,700 over the next 10 years.

The Strategy

This strategy has not been written in isolation; it has been informed by national Defra and Tree Council guidance and has been drafted alongside a range of local stakeholders whose input has been invaluable.

The focus of this strategy is to increase the resilience¹ of our tree, woodland and hedged landscape and help Norfolk adapt to future climate change, pests and diseases.

The strategy will fit with policy and strategy^{2,3,4}, at a local and national level. It will help identify where the greatest gains can be made through tree and hedge planting and enable NCC to submit strong bids for the grant funding that is likely to become available in the future.

This strategy will increase woodland cover, but the primary aim is not to offset carbon through the planting of very high numbers of trees as this may have adverse impact on other important habitats and existing landscape functions in Norfolk. We will encourage natural approaches to tree establishment such as natural regeneration and rewilding as well as planting hedgerows and trees.

NCC manages a significant land holding including 16,900 acres of the County Farms estate (1.27% of Norfolk), closed landfill sites, school grounds, trails and public rights of way, council premises and highway verges (currently 5,965 miles).

The strategy will ensure that current ecological network maps and existing tree location data will inform decision making on the best places to plant trees, creating corridors for wildlife and to achieve the maximum environmental and health benefits that trees provide.

Information exchange and close working relationships with key landowners, stakeholders and community groups will ensure consistent good practice on tree planning, planting, establishment and management across the whole of Norfolk.



1. DEFRA: Tree Health Resilience Strategy. May 2018.
2. NCC: Tree Policy. V3 2018.
3. HM Government: A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment. 2018.
4. NCC Environmental Policy. November 2019.

Strategy Principles



Whitwell ak(c) Danielle Engelbrecht

1. Ensure the right tree or hedge is established in the right place to ensure it thrives to maturity
2. Protect, improve and expand current tree, hedge and woodland populations
3. Connect fragmented woodland and create new 'stepping stone' woodlands
4. Celebrate, promote and raise awareness of the value of trees
5. Improve resilience to climate change and pests and diseases, by increasing species diversity using native and non-native trees as appropriate
6. Use robust biosecurity measures to avoid importing or spreading pests and diseases
7. Work in partnership with other organisations at both local and national levels to ensure a joined-up approach to tree establishment and maintenance in Norfolk
8. Engage and empower local communities to plant and care for new trees, hedges and woodlands
9. Use NCC owned land to pilot and demonstrate best practice in tree establishment and management.
10. Consider people, wildlife and landscape benefits when specifying trees
11. Use strong evidence to secure external matched funding to deliver this Strategy; providing best value for NCC
12. Support existing local businesses within the rural economy to create employment opportunities in the lifelong care of trees and woodlands
13. Reduce the use of plastics, peat derived compost and pesticides

Trees of Norfolk



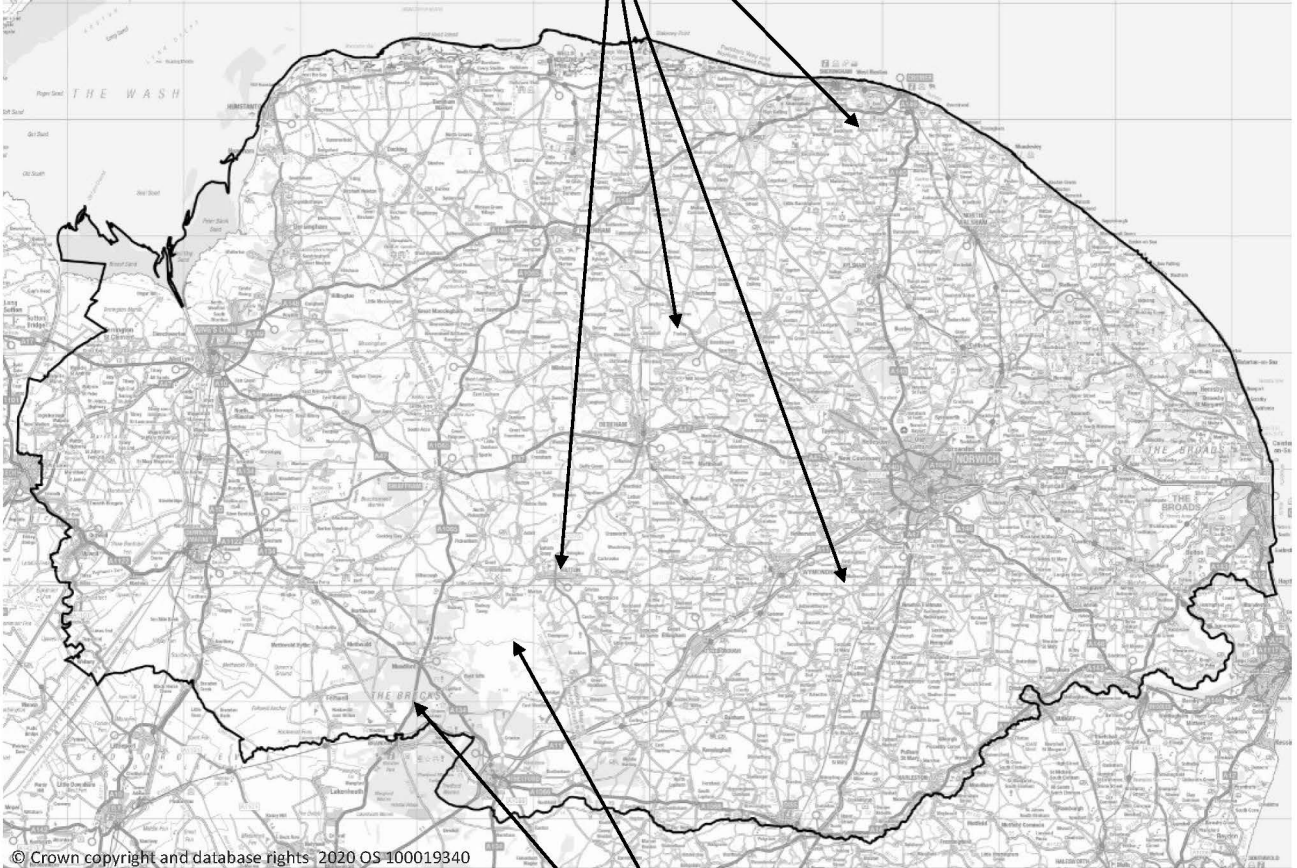
Ancient Woodlands

Veteran Trees © Graeme Cresswell



Lions Mouth, Felbrigg © Norfolk Trails

The North Norfolk Ridge



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Pine belts of The Brecks

Plantations



A pine tree shelterbelt © Evelyn Simak



Brecks Pines © Kirsty Webber-Walton

Trees outside woods - hedgerows, copses, small woodlands, avenues, parklands and orchards



Veteran Trees © Graeme Cresswell



Hedgerow at Seamere Farm © Sue Perkin

Street trees in cities, towns and villages



Admirals Way Swaffham © Anne Crotty

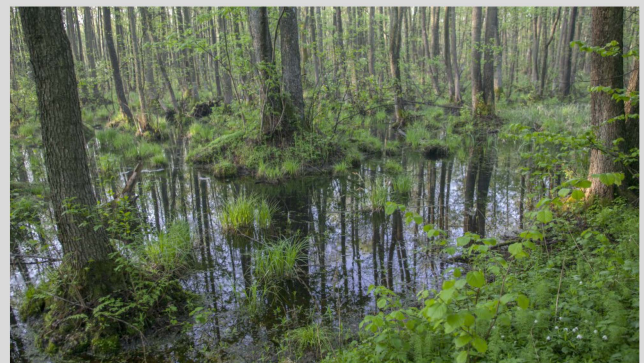


New Amelanchier © Anne Crotty

Alder carr - wet woodland



Veteran Trees © Graeme Cresswell

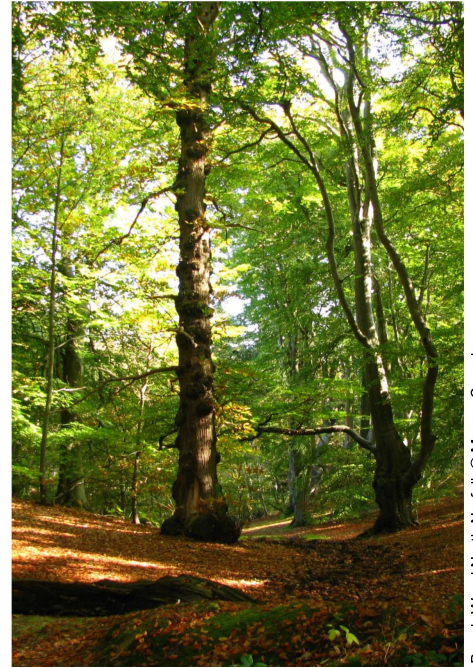


Alder carr © Jerzy Strzelecki

Wellbeing

Tree planting and young tree maintenance improves wellbeing, creates a sense of purpose, reduces social isolation and bonds communities.

It is an intergenerational activity suited to all and improves both mental and physical wellbeing. The trees then provide a legacy of green space with all the health benefits this brings.



Beech Wood North Norfolk © Megan Coombs



Weyoume tree planting © Tom Russell-Grant

Flooding

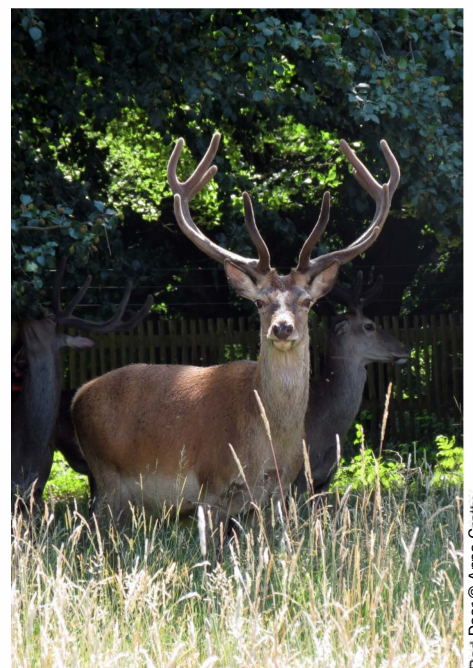
There are several ways that trees can help to reduce or prevent flooding:

- By direct interception of rainfall
- By improving soil structure and infiltration rates
- By absorbing and storing water
- By preventing soil erosion from water run off
- By increasing frictional resistance thereby slowing water flow over land

Damage to young trees

Few woodlands are reaching their full potential because trees, shrubs and plants are extensively browsed by mammals. Damage by non-native species such as some deer and grey squirrel is growing and likely to increase as climate change creates better conditions for these mammals.

Effective management will allow better and more diverse habitat to develop for the benefit of all wildlife and allow the natural regeneration of trees which is one of the very best ways to establish healthy woodlands.



Red Deer © Anne Crotty

Oak tree facts

Oak trees cover more of the UK than any other tree.

2300 total species use oak trees, including 38 bird species, 229 bryophytes, 108 fungi, 1178 invertebrates, 716 lichens and 31 mammals.

A mature oak can absorb up to 70 litres of water every hour.

Oaks live for a long time - the Bowthorpe Oak in Manthorpe near Bourne, Lincolnshire is perhaps England's oldest oak tree with an estimated age of over 1,000 years.

Kett's Oak, Norfolk's most famous oak, was believed to be planted in the mid 1200s.

The timber, prized for its strength and durability, is still used in the construction of houses, furniture making and shipbuilding.

Why write a Tree Planting and Resilience Strategy?

Objective

To produce, adopt and implement a collaborative strategy for developing and managing a thriving, benefit-generating treescape that is in tune with local needs and aspirations.

Benefits

- Provides the most effective mechanism to achieve a good general tree coverage
- Helps ensure that evidence-based and consensus-driven decisions are made
- Creates accountability within defined timeframes
- Provides a basis for shaping robust planning policy in relation to trees⁵

'Norfolk County Council (NCC) resolves to build on its new Environmental Policy which acknowledges that trees are a vital resource of help in combating climate change alongside rewilding for carbon sequestration. Therefore, this council agrees to work with communities, landowners and partners to plant 1 million trees over 5 years which must amount to a net increase around Norfolk which will not only reduce carbon levels but will also benefit wildlife and provide valuable green space to improve the lives of Norfolk residents for years to come.'⁶



Bradwell community woodland planting (c) Ed Stocker

5. Trees in the townscape – a guide for decision makers' Trees and Design Action Group. 2012.

6. Motion passed at full Norfolk County Council Meeting. 25th November 2019.



Thetford forest © Kirsty Webber-Walton

Weavers Way © Norfolk Trails





▼ Norfolk County Council

▶ Wheatfen © Lizzy Oddy