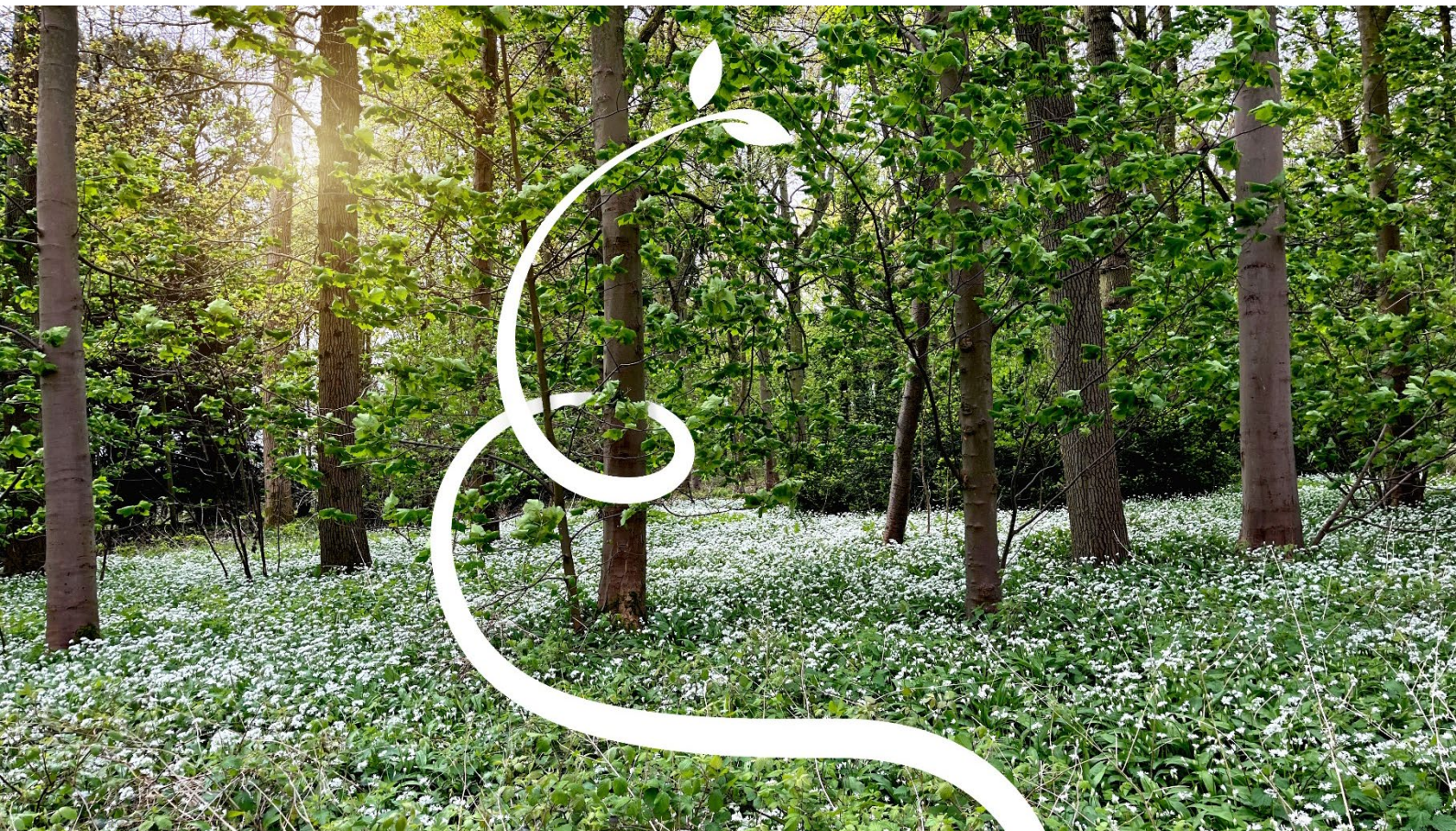


Lincolnshire County Council

Trees & Woodland Planting Strategy 2024 – 2034



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Executive summary

The UK Government published the Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener in 2021, setting out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the economy to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (Defra, 2021). A significant step towards reaching this goal is to increase tree and woodland cover by planting more trees.

Lincolnshire County Council has an ambition to plant **750,000 trees**, a tree for every resident in the county. The Tree & Woodland Planting Strategy presented in this document outlines how Lincolnshire County Council will achieve this by identifying land suitable for new tree planting and protecting existing native woodland and trees, making Lincolnshire a greener and better place to live.

Introduction

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) recognises that climate change may pose potential threats, such as rising urban temperatures and increased risk of flooding, to communities and the environment. Trees and other 'green infrastructure' can help to mitigate and adapt to the changing climate by increasing carbon storage, improving air and water quality, and enhancing habitats for wildlife.

It is vital that we plant more trees in and around Lincolnshire, but crucial that we choose the right trees, for the right places, and for the right reasons. By providing appropriate protection, management, and community support, we will enable the trees of Lincolnshire to prosper far into the future, for generations to come.

Overview of existing woodland, hedgerows, and orchards in Lincolnshire

Lincolnshire has just over 4% tree cover (approximately 22,500 hectares), compared with the national average of 13% (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011). It is one of the lowest levels of tree cover in England. As Lincolnshire has large areas of arable agricultural land, historically it has not tended to have extensive woodland areas. In addition, many of Lincolnshire's woodlands are now isolated within the landscape, lacking connectivity (GLNP, Not dated a).

Of the 22,500ha of woodland covering Lincolnshire, Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) accounts for approximately 6,300ha. Much of the ASNW of Lincolnshire was lost hundreds of years ago, with our current pattern of woodland distribution recorded as early as 1086, when the Domesday Book was completed (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011). In the Victorian 'high farming' period, there was extensive felling for agriculture. However, there has been a minimal amount of woodland cleared for farming in Lincolnshire since the 1940s - 1950s (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011).

Despite having such low tree cover, we have some nationally important areas of woodland, such as the Lincolnshire Limewoods, which is Britain's largest concentration of traditionally managed small-leaved lime woodland, dating back over 5,000 years. Located in the central clay vale, these lime-dominated ASNW include Bardney Limewoods National Nature Reserve (NNR), which is the only woodland NNR in the county (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011). There are two other remaining concentrations of ASNW, which exist in the Bourne woods area on the Kesteven uplands and on the eastern Wolds edge on the Middle Marsh (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011). Newly planted native woodland could provide a valuable role in reconnecting fragmented habitat, as well as offering opportunities for people to experience and enjoy woodland (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011).

Hedgerows are another tool for reconnecting fragmented woodland habitat. In the last century, hedgerow numbers have drastically declined. In Lincolnshire, around 50% of hedgerows have disappeared since 1950 (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011), with approximately 118,000 miles of hedge lost across the country, due largely to agricultural intensification (Woodland Trust, Not dated a). The loss has slowed since the 1990s, but neglect, damage and removal remain significant threats (Woodland Trust, Not dated a).

Many traditional orchards have been lost to neglect, grubbing up and development over the last 60 years, with around a 60% loss of orchards in Lincolnshire (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011). At one time, many farms would have had a mixed orchard to shelter livestock, grow fruit and provide an alternative source of income (Natural England, 2010). New orchard creation can provide these benefits today, along with improving biodiversity and sequestering carbon to mitigate climate change.

National Ambitions

The value of trees and hedgerows is becoming better recognised and there has been a nationwide push to plant more. The DEFRA “25 Year Environment Plan”, published in 2018, set an aspiration to “increase woodland in England to 12% cover by 2060”. This would involve planting 180,000 hectares of new woodland by the end of 2042 (Defra, 2018). Further to this, the UK Government published the Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener in 2021, setting out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the economy to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (Defra, 2021a). A significant step towards reaching this goal is to increase tree and woodland cover from 10.2% to 16.5%, with a Government commitment to accelerate tree planting by creating 30,000 hectares of new woodland every year by 2025 until 2050 (Defra, 2021b).

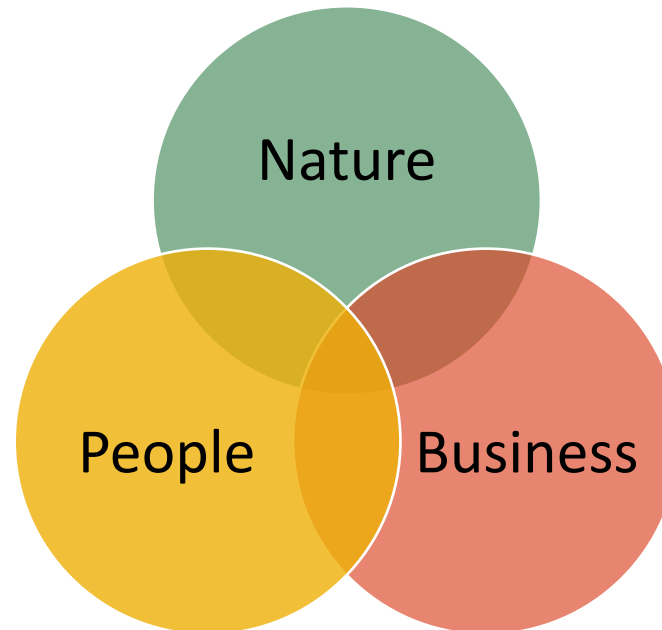
To aid the delivery of tree and woodland planting, the Forestry Commission’s Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF) has provided Lincolnshire County Council with revenue support for the employment of two dedicated Woodland Creation Officers, required to accelerate planting plans, develop a tree planting project, promote the benefits of tree planting and apply for further grant funding from Central Government (Forestry Commission, 2022).

Lincolnshire County Council's Ambitions

Vision

The vision of Lincolnshire County Council is '*working for a better future*'. With this Trees & Woodland Planting Strategy, we envisage that ***'together, we can benefit wildlife and local landscape and help to tackle climate change by planting the right trees, in the right places, for the right reasons.'***

By working in partnership with a variety of organisations and businesses, we want to create and maintain thriving woodland environments through responsible management, giving our residents the opportunity to choose healthy lives with access to nature and the countryside. Trees and woodlands offer social, economic, and environmental benefits that should be shared by those who live in and visit Lincolnshire. We will prioritise areas and approaches which will deliver the broadest range of public benefits, engaging with residents to ensure Lincolnshire's treescapes are enjoyed by everyone, while mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change for future generations.



Aims

Our ambition is to plant **750,000 trees**, one tree for every resident, which will include woodland creation, trees outside of woodland, community orchards and hedgerows, providing social, economic, and environmental benefits across Lincolnshire.

This strategy sets out the key objectives Lincolnshire County Council will follow to achieve the planting ambition over the coming years and how we will work in partnership to further increase tree planting and cover across the county.

Key Objectives

1. Promote the benefits of planting of suitable trees, orchards, hedgerows and woodlands



2. Develop new and facilitate access to existing grant funding for tree planting

3. Work in partnership with District and Parish Councils, Government Departments, Charities, farmers and landowners and communities to increase suitable tree planting

4. Offer expert advice on tree and woodland planting



5. Promote and support development of woodland management plans to ensure woodlands provide multifunctional benefits while remaining resilient to pressures on tree health

6. Aid delivery of biodiversity net gain schemes with guidance from the Greater Lincolnshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Delivery Framework

LincWoods

- New woodland creation
- New hedgerow planting
- Coronation community orchards

Working in partnership

- District authorities, local authorities and parish councils
- Government Bodies - Forestry Commission, Defra and Natural England
- NGOs, such as the Woodland Trust, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership

Planting on Lincolnshire County Council land

- Country Parks, County Farms, schools, offices and highways land
 - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)
 - Street trees



LincWoods is Lincolnshire County Council's tree planting project. We are looking to work with landowners, farmers, businesses, charities, parish councils and communities of Lincolnshire to support the planting of new woodlands, orchards, hedgerows and individual trees. We can offer free help and advice on species, protection, management, funding and grant options available on a site-specific basis. We are in partnership with the Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission, aiming to deliver as much appropriate planting as possible.

'Together, we can benefit wildlife and local landscape and help to tackle climate change by planting the right trees, in the right places, for the right reasons.'

View the map to see trees already planted:

View the map >

The social, economic and environmental benefits provided by trees and woodlands are wide-ranging. Social benefits include the support of health and well-being through recreational activities, such as walking and arts and crafts. Woodlands and community orchards are places that can be accessed and enjoyed by individual people, as well as acting as meeting points for families and friends.

Woodlands offer opportunities to diversify businesses, delivering economic benefits such as reliable income streams from timber, local woodfuel, carbon offsetting, venison, and recreation. Trees planted outside of woodland can increase property and rental values by creating a more appealing aesthetic.

Environmental benefits encompass improving air quality and water quality, preventing nutrient loss and soil erosion, offering shade for crops and livestock and reducing the risk of flooding. Tree planting has been highlighted as a means to help tackle the climate emergency, capturing and storing carbon and helping mitigate against the effects of greenhouse gas emissions.

Woodland

Lincolnshire has one of the lowest levels of tree cover in England due to the high proportion of good quality arable farmland. Lincolnshire's remaining woodlands are now isolated within the landscape, lacking connectivity. To increase habitat connectivity across the county, we are encouraging planting of new woodlands, by offering guidance on woodland creation, management and funding options best suited to each site.

As part of the **LincWoods** project to increase tree planting, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) aims to offer subsidised native planting schemes to:

- parish councils
- voluntary groups
- private landowners
- farmers around the county

LCC's Woodland Creation Officers can assist applicants through a site visit, offering early advice, aiming to save them time and money in their woodland creation endeavours. We will promote and support development of woodland management plans to ensure woodlands provide multifunctional benefits while remaining resilient to pressures on tree health.

Hedgerows

Hedgerows are vital green infrastructure features in the landscape, capturing carbon, preventing soil erosion, helping reduce flooding, cleaning our air and giving clues to historic land management. Although found throughout Lincolnshire's farmed environment, hedgerows are less prevalent in areas of coastal grazing marsh and fenland due to a history of land drainage and style of agricultural practice (GLNP, Not dated b).

Hedges are an essential refuge for wildlife, providing important corridors across the countryside. They are crucially valuable for a number of species of conservation concern in the UK (GLNP, Not dated b). In Lincolnshire, farmland bird species such as grey partridge and yellowhammer, bats and the brown hairstreak butterfly are reliant on hedgerows for their survival (GLNP, Not dated b).

Lincolnshire County Council are encouraging planting of new hedgerows across the county. We will be able to offer guidance on hedgerow creation, management and also the funding options best suited to each site.

As part of the **LincWoods** project to increase tree planting, Lincolnshire County Council will offer subsidised native hedgerow planting schemes to:

- parish councils
- voluntary groups
- private landowners
- farmers around the county



Orchards

Lincolnshire County Council has been awarded funding from the Department for Food, Environment & Rural Affairs (Defra) Coronation Living Heritage Fund for the creation of up to **30 new community orchards** in the county to commemorate the Coronation of King Charles III.

The types of applicants for Coronation Community Orchards include:

- parish councils
- schools
- voluntary groups
- charities
- private landowners who offer benefit to their local community

Trees planted as part of the Coronation Community Orchards form part of the **LincWoods** tree planting project. These orchards present a new opportunity for local communities to join together to cultivate a variety of fruit and nut trees, offering social, health and wellbeing benefits by connecting people and allowing them to interact with nature. Planting within towns and villages will improve access to the countryside and gives people a sense of ownership, encouraging volunteers to provide ongoing tree maintenance, such as pruning. Environmental benefits will include improved habitat connectivity across Lincolnshire, increased biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

We will work together with local communities and landowners to identify suitable locations and species, including Lincolnshire heritage varieties such as Ellison's Orange apple. The grant will enable us to supply fruit trees that can be enjoyed by Lincolnshire residents for years to come, realising our vision of working for a better future.



Working in partnership

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) is ideally placed to deliver tree planting across the county, with strategic links to government departments, charitable organisations, local voluntary bodies, District Councils and local authorities. Collaborative working is central to delivering this Trees & Woodland Planting Strategy 2024 - 2034, which will continue to guide planting into the future, contributing towards the **LincWoods** project legacy.

To deliver the maximum amount of appropriate planting across the county, LCC and North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) successfully received joint funding from the Forestry Commission's Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund. This funding facilitated development of the **LincWoods** project.

As part of the project, LCC is in partnership with the Woodland Trust, allowing our Woodland Creation Officers to act as agents for MOREwoods and MOREhedges grant schemes, facilitating the planting of over 100,000 trees per year.

As part of a wider nature recovery strategy, LCC is a member of the county-wide Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP), an established partnership agreement with 49 member organisations, which is key to delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Lincolnshire. **LincWoods** aims to benefit wildlife and local landscape and help to tackle climate change by planting the right trees, in the right places, for the right reasons. This will be achieved through new woodland creation, new hedgerow planting and community orchard creation across the county. We have developed a GIS-based Woodland and Tree Planting Opportunity Map, which will feed into the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

In October 2021, the County Council hosted the first ever Lincolnshire Climate Summit, involving discussion around Lincolnshire County Council's Green Masterplan, the Government's Net Zero 2050 target and the future challenges facing the county. We hope to organise another summit in future, in which we will highlight the importance of tree planting in order to meet targets and mitigate challenges.



Planting on Lincolnshire County Council land

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) has proactively planted trees on suitable land for the last 50 years including schools, highways and countryside sites and these areas are under review should more opportunities arise. A proportion of the land owned by Lincolnshire County Council is coastal habitat, which is unsuitable for tree planting, such as areas of The Wash, which is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA).

The County Farms holding has largely been excluded from Council planting programmes in the past and left to the tenants to manage. The County Farms tenanted farmland has been mapped and considered, with the majority classified as high grade (Grade 1 or Grade 2) agricultural land, which is important for food production. We appreciate the competing needs of economic productivity as well as the timescales required for change of land use from agricultural production to forestry.

We endeavour to explore the possibility of planting new hedgerows across the holding and trees on some areas of lower grade (Grade 3) agricultural land and unproductive pockets, such as awkwardly-shaped field corners. Hedgerow planting on County Farms tenanted farmland will create new habitat for farmland bird species, such as grey partridge and yellowhammer, as well as provide corridors to link existing areas of woodland.

Trees have been planted on Local Nature Reserves owned by Lincolnshire County Council including Mareham Pastures, Sleaford through schemes such as Treescapes funding. In January 2022, we planted over 15,000 trees as part of the Treescapes Project, funded by the Forestry Commission.



We will continue to plant new trees and hedgerows on our Nature Reserves where appropriate. Additionally, we will liaise with our Highways Team to develop appropriate tree planting alongside roads and footpaths across the county.

When planting replacement highway trees we will utilise a diverse range of climate resilient species in shaping the urban landscape. The trees selected will be a combination of native and non-native stock. We will endeavour to plant more trees than are being removed to ensure no degradation of the highways tree resource. The table below shows the number of trees to be planted with reference to the size of tree removed. All trees planted will be the 'right tree for the right place' and we will endeavour to plant larger growing trees, trees that are able to lock up more carbon than those smaller growing species, thus assisting with our ambition to offset our carbon emissions.

Table detailing tree size/numbers to replace with:

Trunk diameter of felled tree	No. of replacements
0 - 20cms	1
20 - 40cms	2
40 - 60cms	3
60 - 80cms	4
80 - 100cms	5
100cms+	6



Biodiversity Net Gain and Carbon offsetting

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is a mandatory development approach, introduced in February 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, that will assure habitat for wildlife is in a measurably improved state following development when compared to the baseline assessment of what was there prior to development (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2024).

The Act sets out the following key components to mandatory BNG:

- Minimum 10% gain required calculated using Biodiversity Metric & approval of net gain plan
- Habitat secured for at least 30 years via obligations or conservation covenants
- Habitat can be delivered on-site, off-site or via statutory biodiversity credits
- There will be a national register for net gain delivery sites
- The mitigation hierarchy still applies of avoidance, mitigation and compensation for biodiversity loss
- Will also apply to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)
- Does not apply to marine development
- Does not change existing legal environmental and wildlife protections

BNG presents an opportunity for Lincolnshire County Council to create and improve natural habitats for the benefit of biodiversity, resulting in more or better quality natural habitat than there was before development. We will work with our planning team to identify areas suitable for new woodland creation and tree planting opportunities, ensuring that we plant the right trees, in the right places, and for the right reason.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs) were introduced in the Environment Bill 2020 as a new system of spatial strategies across England, designed to steer more coordinated, practical and focussed action for nature recovery (GLNP, 2024). They will support the delivery of BNG and provide all public authorities with a heightened responsibility to conserve and enhance biodiversity (GLNP, 2020).



Carbon offsetting

A carbon credit is an mechanism used to avoid, reduce or remove greenhouse gases (GHG) from the atmosphere, measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) (UK Parliament, 2024). There are three main outcomes for projects creating carbon credits:

- Avoid emissions, for example by preventing deforestation and forest degradation
- Reduce emissions, for example by restoring peatlands
- Remove and store CO₂, for example by direct air capture or restoring forests (UK Parliament, 2024).

Carbon offsetting presents an opportunity for Lincolnshire County Council to work with corporate partners wanting to sponsor tree planting. We will aim to match sponsorship with appropriate planting sites for the most beneficial outcomes.

Barriers to planting

Barriers to planting are wide-ranging and it is essential that we plant the right trees, in the right places, and for the right reasons. Therefore, we need to consider the following factors when planting trees and woodland:



Lincolnshire is a commercially significant agricultural county with high-grade arable and vegetable-growing land, which is fundamental to UK food production.



Housing and industrial developments, both existing and new, should not conflict with tree planting proposals.



Existing non-woodland habitat inappropriate for tree planting, such as deep peatland and priority habitat types, such as mudflats, coastal sand dunes and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh.



Existing site designations, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Nature Reserves, which are important for biodiversity.



Archaeological features and the historic environment, which must not be negatively impacted by proposed tree planting in order to preserve our cultural heritage.



The role of farmers' socio-cultural identity has an impact on potential investment in woodland, with tree planting regarded as financially risky, overly committing, and an inappropriate crop for their farms as there is perceived priority of food production (Warren *et al.*, 2016; Ambrose-Oji *et al.*, 2022).

Our approach to trees and woodland

What trees to plant

The right tree, in the right place, for the right reasons

Key factors for planting the right tree, in the right place, and for the right reasons are:

- **Soil** – assess the soil of the site to ensure selection of appropriate tree species and inform woodland design.
- **Water** – flood risk, water availability and water management activity, such as from the internal draining board.
- **Historic environment** – review the archaeological features of the proposed planting site in order to protect the historic landscape.
- **Landscape** – consider the landscape character of the area, the historic context and the ways that people value the local landscape.
- **Biodiversity** – identify whether there is priority habitat on the proposed planting site, as well as the presence of any protected species.
- **Climate change** – creation of resilient new woodlands to mitigate the impacts of climate change, involving diverse species and age (Forestry Commission, 2021).

Resilience

The susceptibility of trees to damage and mortality from pests and diseases will increase with the climatic changes we are facing, including milder winters, warmer temperatures, changes in seasonal timing and phenology, in combination with other climate impacts, such as storm damage and drought stress (Forest Research, 2024a).

To increase resilience to these threats, it is essential that adaptation measures are put in place (Forest Research, 2024a). Woodlands with a diverse structure are more resilient and may be able to better withstand some of the risks posed by climate change compared to even-aged uniform stands (Forest Research, 2024b). We must consider native vs. non-native tree species, sourcing home-grown trees rather than imported stock, site-specific conditions and landscape character, and the future management of newly planted trees, woodland, hedges and orchards.

Native vs. non-native

Native trees are widely defined as species that colonised Britain 10,000 years ago, when glaciers melted after the last Ice Age and before the UK was disconnected from mainland Europe by the formation of the English Channel (Woodland Trust, Not dated b). These tree species are often considered to provide more suitable habitat for our native wildlife, due to their cohabitation over time. They can also be better suited to local environmental and climatic conditions.

Other tree species are classed as non-native, which can have varying definitions. Many of these species are now widely accepted as part of our natural treescapes (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011).

Woodland management sometimes includes efforts to reduce the presence of non-native tree species within a predominantly native species composition where there are concerns that non-natives could outcompete or hybridise with native species (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011). Colonisation by or replanting with non-native species can reduce the ecological value of ancient semi-natural woodlands in particular (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011).

However, climate change is shifting attitudes towards non-native species as some of our native trees become less suitable in parts of the country and alternative non-native trees present new opportunities for establishing resilient habitats (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011).

Resilient woodlands are formed with species diversity, mitigating the risk of large-scale canopy loss resulting from pests and diseases which target specific species, or other pressures on tree health (Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan, 2011). Therefore, we will consider non-native tree species in our planting schemes, where appropriate.



Home-grown vs. imported

Over time, pests and diseases have been accidentally introduced to the UK from overseas via international trade pathways and imported goods, such as furniture. Historically, many of these organisms would not have been able to survive in our climate, but as a result of climate change, warmer, wetter winters facilitate the establishment and spread of their populations (Forest Research, 2024a).

To help stop the spread of organisms, such as the fungus Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), Defra's Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain (2014) introduced the development of certification schemes, such as The Plant Healthy Certification Scheme, to improve biosecurity in the UK horticultural sector (Plant Healthy, 2024).

When sourcing trees for new planting schemes, we ensure that our supplying nursery is Plant Healthy certified and value seed provenance in nursery selection. Any project supported by Lincolnshire County Council will aim to support local tree nurseries and avoid importing trees from abroad, as this increases the risk of introducing disease.

Landscape character

There are eight classified National Character Areas in Lincolnshire, each with distinctive landscape characteristics: Lincolnshire Coast and Marshes, Lincolnshire Wolds, Central Lincolnshire Vale, Northern Lincolnshire Edge with Coversands, The Fens, Southern Lincolnshire Edge, Trent and Belvoir Vales and the Kesteven Uplands.

We will be considerate of landscape character by planting new hedgerows and trees of appropriate species and in appropriate places so that the landscape of an area is not altered or impacted negatively. Sensitivity will be shown to the way local people value their local landscape.



Management of newly planted woodland, trees and hedgerows

We will work with partners, including the Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission to provide advice and support for best practice woodland and hedgerow management, which will include:

- Appropriate tree protection tailored to each site to address the level of risk of browsing by deer species, hares or field voles.
- Mulching for weed suppression will be encouraged rather than herbicide where possible, to reduce chemical input into the environment.
- Where appropriate, development of on-going woodland management plans to promote greater diversity of tree species and age, as well as more deadwood, veteran trees and open habitat within woodlands (Woodland Trust, 2021).
- On-going maintenance requirements for new community orchards, including pruning. Simple records will be kept describing community involvement for a period of 15 years, such as the date and time of school visits.
- Under the Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations (2024), a 2-metre buffer strip must be maintained around hedgerows planted on agricultural land, free from cultivation, pesticides and fertilisers.

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