



South Kesteven District Council Trees & Woodland Strategy 2024 - 2034



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KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Foreword

We are now facing the major challenges of climate change and experiencing changes in our weather patterns and disruption to the usual balance of nature.

In response to this, South Kesteven District Council recently published its revised Climate Action Strategy, which set out our way forward on reducing carbon emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

As we know, the planting of trees of any kind brings with it valuable ecosystem benefits such as providing natural habitats, limiting the impact of heatwaves in urban areas and the filtering of pollution and flood prevention. Trees also play an important role in positively impacting on the wellbeing of communities and residents. They improve air quality, offer shade for crops and livestock, prevent nutrient loss and soil erosion and improve water quality. They also help to reduce the risk of flooding.

To ensure we have a resilient tree scape that continues to deliver these benefits, there needs to be a comprehensive plan for the management of our existing canopy. The Council has therefore worked to develop and deliver a District-wide Tree and Woodland Strategy as part of its ensuing work-plan.

The purpose of the strategy and accompanying action plan is to establish the current level of tree canopy cover in the District, highlight main areas of opportunity to increase the number of trees and areas of woodland and set out what role the Council can play in facilitating this alongside key partners.

Knowing that trees play such an important part in ensuring our District remains habitable for the future means that we need to protect the trees we have and enhance the tree scape of South Kesteven through continual planting and an expansion of our canopy cover.

We are therefore delighted to introduce South Kesteven District Council's Trees and Woodland Strategy 2024 – 2034.

Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, Councillor Rhys Baker



Cllr Rhys Baker,
Cabinet Member for
Environment and Waste



Benefits of Trees

There are more benefits to trees than many of us appreciate. In keeping with benefits of other natural systems, they are also known as ecosystem services. This approach was standardised by the World Commission on Ecosystem Service Management of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Work continues to quantify and value each of them.

Those that are quantifiable with valuations adopted by national or local government have been included within this report. They include carbon storage and sequestration, pollution mitigation, avoided stormwater runoff, all determined using i-Tree.

Many UK local authorities have also adopted CAVAT (Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees) to place a valuation upon the amenity of public trees.

There are a large number of other benefits where research continues to help assign meaningful financial valuations.

Increased property or rental value:

A series of international third-party studies have shown that trees increase property prices by between 5% to 18%.

Increased consumer spending:

Consumers are willing to spend more in shopping areas with large, well cared for trees. This has been measured as an increase of 9% to 12%.

Climate Adaptation - Temperature Regulation:

Trees and woodlands can reduce peak summer temperatures by up to 7°C. This particular adaptation has long been adopted by authorities in warmer locations and forms a key tenet of green infrastructure thinking. Current research extends into examining the cooling effectiveness of individual species.

Reduced Stress and improved mental health:

Forest Research recently valued this particular benefit of forests and woodlands nationally at £185m. More trees immediately around the home (less than 100 meters) are associated with a reduced risk of being prescribed antidepressant medication. This association is especially strong for deprived groups.

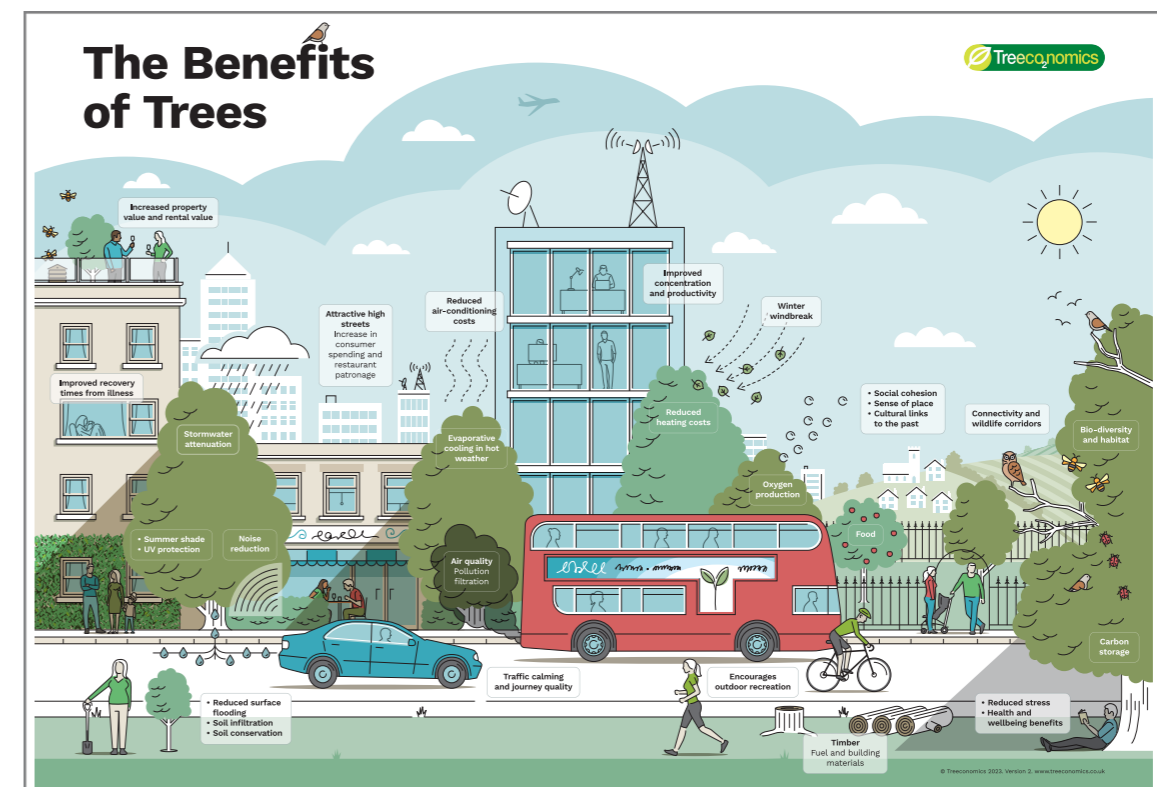
Improved concentration and academic achievement:

Greener schools have higher test scores, even after taking income into account. Middle school students get a boost from school greening. Planting trees within 250m of schools has the greatest effect.

Improved recovery times from illness:

Patients placed in rooms with views of nature experienced shorter stays in the hospital than patients in rooms that faced other buildings.

The image on the following page serves as a good illustration of the many benefits of trees



The Benefits of Trees



History

South Kesteven has a rich range of trees and green spaces. The District is home to a number of ancient tree treasure troves, including over 600 protected ancient trees with notable sites including the charming Belton Park and Grimsthorpe Castle.

The Council is committed to its policy of planting two trees for every one removed. Recent years have also seen new additions to South Kesteven's tree canopy cover:

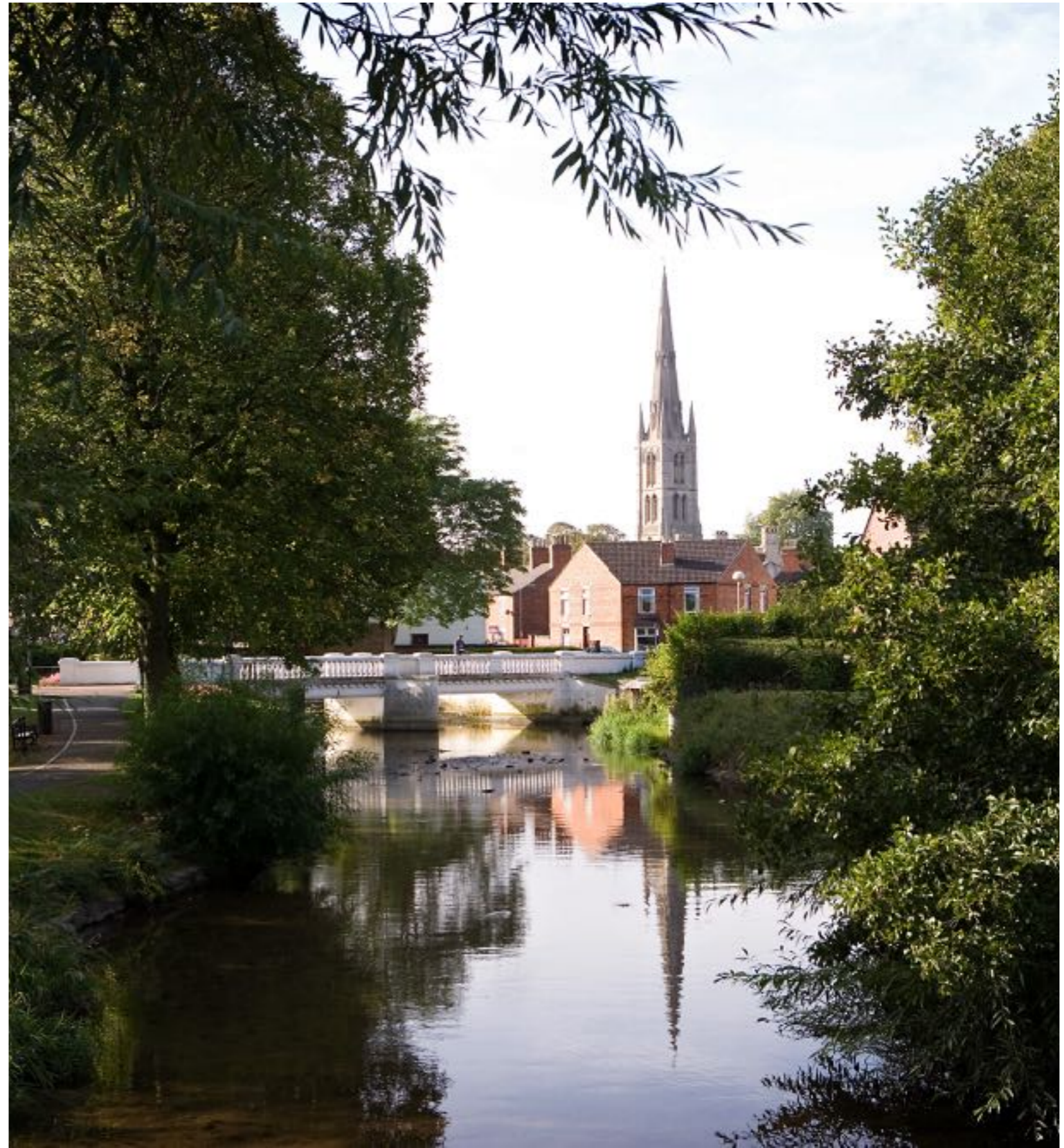
Queen Elizabeth Park is home to Grantham's Diamond Grove. In 2011, sixty silver birch trees were planted by the Wyndham Park Forum in an open area of the park. At the heart of the grove, an English Oak- 'Quercus Robur'- was planted to hopefully live on as Grantham's 'Elizabeth Oak' for hundreds of years.

Grantham's Heroes Commemorative Orchard is home to 75 heritage variety Apple, Plum and Cherry trees. These were planted in 2020 by the Wyndham Park Forum to mark the 7th anniversary of the end of WWII and the joint efforts of the RAF, airborne forces of First Airborne and America's Troop Carrier Command.

To celebrate National Tree Week in 2021, 50 trees - Wild Cherry, Rowan, Silver Birch, Hornbeam, Medlar and Whitebeam – were planted on council-owned areas of green space in Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and Market Deeping.

The Witham/Slea Blue Green Corridor ran from 2019 to 2023 and involved tree planting along the River Witham's corridor as well as tree hinging and felling; all with the aim to improve biodiversity in the local area.

2024 will see further trees planted across the District thanks to funding from the Coronation Living Heritage Fund which celebrates the coronation of King Charles III. This will fund up to 31 small community orchards which are due to be created across South Kesteven.



Wyndham Park, Grantham

Current State of Trees and Woodland

South Kesteven's trees and woodlands are a vital resource for the District, with a growing role within the public policy of South Kesteven District Council.

Previous & Current Tree planting initiatives:

- Gaps in key settlement areas
- Connectivity as a challenge
- Threats of new development

South Kesteven's 10% tree cover is half of the 20% recommended by Forest Research and significantly below the 30% target for urban spaces within the 3-30-300 rule recommended by the IUCN. It is not, however, entirely unexpected; South Kesteven's rural setting is dominated by open farmland and hedgerows, with few woodlands. To address the low canopy cover, different approaches will be required in rural areas, versus towns.

This strategy strives to ensure we plant the right trees, in the right places for the right reasons and 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 South Kesteven District Council, in line with current international, national, and local policy.

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 targets, priorities and actions laid out in this 10 year tree strategy document will build on South Kesteven District Council's previous successes and include actions around sustainable management, community engagement and on ongoing measurement of the structure and composition of the District's treescape.

As the climate changes, the loss of biodiversity and the need for resilience need to be tackled now to ensure that future generations can continue to benefit from our trees long into the future. This is a challenge for us all, hence the central focus on acting through local capabilities and decision-making.



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

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

What is covered by 'Trees & Woodlands'

We have taken a broad definition, to include all trees, shrubs and hedges, which can be found anywhere from deliberately planted roadside trees to self-seeded scrubland. They provide benefits to those who live nearby and within them. 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 natural landscape.

Sources and References:

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

Our Vision

Exploration of the decided vision and how the strategy will link to fundamental goals are within that vision. Description of how the strategy is divided into different sections which will aid the same vision but with very different approaches and outcomes.

The vision is centred upon local communities. It recognises the vital importance of the parish structure in enabling a responsiveness to the concerns and wishes of those who live in each particular part of the District.

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. This ambitious Trees and Woodland Strategy is an important step forward. Its implementation, in collaboration with both Lincolnshire County Council and all 65 parish and town councils, will create a greener, healthier and more resilient place to live and work.



Our vision:

**Healthy Trees, Healthy South Kesteven:
Strengthening our tree assets through protection,
enhancement, and growth, ensuring resilience and
vitality in perpetuity**

Alternative formats are available on request: audio, large print and braille

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