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| Report To: | Overview & Scrutiny Committee |
| Date: | 9 th December 2025 |
| Subject: | Tree and Hedgerow Strategy Action Plan |
| Purpose: | To agree the Action Plan to inform delivery against the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Tree and Hedgerow Strategy |
| Key Decision: | Yes |
| Portfolio Holder: | Councillor Claire Rylott, Portfolio Holder for Green Spaces and Travel |
| Report Of: | Christian Allen, Assistant Directory – Regulatory |
| Report Author: | Sarah Baker, Group Manager – Climate Change and Environment |
| Ward(s) Affected: | All |
| Exempt Report: | No |

Summary

The South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership adopted its Tree and Hedgerow Strategy back in 2022 however for reasons outlined in this report a formal Action Plan to deliver the ambition and commitment of the three Councils has not previously been agreed. This report sets out the approach to taking forward a variety of work areas and projects to ensure trees and hedgerows throughout the sub-region are appropriately managed, protected and enhanced for the benefit of all.

Recommendations

That Overview & Scrutiny Members;

1. Consider the proposed Tree and Hedgerow Action Plan and provide feedback as appropriate; and
2. Recommend to Cabinet adoption of the Tree and Hedgerow Action Plan.

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| <p>Reasons for Recommendations</p> <p>To ensure a considered plan is in place to deliver progress against the ambition and high level commitments of the Tree and Hedgerow Strategy.</p> |
| <p>Other Options Considered</p> <p>Not to adopt the Action Plan and to continue to undertake projects, policy and procedural updates in a piecemeal fashion across South and East Lincolnshire.</p> |

1. Background

- 1.1 The development of a Tree and Hedgerow Strategy for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership was delivered as part of the Annual Delivery Plan for 2022-23.
- 1.2 The Strategy sets out the vision that *“Our communities are richer in greener spaces to live, visit and invest through the sustainable presence of trees and hedgerows which help people and wildlife adapt to the future challenges of our changing environment”*.
- 1.3 This is underpinned by the three core objectives of the Strategy which are to Protect, Plant and Participate – recognising the need to manage and enhance existing resources, to ensure a carefully considered approach to new planting and to engage local communities and wider stakeholders in delivery of the Strategy going forward.
- 1.4 Development of the accompanying Action Plan commenced straight away alongside consultation and support from a number of external partners including the Woodland Trust, Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership, Forestry Commission and many more.
- 1.5 Finalisation of the document was however delayed pending development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Lincolnshire being led by Lincolnshire County Council to ensure the two documents did not duplicate and complimented each other in terms of strategic delivery.
- 1.6 Development of the LNRS is now progressing but this work is unlikely to complete until mid to late 2026 and it was agreed there is a need to move forward SELCP’s work on Trees and Hedgerows earlier.
- 1.7 In addition, the appointment of a new Arboricultural Officer at East Lindsey District Council has brought in a renewed level of expertise and support to further develop the Action Plan to the version which is now being proposed. Whilst this is not a shared role, their informed input to the document will benefit all three Councils.

2. Report

- 2.1 Tree planting in particular is often the go-to activity highlighted in the fight against climate change however it is far more complex than simply placing trees into the ground. The principle of the 'Right Tree in the Right Place' is critical to ensuring future success and requires careful planning so that trees and hedgerows are correctly managed and maintained into the future with the required resources identified at the outset.
- 2.2 It is also important to understand the local context for tree planting and work to develop the current evidence base has been undertaken as part of the development of this Action Plan.
- 2.3 A baseline mapping exercise has been undertaken using I-tree canopy software which showed that approximately 6.5% of land in South and East Lincolnshire is classified as tree cover, and just 1.5% is classified as hedgerows. This is against an England average tree cover of 12.8% and hedgerow cover of 2.5% however it is important to consider that South and East Lincolnshire has not historically been a heavily tree covered area due to its predominantly fenland and agricultural landscape and that landscape character is important to maintain.
- 2.4 This research has also demonstrated however that over 80 kilotonnes of carbon is sequestered annually in trees in South and East Lincolnshire with an estimated economic value of over £18,000,000 demonstrating their importance to the sub-region, not only in helping to tackle climate change but in providing health and wellbeing benefits such as cleaner air.
- 2.5 Woodland opportunity mapping for the sub-region undertaken by Friends of the Earth based on existing habitat and landscape character has outlined the potential for future woodland creation opportunities in each District to be:
 - East Lindsey: 908 hectares
 - Boston: 11 hectares
 - South Holland: Less than 1 hectare
- 2.6 This data demonstrates the large difference in opportunity across South and East Lincolnshire and highlights why the sub-regional approach is so important. Urban planting opportunities for extending schemes such as community woodlands and traditional orchards may have a greater role to play in South Holland with larger scale woodland creation in East Lindsey for example.
- 2.7 Available hedgerow data is far more limited however the habitat is a focus of the UK Government's Environmental Improvement Plan and a national target has been set for creation or restoration of 30,000 miles of hedgerows by 2037 and 45,000 miles by 2050.
- 2.8 The draft Tree and Hedgerow Action Plan for South and East Lincolnshire puts forward a number of proposed activities set across the Plant, Protect and Participate core objectives. These include activities such as reinvigorating and reinstating Tree Warden networks, working with communities and wider stakeholders to identify planting opportunities with ongoing management plans, taking steps to improve and

encourage strong biosecurity measures to minimise the spread of pests and diseases and to ensure a consistent and transparent approach to decision-making concerning trees and hedgerows across our own landholdings. It also includes development of achievable tree and hedgerow planting targets based on informed evidence.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. Trees and hedgerows have an important role to play in supporting the environmental and economic wellbeing of South and East Lincolnshire but it is important to recognise that delivery of the agreed vision is about far more than simply planting and creating new habitats.
- 3.2. The proposed Action Plan seeks to balance new initiatives with ensuring that appropriate management practices and stakeholder networks are in place to identify, resource and implement activities for the benefit of all.
- 3.3. It is proposed that a light touch review of the Action Plan is undertaken as soon as the Lincolnshire LNRS is agreed by the Secretary of State (anticipated late 2026) to ensure the two documents complement each other.

Implications

South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

Trees and hedgerows are a very tangible feature of the natural environment and something that local residents are often very passionate about. It is important for the Partnership to clearly set out its vision and detail how it intends to deliver that including how it will work with local communities and key stakeholders.

Corporate Priorities

The Tree and Hedgerow Strategy and associated Action Plan directly supports delivery against the Environment priority set out within the South and East Lincolnshire Sub-regional Strategy.

Staffing

None. Oversight and delivery of this action plan will be encompassed within existing resources.

Workforce Capacity Implications

None.

Constitutional and Legal Implications

None.

Data Protection

None.

Financial

There are no direct financial implications arising from adoption of the Action Plan however there are a number of areas of work outlined within the document that will require additional funding to implement. There are a wide range of external funding opportunities available to support the Action Plan and those will be fully explored. Projects which do require financial investment will be agreed through the relevant governance procedures prior to work commencing to ensure the financial implications are considered and understood.

Risk Management

There is a greater risk of doing nothing than of adopting this Action Plan. Having agreed an ambition and high level commitment through the Tree and Hedgerow Strategy it is critical that a roadmap to delivering against that is clearly set out.

Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales

Consultation with a number of external stakeholders, providing expertise within the field, has been undertaken as part of the development of this action plan.

The relevant portfolio holder has been consulted and scrutiny committees will have the opportunity to comment on the draft Action Plan before it is taken forward for formal adoption by Cabinet.

Reputation

Any reputational risks associated with this report are more likely to arise from doing nothing rather than implementing an Action Plan to deliver the previously agreed vision and high level commitment of the Partnership.

Contracts

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

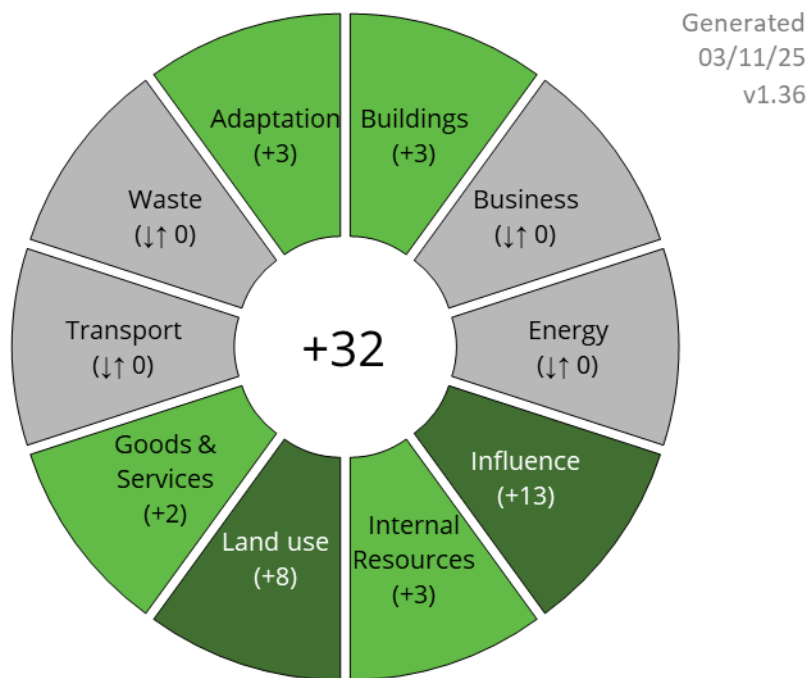
Equality and Diversity / Human Rights / Safeguarding

None. An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken with no implications being noted.

Health and Wellbeing

Exposure to trees and hedgerows are considered to have benefits to the mental and physical wellbeing of people therefore taking action to improve this aspect of the natural environment is anticipated to have a positive impact on local residents and visitors to the sub-region.

Climate Change and Environment Impact Assessment



The Partnership has committed to being Net Zero by 2040 (14 years and 1 months away).

Delivery of this action plan has the potential to influence a number of areas positively in relation to climate change predominantly through improved stewardship, shared learning and understanding and new habitat creation.

Acronyms

LNRS: Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Appendices

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report:

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| Appendix 1 | Tree and Hedgerow Action Plan |
| Appendix 2 | Tree and Hedgerow Strategy |

Background Papers

No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.

Chronological History of this Report

A report on this item has not been previously considered by a Council body.

Report Approval

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