

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Climate & Environment Advisory Committee

1 September 2020

AUTHOR/S: Miriam Hill, Trees Officer

Item: England Tree Strategy

Item brought to Committee because: Advice is sought on any additional issues or considerations which are of particular importance or relevance to South Cambridgeshire and Cambridgeshire.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 South Cambridgeshire District Council is to submit a response to DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) in response to the current England Tree Strategy consultation.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The England Tree Strategy seeks to further the work of the National Tree Champion, Sir William Worsley, the many changes in legislation and policy which have occurred over the last two years, future changes in the land management grants systems and reflect changes in public opinion.
- 2.2 The document also reflects the 2018 DEFRA consultation 'Protecting and enhancing England's trees and woodlands' which sought views and opinions on: the duty to consult on tree management; reporting on felling and planting of trees by local authorities; tree and woodland strategies; and forestry enforcement measurements.
- 2.3 A considerable number of organizations have contributed to the formation of this document already. They range from environmental and wildlife groups through to large landowners and forestry representatives.
- 2.4 The consultation period ends on the 11th September 2020.

3.0 The England Tree Strategy Document

- 3.1 Trees touch on all aspects of living and working in England. They are an essential green infrastructure resource providing services and benefits to humans. They improve air quality, reduce noise, provide microclimate regulation and help save energy through solar shading, intercept and retain rainwater, act as visual elements within the landscape and provide food, shelter and other products for animals and humans alike.
- 3.2 There are also disadvantages of trees. Disadvantages include increases in allergies, the emission of volatile organic compounds, disruption of hard surfaces, falling leaves, flowers, seeds and fruits, a host and food source for unwanted wildlife.
- 3.3 It is imperative that England increases the canopy cover of the entire country to assist with combatting climate change and become more self-sufficient with wood and tree-

based products. This is especially important within urban areas where trees can have the greatest benefits from eco-system services and gains in health and well-being.

- 3.4 The England Tree Strategy endeavours to address both existing problems associated with planting, managing, and harvesting trees and looks forward at what the nursery, arboricultural and forestry industry may need over the next decades with increasing treescape and canopy cover.
- 3.5 There is no part of the England Tree Strategy which will not affect how we perceive, live, play and work in South Cambs.
- 3.6 As a Council our main areas of focus are as a; local planning authority and regulator of building control; landowner and drainage authority; grant giver and community developer; supporter of local businesses including agriculture; and a local leader of better health and wellbeing.
- 3.7 The Strategy document is very broad to allow DEFRA scope to take consultation responses and shape them into a sharpened, detailed document. DEFRA have not determined a fixed idea of what the outcome/output of the consultation may be, but it has already been suggested that a combination of updates to the Forestry Act 1967, additional guidance and policy are most likely.
- 3.8 There are four main themes to the Strategy: expanding and connecting trees and woodlands; protecting and improving our trees and woodland; engaging people with trees and woodland; and supporting the economy. The 39 associated questions are very detailed with few or limited opportunities to free text.
- 3.9 It is important to note that the Strategy has a Technical Annex which also includes a considerable amount of pertinent information and background.

4.0 Forming the consultation response

- 4.1 It has not yet been determined the most appropriate method of responding to the consultation. It is possible that South Cambs may respond jointly with Cambridge City Council on some aspects of the Consultation to reflect our partnership. It may be best for South Cambs to submit two responses, one concentrating on our work as a local planning authority and a second reflecting a more holistic response.
- 4.2 To date, the views from a diverse range of officers from many disciplines' have been sought on either themes or specific responses for individual questions. This includes Ecologists, Landscape Architects, Building Control and Sustainability. These are being collated to provide a clear picture on what is considered most important to South Cambs.
- 4.3 Officers have also had a collective discussion with other Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trees and Woodlands Officers. This has provided a better view of how Cambridgeshire as a whole will respond and given an indication of which are the most important themes for different Councils.
- 4.4 Nationally, Officers have been included in workshops with organisations such as The Institute of Chartered Foresters, to ensure the South Cambs perspective can be included within other responses.
- 4.5 There are too many responses to list in this document, however common themes include: the support of increasing canopy cover; ensuring the 'right tree in the right

location' is adhered to and encouraged; involving as many members of the community on the tree planting and management journey as possible; ensuring what is planted becomes established and allowed to thrive; protecting what we have whilst increasing the canopy cover and variety of treescapes; increasing the opportunities of tree planting to all sizes and types of landowner through education and grants; and encouraging a longer term vision and greater scope of treescapes and management outside of the arboricultural and forestry industries.

5.0 Climate & Environment Advisory Committee

- 5.1 Officers would like to reflect the advice and interests of the Climate & Environment Advisory Committee within the consultation response on matters with particular relevance to the South Cambs perspective.

6.0 Background Papers:

- 10.1 The following list contains links to the documents on the Council's website and / or an indication as to where hard copies can be inspected.

- England Tree Strategy Slides
- [England Tree Strategy Consultation Document](#), and
- [England Tree Strategy Consultation – Technical Annex](#).

Report Author:

Miriam Hill Trees Officer
Telephone Number: 07514 922 461