

Mid East & Antrim Tree & Woodland Strategy

2025 - 2035





Acknowledgements

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This Tree & Woodland Strategy was prepared by Treeconomics in collaboration with the core project team.

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Foreword

Foreword

Mid & East Antrim has taken bold first steps to improve total tree coverage within the borough. This is just the beginning of a more comprehensive approach to securing more of the benefits of trees and woodlands for the residents of the borough.

In October 2023, the council adopted its Local Development Plan 2030, which aims to see the high quality development that respects the precious natural and historic environment. As a powerful tool to help to deliver place-shaping and the Community Plan: Putting People First, it recognises the importance of trees as part of the solution set.

The Mid East & Antrim Tree & Woodland Strategy builds upon this work to set out more specifically how the borough is going to meet the challenges in expanding and maintaining our urban and rural tree coverage to the benefit of all.

A comprehensive approach to the challenge must involve everyone, from local communities through to major public and private landowners.

For the former, resident engagement and support for independent community organisations to plant and care for trees will form a significant aspect of this approach.

For the latter, MEA Borough Council will act as a convenor for all major landowners, whether public or private, to come together to determine how best to work towards a set of collective goals to enhance our trees and woodlands.

This comprehensive approach, across many dimensions, will allow us to make best of use of trees and woodlands to provide high quality places to live and work, better climate resilience, improved health & wellbeing alongside improved natural habitats.

Trees and woodlands have a vital role in delivering a strong, vibrant, safe and inclusive community, where people work together to improve the quality of life for all.



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Section 1

Introduction & Background



The development of this Tree and Woodland Strategy (TAWS) for Mid and East Antrim Borough Council reflects the council's commitment to protecting and enhancing its valuable natural assets. By safeguarding and improving the health of trees and woodlands, the strategy aims to strengthen biodiversity, support landscape character, and contribute to the well-being of residents. It follows the principle of ensuring the right trees are planted in the right places for the right reasons, balancing conservation with urban and rural needs. The strategy will guide the borough's approach over the next decade, with a strong focus on key actions in the first three years to achieve measurable outcomes.

Established in 2015 as part of local government re-organisation in Northern Ireland, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council consolidated the former Ballymena, Carrickfergus, and Larne borough councils into a single administrative body. The Council now oversees an area of approximately 104,700 hectares, making up a significant portion of County Antrim, and is home to a population of around 138,000 people (7.4% of the total Northern Ireland population)¹. The primary urban centers—Ballymena, Carrickfergus, and Larne—function as key commercial and residential hubs, while the region also encompasses numerous smaller towns and rural communities characterised by farmland, woodlands, and coastal landscapes.

The landscape of Mid and East Antrim is varied, featuring countryside, upland plateaus, river valleys, and a coastline along the Irish Sea. The region includes parts of the Antrim Plateau and the Glens of Antrim, known for their scenic beauty and ecological significance. Additionally, the borough contains sections of the Causeway Coast and Glens Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), highlighting the importance of its landscapes in both conservation and tourism.

Woodlands within the borough encompass a mix of ancient woodland, semi-natural broadleaf forests, commercial forestry plantations, and parkland. Key woodland areas include Carnfunnock Country Park, Glenarm Forest, and Portglenone Forest, as well as pockets of smaller woodlands scattered throughout the borough. Common tree species include oak, ash, beech, and birch, while conifer plantations, primarily composed of spruce and pine, also contribute to the landscape.

Community engagement and collaboration will be central to delivering the aims of this strategy. By working alongside landowners, conservation groups, businesses, and local communities, the Council seeks to promote best practices in tree and woodland management. The strategy will align with broader environmental goals, ensuring the borough continues to benefit from a resilient and well-managed natural landscape for generations to come.





Benefits of Trees

There are far more benefits to trees than many of us appreciate. Like other natural systems, these benefits are often referred to as *ecosystem services*. This concept was formalised by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Commission on Ecosystem Management. The Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services (CICES) has identified over 100 distinct services provided by nature - and efforts are ongoing to better understand, quantify, and value each one.

Trees play a crucial role in supporting healthy, resilient environments. They provide a wide range of ecosystem services that are essential to both people and wildlife. These include improving air quality by absorbing pollutants, reducing the urban heat island effect through cooling, and mitigating flooding by absorbing excess rainwater². Beyond their environmental benefits, trees also offer significant social and economic value by enhancing the aesthetics of communities, providing recreational spaces, and improving mental well-being.

Many local authorities have also adopted CAVAT (Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees) to assign a financial value to the amenity provided by public trees³. Beyond this, a wide range of other tree-related benefits are being actively researched, with ongoing efforts to develop robust and meaningful methods of valuation.

Increased property or rental value:

A series of international third-party studies have shown that trees increase property prices by between 5% to 18%⁴.

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%⁵.

Climate Adaptation - Temperature Regulation:

Trees and woodlands can reduce peak summer temperatures by up to 7°C⁶. This particular adaptation has long been adopted by municipalities 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 £185m⁷. 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. School students get a boost from school greening. Planting trees within 250m of schools has the greatest effect⁸.

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 buildings⁹.

Noise Attenuation:

Trees, hedges and woodlands act as natural barriers to sound, reducing noise pollution from traffic, industry and urban activities, contributing to a more peaceful environment¹⁰.

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

Sources and References:

2 i-Tree Eco. i-Tree Software Suite v6 (n.d.). <http://www.itreetools.org>

3 Doick, K. J., Neilan, C., Jones, G., Allison, A., McDermott, I., Tipping, A., & Haw, R. (2018). CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees): valuing amenity trees as public assets. *Arboricultural Journal*, 40(2), 67–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071375.2018.145>

4 Wolf, K.L. 2007. City Trees and Property Values. *Arborist News* 16, 4:34-36.

5 Wolfe, K.L. 2005. Business District Streetscapes, Trees and Consumer Response. *Journal of Forestry* 103, 8:396-400.

6 Doick, K. Hutchings, T. FCRN012 Forest Research. Air temperature regulation by urban trees and green infrastructure 2012.

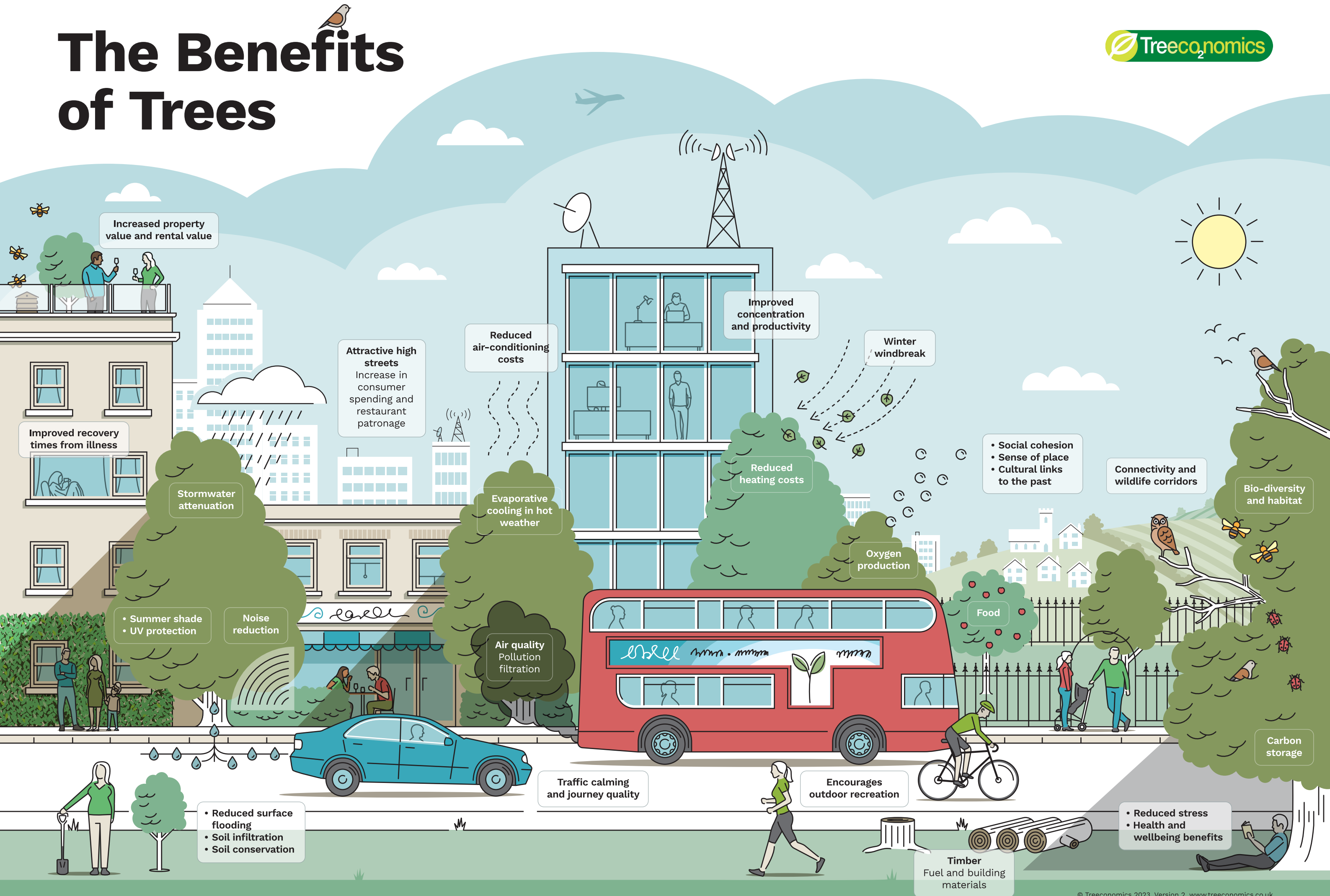
7 Forest Research (online). Mental health benefits of visiting UK woodlands estimated at £185 million (2021).

8 Kuo, M., Klein, S.E., Browning, M.H. and Zaplatosch, J., 2021. Greening for academic achievement: Prioritizing what to plant and where. *Landscape and Urban planning*, 206, p.103962.

9 Ulrich, R. (1984) View through a window may influence recovery from surgery. *American Association for the Advancement of Science*.

10 Oliveira, J.D.D., Biondi, D. And Reis, A.R.N.D., 2022. The role of urban green areas in noise pollution attenuation. *Dyna*, 89(220), pp.210-215.

The Benefits of Trees



Mid & East Antrim's trees and woodlands are a vital natural asset, playing an increasingly significant role in the borough's public policy.

A canopy cover study conducted by Treeconomics, using Google Environmental Explorer found that Mid & East Antrim currently has approximately 9,400 hectares of tree canopy cover, equating to 8.8% of the area. Canopy cover varies significantly across Electoral Areas, ranging from 8.2% in Braid to 15.1% in Knockagh. For context, the average urban tree canopy cover in England is 16.5%, based on data from over 283 towns and cities¹¹.

While a 20% canopy cover has previously been suggested as a minimum for urban areas¹², the 3-30-300 rule, recommended by the IUCN, proposes that:

- Every resident should be able to see at least three trees from their home,
- Neighbourhoods should strive for 30% tree canopy cover, and
- Every resident should live within 300 metres of a quality green space*.

* NI statutory requirements for open green space are based on provision per population. Whilst there are no specific guidelines for quality green space, a lower size threshold of 0.2 hectares is suggested as an inclusive approach¹³.

Guidance for rural areas is less prescriptive due to variations in landscape, but increasing tree cover and hedgerow extent - especially in agricultural areas - remains crucial for enhancing biodiversity, improving climate resilience, and strengthening ecological connectivity.

Climate change is a major threat to trees and woodlands. Ensuring that both the urban and rural tree populations are resilient to changing temperatures, changing weather patterns, and new pest and disease threats will be crucial to ensuring the future of Mid & East Antrim's landscapes. Improving resilience means improving biodiversity, protecting soils, diversifying urban forests and woodland types, and using trees and hedges to connect isolated green pockets to help pollinators and wildlife to diversify and thrive.

Currently, one of the greatest threats facing tree populations is ash dieback, a deadly fungal disease which was first recorded in Northern Ireland in 2012 and is now widespread across the region, including Mid and East Antrim. Given the size of mature ash trees and the wide range of native biodiversity that depend on them, both canopy cover and local ecosystems are at serious risk of decline over the next 10–20 years. The Woodland Trust estimates that up to 80% of ash trees in the UK could be lost to this disease.



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. 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 / quality green space

What is covered by 'Trees & Woodlands' within this plan

We have taken a broad definition that includes all trees, hedgerows and woodlands.

The scope of this plan is limited by the Council's ability to directly influence these trees. In practice, this primarily includes trees on MEA land, trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), and those affected by any planning submissions. The Council will also seek to work with other public and private landowners, although its influence in these cases may be more limited.

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:

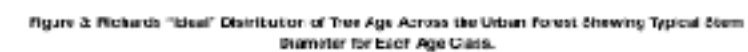
11 Doick et al (2017)

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

13 Field in Trust. <https://fieldsintrust.org/>

T2 Size (Age) & Species Diversity

16 Blaker (1915)



Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	Even age distribution or highly skewed toward a single age class.	Some uneven distribution, but most of the tree population falls into a single age class.	Total tree population across authority approaches an 'ideal' age distribution of 40% juvenile, 33% semi-mature, 23% mature, and 0% senescent.	Total population approaches that ideal distribution authority-wide as well as at the micro level.

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Responsible entity /
department
and review point

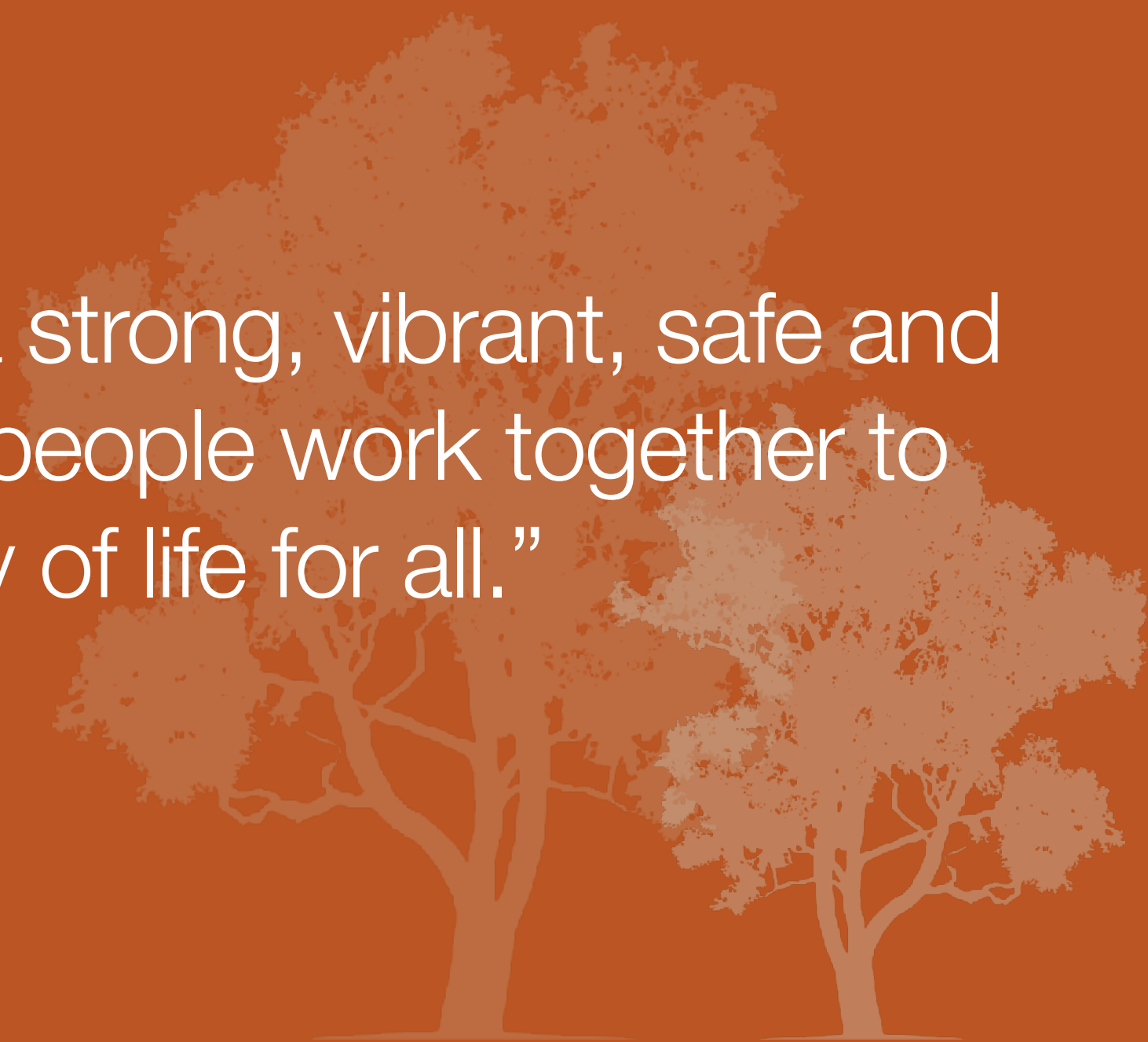
Future position
(2035)

6

Section 2

Vision

“Mid and East Antrim will be a strong, vibrant, safe and inclusive community, where people work together to improve the quality of life for all.”





People

Green job creation, reduced stress & improved mental health, tree equity, community involvement

“Support those seeking employment, provide upskilling support, improve access to the labour market for those with disabilities, and promote skills pathways.”

“Support and deliver opportunities for our citizens to improve their physical, mental, and emotional health”

Place

Circular economy, green industry cooperation, tourism & trees, green waste utilisation

“Help drive sustainable economic growth by promoting the borough as a leading visitor and cultural destination, utilising our natural, and built, heritage and assets.”

“Enhance and expand our amenities, parks, open spaces, and built heritage, making sure they meet the needs of all, while encouraging their respectful and mindful use.”



Planet

Tree benefits, natural regeneration & habitat restoration, biosecurity, climate adaptation

“Support local communities to create an environmentally resilient and sustainable borough that is equipped to deal with emergency situations, including climate adaptation.”

“Protect our natural environment, enhance biodiversity, and retain or increase Council’s current levels of carbon capture.”

“Empower, educate, and work in partnership with our citizens, communities, and businesses, to progress the borough towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.”

Linking to other Mid & East Antrim Strategies

Performance

Green job creation, reduced stress & improved mental health,

“Include stakeholders in our decision-making processes through consultation, communication, and engagement, in order to increase satisfaction levels.”

“Continue to work alongside our partners to progress the delivery of the Community Plan and other Council strategies, sharing knowledge, skills, and best practice, to create synergy and influence decision making to achieve the best outcomes for the borough at an affordable cost.”



Sources:

Mid & East Antrim Corporate Plan 2024 - 2028 <https://www.midandeastantrim.gov.uk/council/policies-and-documents/corporate-plan/corporate-plan-2024-2028>

Mid and East Antrim's vision is to be a strong, vibrant, safe, and inclusive community, where people work together to improve the quality of life for all. This vision, first set out in the Communities Strategy and later embedded in the Corporate Plan, now also underpins this Trees and Woodland Strategy.

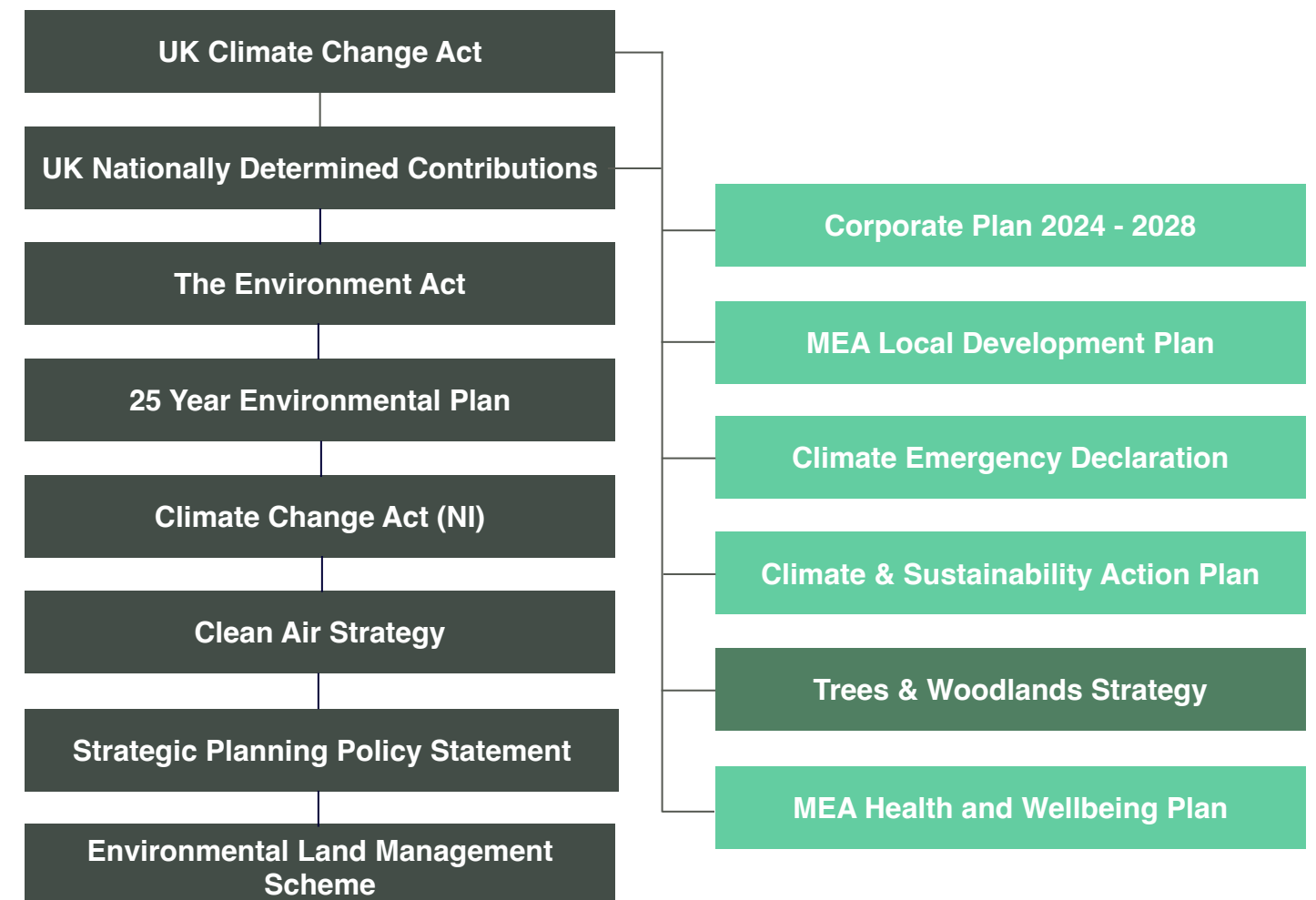
This document extends that shared ambition by asking: how can trees help deliver this vision for Mid and East Antrim? In response, the strategy explores how trees and woodlands connect with the four key pillars of People, Place, Planet, and Performance - each offering a unique route toward long-term environmental, social, and economic wellbeing.

This document seeks to show practical approach to the realisation of the MEA vision. It outlines key topics, priorities, and actions under three central themes. Though each theme has distinct goals and approaches, they work together to advance the overall vision :

- 1) Trees and Woodlands Structure,
- 2) Community Framework,
- 3) Sustainable Resource Management Approach.

To ensure delivery, the strategy introduces a clear set of performance indicators, grounded in current evidence and best practice. For each, we assess the present situation, set out our ambitions, and identify local priorities. In doing so, this strategy provides a practical roadmap for building healthy, resilient treescapes that support a better quality of life for all in Mid and East Antrim.

“Mid and East Antrim will be a strong, vibrant, safe and inclusive community, where people work together to improve the quality of life for all.”



Section 3.1

Tree and Woodland Structure

Targets, Priorities and Actions

This section considers the physical structure of the trees and woodland from various perspectives.
It does not cover the management of those trees which is in a later section.



T1 Relative Tree Canopy Cover

Tree Canopy Cover, often referred to simply as tree cover, is the proportion of an area covered by the leaves, branches, and stems of trees when viewed from above. It is a two-dimensional metric, representing the spread of tree cover across a given landscape. Canopy cover is widely assessed because it is relatively straightforward to measure, can be determined using various methods, and is cost-effective compared to more complex forestry assessments. Measuring canopy cover is valuable for understanding nature connectivity and serves as a strong indicator of the ecosystem services provided by trees. Many benefits, such as air pollution reduction, carbon sequestration, and cooling effects, are directly linked to leaf area, making canopy cover an important metric in urban and rural planning.

There are many methods of assessing canopy cover at this scale, including i-Tree canopy, i-Tree Eco, Sentinel satellite data, and Bluesky National Tree Map, etc. These methods are not directly comparable with each other as they use different metrics and definitions of what constitutes canopy cover.

MEA will utilise the most suitable and available assessment methods at the time of measurement. A key objective for the Borough is ensuring equitable distribution of canopy cover across settlement areas.

Figure 2 provides a more detailed, localised view of canopy cover compared to a area-wide assessment. Moving forward, future evaluations should distinguish between canopy cover contributions from woodlands, parks, and street trees, ensuring a more refined understanding of tree distribution.

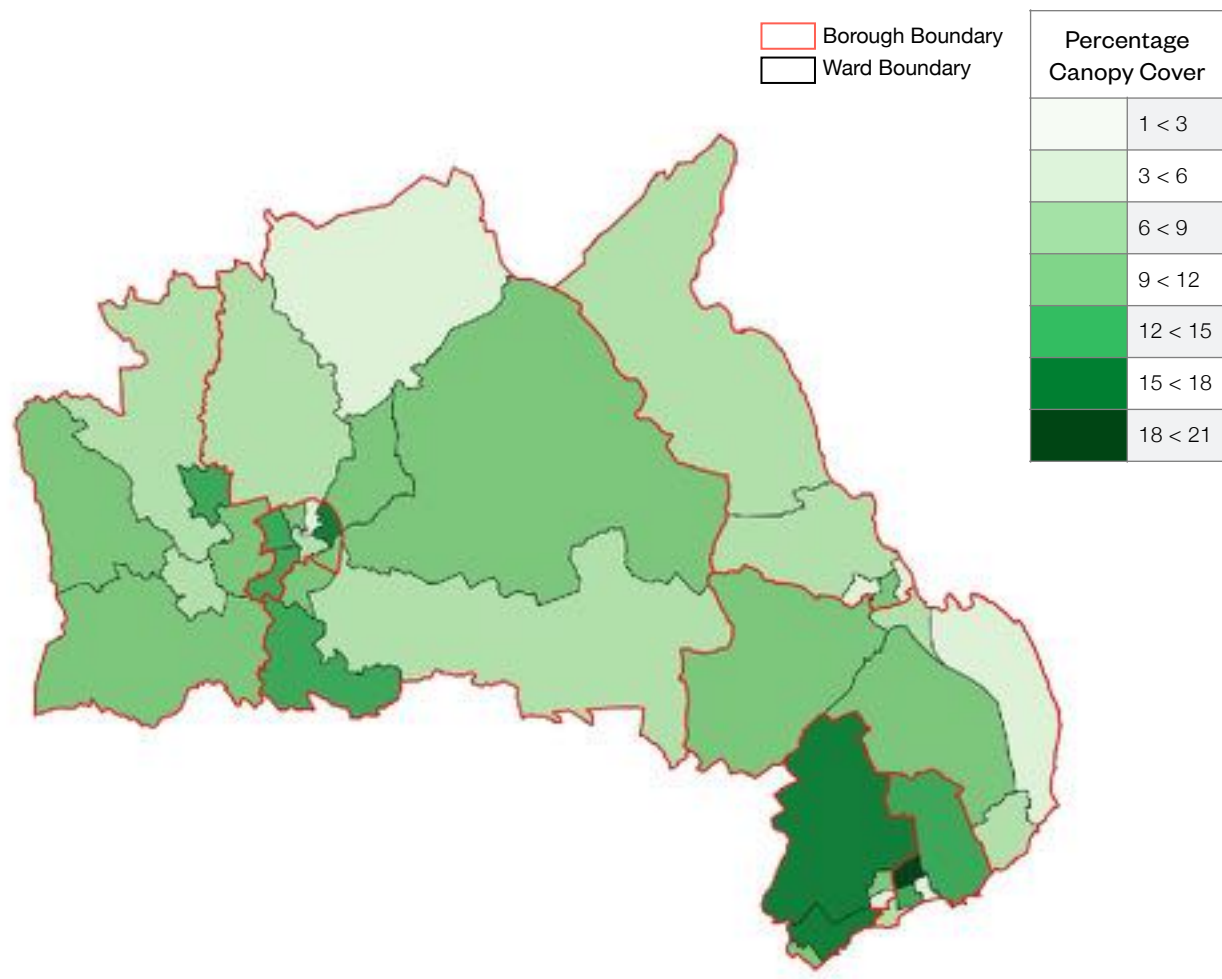


Figure 2: MEA's Existing Canopy Cover Percentage by Ward measured with Google Satellite Data
© Google Insights Explorer. OpenStreetMap contributors
Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2024.

Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
Local Development Plan Climate & Sustainability Action Plan	1. Agree tree canopy cover target and timeline in consultation with other major landholding bodies - public & private. 2. Review every 3 years by carrying out a canopy cover assessment.	MEA Council - Parks Development	2028

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current () and Target () positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	The existing canopy cover equals 0–25% of the potential.	The existing canopy cover equals 25–50% of the potential.	The existing canopy cover equals 50–75% of the potential.	The existing canopy cover equals 75–100% of the potential.

T2 Size (Age) & Species Diversity

A resilient and sustainable tree population depends on both age and species diversity to ensure that the benefits trees provide to the people of Mid & East Antrim continue over time. Effective management requires a detailed understanding of the current tree population to support informed decision-making.

Age diversity is essential for long-term resilience. Maturing trees must be protected and managed to allow them to reach veteran status, while young trees must be continually planted to replace those lost due to age, disease, or safety concerns. Larger, older trees often provide greater ecosystem services, such as carbon storage, cooling, and habitat provision. However, a truly sustainable tree population relies on a well-distributed age structure, ensuring that younger generations of trees are in place to sustain future canopy cover¹⁴. This principle applies to all trees, whether on Council or private land, and in urban, parkland, or natural settings.

Species diversity is equally critical, as it enhances the overall resilience of trees and woodland against environmental stress, pests, and disease. A more varied treescape reduces the risk of large-scale loss due to species-specific threats. The first step in achieving this is assessing the existing species composition across Mid & East Antrim to guide future planting and management.

Santamour’s (1990) 10-20-30 rule for species¹⁵, genus and family, and Barker’s (1975) benchmark of 5% per species¹⁶ provide useful targets for urban tree diversity, helping to prevent over-reliance on any single species. At a landscape level, Hubbell’s dominance diversity curves offer another way to assess and visualise species variation.

Sources and references:
14 Richards, N.A., (1982/1983). Diversity and stability in a street tree population. Urban Ecology 7, 159–171 – as cited in McPherson, Urban
15 Santamour (1990)
16 Barker (1975)

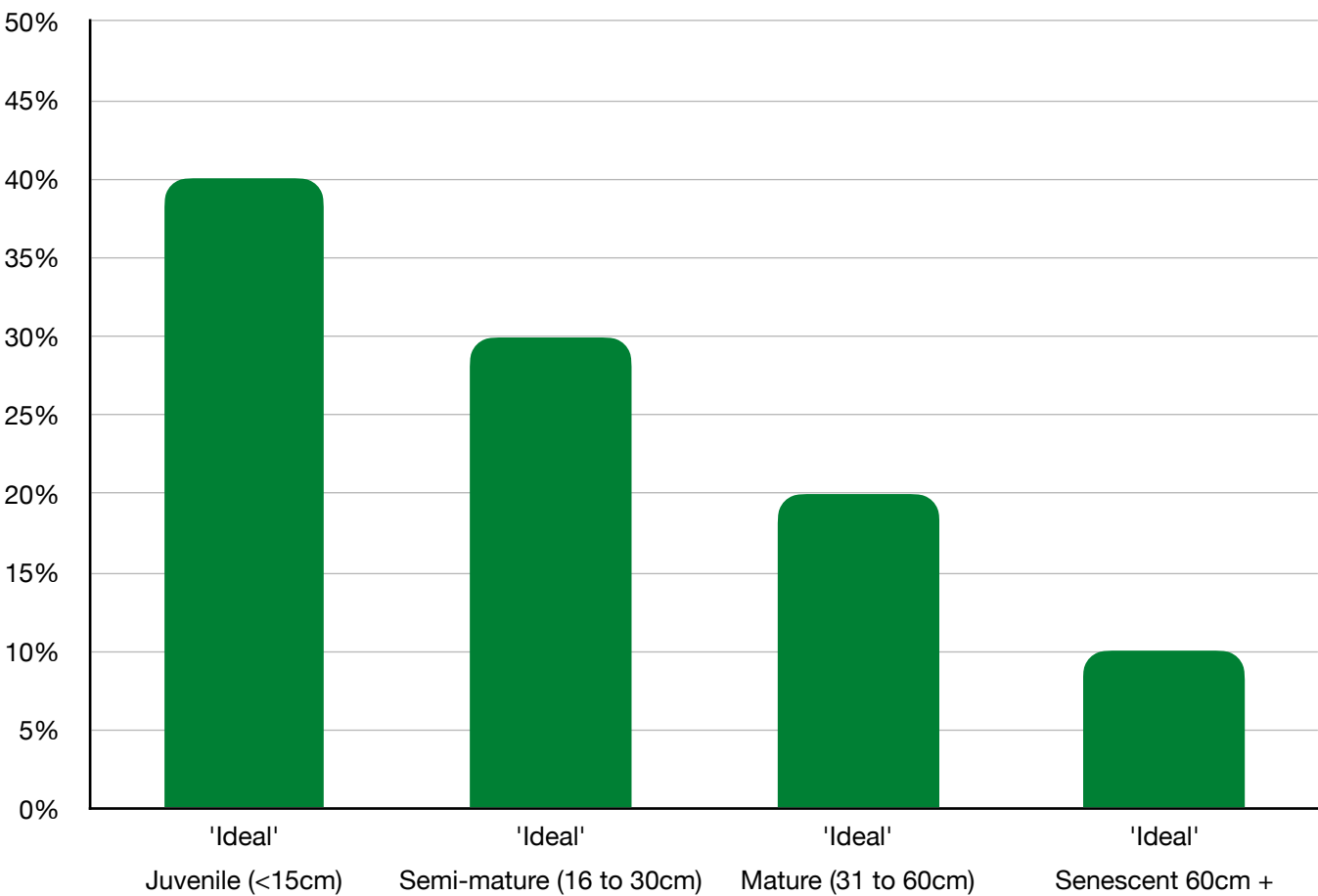


Figure 3: Richards “Ideal” Distribution of Tree Age Across the Urban Forest Showing Typical Stem Diameter for Each Age Class.

Link to relevant corporate policies
Local Development Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Establish inventory of own trees. 2. Establish planting plans to improve future tree diversity and ensure replacement. 3. Conduct i-Tree Eco Sample study across all trees. 4. Identify prioritised parcels (wards) where data followed by action could be stimulated quickly.	MEA Council - Parks Development	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	Even age distribution or highly skewed toward a single age class.	Some uneven distribution, but most of the tree population falls into a single age class.	Total tree population across authority approaches an ‘ideal’ age distribution of 40% juvenile, 30% semi-mature, 20% mature, and 10% senescent.	Total population approaches that ideal distribution authority-wide as well as at the ward level.



Targets, Priorities and Actions

T3 Species Suitability

Selecting a broad array of species which are well suited to their context, whether that is urban or rural is fundamental to the concept of species suitability. Trees have unique needs; all tree species have different genetic characteristics and growth strategies which have been developed to maximise survival and growth in their natural habitats. Climate, soil, and other environmental aspects can affect their ability to survive and thrive.

Urban contexts create greater external stresses than those trees experience in their natural habitat. This can limit their lifespan and increase vulnerability to pests and diseases. Securing species suitability means, trees are less likely to be placed under those stresses and more likely to reach maturity.

That context is also going to change under the impact of climate change. Predictions from the [UK Meteorological Office](#) forecast warmer wetter winters and hotter, dryer summers. Even that simplistic high level summary is enough to indicate that some species will struggle in the future. Such factors need to be taken into account today when making tree species selection decisions. Many of our native species will be closer to the edge of their suitability range under even the best case scenarios now being envisaged.

Table 1 shows the expected suitability of common tree species within Mid & East Antrim. Under the current climate, most species displayed are comfortably within their survival range, but in the worst case scenario by 2090 most species are expected to struggle¹⁶.

Sources and references:
16 Climate Change Alliance of Botanic Gardens. (2024)

Species	Current suitability	2050 Emissions Limited	2090 Business as Usual
Downy birch	11	11	6
Silver Birch	11	11	9
Blackthorn /Sloe	11	11	9
Bird cherry	9	9	6
Wild cherry	11	11	9
Crab apple	11	11	6
Pedunculate oak	11	11	9
Sessile oak	11	11	9
Rowan	11	11	6
Scots Pine	11	11	6

Table 1. Species suitability under 3 climate scenarios for Native Irish Tree Species
Current is based on the climate of 2020.
2050 Emissions Limited uses the SSP2 or RCP4.5 emission scenario as laid out by the IPCC.
2090 Business as Usual uses the SSP3 or RCP7.0 emission scenario as laid out by the IPCC.
11 - Middle of natural range
9 - Middle of Botanic Garden range
6 - Shoulder of Botanic Garden range
2 - Not known but possible to survive

Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
Local Development Plan	1. Assess species suitability across MEA for a changing climate. 2. Create a Tree Establishment Strategy for MEA. 3. Assess the potential for the introduction of new species and determine which sets of data are best to use for establishing MEA's relative tree canopy.	MEA Council - Parks Development	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	Fewer than 50% of all trees are from species considered suitable for the area and for projected climate.	>50%-75% of trees are from species suitable for the area and for projected climate.	More than 75% of trees are suitable for the area and for projected climate.	Virtually all trees are suitable for the area and for projected climate.

T4 Council Owned Trees

Individually managed trees - such as street trees - are typically considered to be “intensively managed” using arboricultural practices. In contrast, trees in woodlands or other natural settings are usually “extensively managed” as a group. Park trees may fall into either category, depending on how they are cared for.

Understanding how many trees are intensively managed, and what this management involves, can help establish a baseline for improving future practices. A detailed tree inventory - recording tree location, species, condition, and other key attributes - is useful for effective maintenance and risk management.

Such inventories can also serve as powerful tools for community engagement. By giving people access to information about the individual trees in their streets and neighbourhoods, we can foster greater awareness and connection. This, in turn, has been shown to encourage better care and stewardship of urban trees by local residents.



Link to relevant corporate policies
Local Development Plan
Climate & Sustainability Action Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Move to an integrated GIS based tree inventory system. 2. Assess current management practices and stress levels found in the existing tree population. 3. Priorities within the population to be identified where management impact might be greatest. For example large mature trees, middle aged trees that have the potential to develop.	MEA Council - Parks Development / Assets	2026

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	Condition of treescape is unknown.	Sample-based tree inventory indicating tree condition and risk level.	Complete tree inventory that includes detailed tree condition ratings.	Complete tree inventory that is GIS-based and includes detailed tree condition as well as risk ratings.

T5 Council Owned Natural Areas

Trees located in woodlands or other natural areas are typically “managed extensively”, as part of a wider group or ecosystem. Understanding the extent of extensively managed trees - and what this form of management involves - is essential for informing and improving future practices.

Conducting natural area surveys that assess ecological structure and function would provide valuable insights. Issues such as woodland fragmentation, recreational overuse, disturbance, and the spread of invasive species like *Rhododendron* have all been identified as concerns, yet remain largely unquantified in the local context.

Developing individual management plans and a web-based mapping tool for these areas would support both effective oversight and wider community engagement. These resources could also help identify key ecological connections across the Borough. To ensure best practice, current extensive management methods should be regularly reviewed - and updated where needed - to reflect new knowledge and changing conditions.



Link to relevant corporate policies
Local Development Plan
Climate & Sustainability Action Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Migrate woodland and other natural environment data to a publicly accessible web-map. 2. Identify parcels of land where natural regeneration might be possible.	MEA Council - Parks Development / Assets	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	No information about Council owned natural areas.	Council owned natural areas identified in a “natural areas survey” or similar document or on webmap.	Survey document also tracks level and type of public use in Council owned natural areas.	In addition, usage patterns, ecological structure and function of all Council owned natural areas are also assessed and documented.

T6 Trees on Private Land

Trees on private land are more difficult to survey and manage than those on Council land due to their extent, inaccessibility, and the need for landowner cooperation. As such, tree and woodland management across the Borough depends heavily on private individuals and estates taking an active role in stewardship.

Developing tools to engage and influence these landowners will be critical in managing the full extent of Mid and East Antrim’s treescape. This includes everything from household gardens to large privately owned estates, as well as land managed by the Forestry Commission under current felling licenses.

An example of the ecological value of private land can be seen at Glenarm, one of the richest areas in Northern Ireland for woodland plants. The estate supports diverse habitats including veteran trees, woodlands, and grasslands, home to rare saproxylic beetles, lichens, bracket fungi, and species such as Leisler’s, Daubenton’s and brown long-eared bats. Despite being privately owned, Ulster Wildlife has established a woodland reserve here, leading initiatives such as veteran oak restoration, coppicing, and public wildlife walks.

While a full inventory of private trees is difficult, many fall within conservation areas or are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). Compiling and aligning existing records with ecosystem service mapping may offer new insight into their environmental value.



Link to relevant corporate policies
Local Development Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Engage with major landowners in the Borough. 2. Conduct a i-Tree Eco sample survey to provide this baseline data.	MEA Council - Parks Development /Operations/Capital	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Low	No information about privately owned trees.	Aerial, point-based assessment of trees on private property, capturing overall extent and location.	Bottom-up, sample-based assessment of trees on private property, as well as basic aerial view (as described in “Moderate” rating).	Bottom-up, sample-based assessment on private property, plus detailed Tree Canopy Cover (TCC) analysis of entire treescape, integrated into authority-wide GIS system.

T7 Tree Benefits

Trees and woodlands bring with them both benefits and costs. Whilst many of the costs are well known, the benefits can be difficult to quantify or justify. Nevertheless, a considerable and expanding body of research exists on the benefits that trees and woodlands provide to those who live and work nearby, to green infrastructure and to the wider ecosystem.

Trees provide a ‘sense of place’, moderate extremes of high temperature in urban areas, improve air quality, reduce rainwater runoff, and act as a carbon sink. Yet, trees are often overlooked and undervalued.

Recognising and valuing the services that trees provide enables more informed decisions around planting and management - benefiting both current and future generations. It also supports better communication of the importance of trees to the public, planners, and developers, helping to promote the protection of existing trees as well as encouraging new planting.

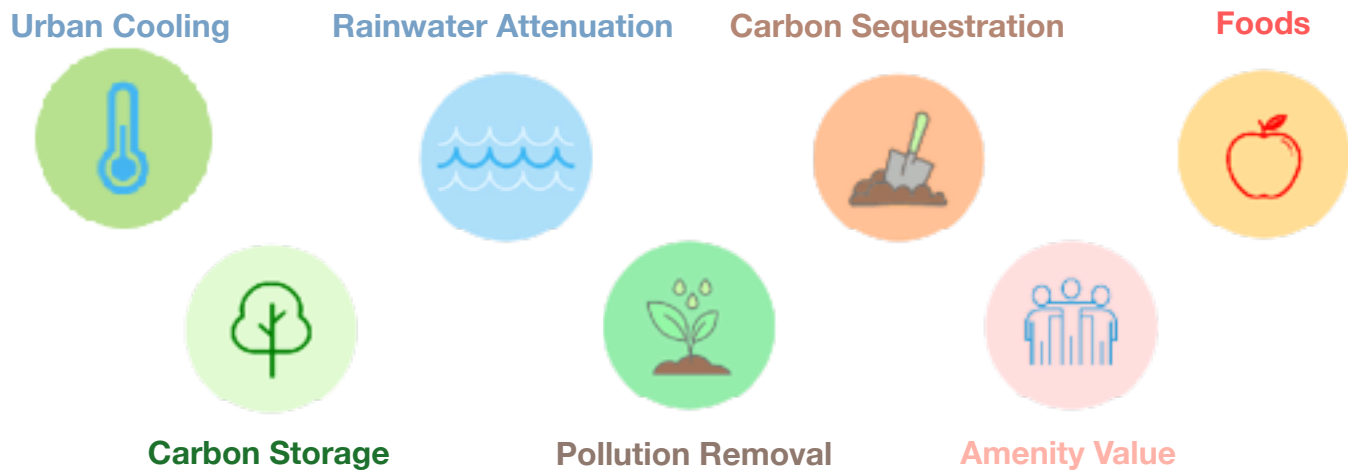
Tools such as i-Tree Eco can be used to quantify the benefits of trees—also known as Ecosystem Services (ESS)—while providing valuable insights into the structure and composition of the urban forest.

About i-Tree:

i-Tree is a free to use, open-access suite of tools developed to assess the value of the urban forest and the ecosystem services provided which:

- Quantifies the benefits and values of trees around the world.
- Aids in tree and forest management and advocacy.
- Shows potential risks to tree and forest health.
- Is based on peer-reviewed international research.

i-Tree Eco is an application designed to use field data from individual trees, complete inventories, or randomly allocated plots across the sample area to analyse the forest structure and ecosystem services provided.



Link to relevant corporate policies
MEA Climate & Sustainability Action Plan
Corporate Plan
Local Development Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Conduct a i-Tree Eco sample survey to provide this baseline data.	MEA Council - Parks Development/ Operations / Climate	2027
2. Prioritised zones to be identified where specific benefits can have the highest impact. (Shade, storm water, pollution etc) with species choice related to species ability to deliver required benefits.		

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	No comprehensive information available about tree benefits	Some information available on key tree benefits.	Sound information available on a key set of tree benefits, such as biodiversity, recreation, environmental services (see below).	Comprehensive information available on all tree benefits across the authority.

T8 Natural Regeneration & Habitat Restoration

Natural regeneration and habitat restoration are essential tools in Mid and East Antrim’s approach to addressing environmental challenges, supporting biodiversity, and improving long-term climate resilience. By allowing nature to take the lead, ecosystems can recover more holistically, creating healthier and more self-sustaining landscapes.

Designated natural regeneration areas will be identified across the borough, supporting the recovery of native woodland, enhancing soil quality, and promoting the return of species-rich habitats. Where appropriate, this process will be supported by minimal intervention, including fencing to manage livestock, allowing hedgerows to mature, and encouraging the development of linear woodland corridors. These approaches not only boost biodiversity but also contribute to natural flood management and nutrient neutrality - by filtering pollutants and slowing water runoff into rivers and streams.

The Mid and East Antrim Local Biodiversity Action Plan¹⁷ promotes sustainable land management practices that support biodiversity, such as traditional grazing systems, habitat restoration, and landscape-scale conservation. It highlights the importance of working in partnership with landowners, farmers, and local communities to restore and protect key habitats - especially those under threat from modern land use pressures.

Sources and references:
17 Mid & East Antrim Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)



Link to relevant corporate policies
Local Biodiversity Action Plan
MEA Climate & Sustainability Action Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Conduct baseline biodiversity surveys to identify and map areas suitable for natural regeneration and habitat restoration. 2. Expand designated natural regeneration areas annually, ensuring regular monitoring of species health and habitat growth.	MEA Council - Parks Development	2028

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	Minimal efforts with no formal tracking of land area designated for natural regeneration and habitat restoration	Initial baseline survey and identification of designated areas for NR+HR with basic monitoring of plant and animal species	Established biodiversity index, expanding of NR+HR areas, regular surveys; detailed tracking of species' health and growth	Comprehensive GIS-based mapping of NR+HR areas, detailed biodiversity index, high survival rates of NR species, and extensive monitoring and reporting



Summary - Trees and Urban Forest Structure

Key Performance Indicator	Current Performance Level				Priority
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal	
T1 – Relative tree canopy cover					Medium
T2 – Size (age) & species diversity					Medium
T3 – Species suitability					Medium
T4 – Council-owned trees					High
T5 – Council-owned woodlands and natural areas					Medium
T6 – Trees on private land					Low
T7 – Tree benefits					High
T8 – Natural regeneration & habitat restoration					Medium

Section 3.2

Community Framework

This section considers the various communities that are required for a successful, long term approach to management of trees and woodland.
This covers not only the local residents, but local government in all its forms, NGOs and commercial entities.



C1 Governance & Council Directorate Co-operation

This target aims to establish a path of leadership and cooperation for the successful delivery of the targets, priorities and actions within and relating to this strategy, and to encourage all departments within the Council to consult and collaborate with the tree and woodland managers on issues. Leaders must delegate responsibilities and ensure goals are delivered on time and on budget by partners and associates. Leaders who delegate these responsibilities must also ensure that a clear system of accountability is also in place to deliver set goals.

Regular communication across departments and agencies is key to ensuring that trees and woodlands are fully considered by the council. Key stakeholders to incorporate into this network are planning and development. Other key departments include are housing, environmental health and parks & gardens, also parish councils, which although external to the council, still need to be involved in the process. Opening communication channels and interdepartmental teams can help coordinate tree and woodland management by providing knowledge and guidance to all council departments, when required, in order to ensure that trees, woodlands and green infrastructure are considered in full at all stages of decision making.



Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
Corporate Plan Local Development Plan	- Engage in other department strategy consultations to promote the importance of trees and woodlands, and encourage them to consider how they can contribute to the targets and actions of this Strategy. - Identify policy areas across all departments where trees and woodlands can contribute or are potentially impacted.	MEA Council / Community / NGO's	2026

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	Agencies act on the treescape without cross-departmental coordination, consultation or consideration. Leadership for trees, woodlands & hedge management is fragmented.	MEA works with other NGO's and Agencies on ad-hoc projects as and when they arise.	MEA regularly and frequently works with other NGO's and Agencies to establish projects and plans. There is a cultural champion in place.	Integrated treescape governance and leadership provided by a single dept and measured to plan that reflects local and international policies.

C2 Community Involvement and Neighbourhood Action

At the neighbourhood level, communities and residents groups will be encouraged to participate and collaborate with the Council, and its partnering with Governmental and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in tree and woodland management activities.

Collaborating with smaller community groups such as volunteers, schools and charity groups can encourage further community involvement with projects in small neighbourhoods and wider areas, which would benefit the whole Borough. Neighbourhood activities often help the community members to connect more with their trees and woodlands, and encouraging communities to get involved will reduce the likelihood of conflict or opposition to tree planting.



Link to relevant corporate policies
Corporate Plan Community Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Create database of community groups. 2. Raise awareness of trees as part of broader initiatives (can be an important ‘connector’).	MEA Council / Community / NGO's	2026

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■, □) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	Little or no citizen involvement or neighbourhood action.	At the neighbourhood level, citizens and groups collaborate with MEA and/or its partnering NGOs in tree & woodland management activities to advance authority-wide plans.	Some neighbourhood groups engaged in advancing tree & woodland goals, with some support from the Council or its partnering NGOs.	Many active neighbourhood groups and a tree officer in every ward engaged across the community, with actions coordinated or led by MEA and/or its partnering NGOs.

C3 General Appreciation of Trees as a Community Resource

In order for the strategy to be considered a true success, the most powerful legacy is that the residents love, respect, appreciate and care for its trees. Community initiatives could provide an invaluable opportunity to promote the progress made by the borough in terms of urban greening and green infrastructure.

Widely publicising events all year round - making good use of digital communications and social media - such as National Tree Week (usually in late November to early December), Arbor Day, planting days (winter time) and outdoor events, will bring focus onto Mid & East Antrim’s trees and woodlands, encouraging participation from those that live and work locally.

By engaging and encouraging the community in this way, trees and woodlands will be protected and enhanced for generations to come. While changing values can be challenging, education, celebration, and hands-on involvement provide powerful tools to build awareness and encourage appreciation for the vital role trees play in our collective wellbeing.

This responsibility extends beyond individuals. It applies equally in our professional and private lives, and across the organisations we represent - whether public, private, commercial, nonprofit, or governmental.

Sources and references:
18 Clark, J.R., Matheny, N.P., Cross, G. And Wake, V. (1997). A Model of Urban Forest Sustainability. Journal of Arboriculture. Volume: 23. Issue: 1

“Having public agencies, private landholders, the green industry, and neighbourhood groups all share the same vision ... is a crucial part of sustainability. This condition is not likely to result from legislation. It will only result from a shared understanding of ... value to the community and commitment to dialogue and cooperation among the stakeholders.” *Clark et al, 1997*¹⁸



MEAOUTDOORS

Link to relevant corporate policies
MEA Climate & Sustainability Action Plan Corporate Plan Community Plan Local Development Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Develop local communication programmes built around national initiatives in conjunction with sector NGOs. 2. Build greater confidence and empower people to manage trees they own (e.g. provide good information (website, social media, being approachable) in language appropriate for the audience (non technical) and in the language of the target audience).	MEA Council / Community / NGO's	2026

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	General ambivalence or negative attitudes about trees, which are perceived as neutral at best or as the source of problems. Actions harmful to trees may be taken deliberately.	Trees generally recognised as important and beneficial.	Trees widely acknowledged as providing environmental, social, and economic services – resulting in some action or advocacy in support of the treescape.	The community values the treescapes environmental, social, & economic roles, earning support for sustainable policies. Dissenting views are heard through inclusive consultations.

C4 Green Industry Co-operation

The ‘green industry’ encompasses a wide range of professions and businesses involved in tree and vegetation management. This includes landscapers, nurseries, garden centres, contractors, maintenance professionals, tree care companies, landscape architects, foresters, planners, and developers, among others.

The Council will actively collaborate with green industry professionals, as well as with relevant government departments, public bodies, landowners, and other local stakeholders to strengthen existing partnerships to advance the Borough’s tree and woodland goals while promoting high professional standards.

Engaging with this wider network presents a valuable opportunity to influence and improve the management of forest resources, both on private and Council land. The Council will proactively build and maintain a contact list of individuals, businesses, and organisations interested in tree planting, woodland creation, or land availability for planting. By fostering close cooperation, the Council can encourage best practices in tree planting, maintenance, and protection, ensuring long-term sustainability.

- Given the land-use characteristics within Mid & East Antrim, key sectors for targeted collaboration include:
- Farming – Encouraging agroforestry, hedgerow management, and tree planting to enhance biodiversity and resilience.
 - Forestry – Supporting sustainable woodland management and responsible harvesting practices.
 - Tree Surgery & Arboriculture – Promoting professional tree care and preservation efforts.
 - Renewable Energy (Wind & Solar) – Ensuring that tree and vegetation management aligns with both environmental and energy goals.
 - Public Sector Agencies & Government Departments – Coordinating land use, climate adaptation, biodiversity planning, and green space funding through cross-departmental collaboration.



Link to relevant corporate policies
Climate & Sustainability Action Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Establish list of organisations and relevant individuals in green industries operating within MEA. 2. Strengthen communication and collaboration through planning to meet the objectives of the plan.	MEA Council / Economic Development	2026

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■, □) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	Little or no cooperation among segments of green industry or awareness of authority-wide treescape goals and objectives.	Some cooperation among green industry, with growing awareness of authority-wide goals. The Council is beginning to engage the sector through information, advice, and learning.	Specific collaborative arrangements across segments of green industry in support of authority-wide goals. Ongoing engagement leads to shared understanding and delivery.	Shared vision and goals and extensive committed partnerships in place. Solid adherence to high professional standards.

C5 Involvement of Large Private Landholders

A significant proportion of land in Mid & East Antrim is owned by private individuals, organisations, and institutions. Engaging these landholders is essential to the success of efforts to enhance and protect the Borough’s trees and woodlands. Outreach programmes, tailored management plans, and targeted funding strategies can help bring these stakeholders on board.

Effectively communicating the many benefits of trees can inspire private landowners to invest time and resources into their natural assets. The aim is to support large landholders in aligning with Borough-wide tree and woodland goals by encouraging the adoption of specific resource management plans. This will ensure trees on private land are managed in ways that maximise environmental, social, and economic benefits.



Link to relevant corporate policies
Local Development Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Establish list of major landholders and key individuals. 2. Communicate MEA Tree Strategy directly & engage. 3. Coordinate collaborative arrangements to meet the objectives of the plan.	MEA Council - Parks Development	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Low	Large private landholders are generally uninformed about tree & woodland issues and opportunities.	Council conducts outreach directly to landholders with educational materials and technical assistance, providing clear goals and incentives for managing their tree resource.	Encourage landowners to advance authority wide tree and woodland goals.	As described in “Good” rating, plus active community engagement and access to the property’s forest resource.

C6 Tourism & Trees

Tourism is a key economic sector in Mid and East Antrim, supporting over 4,200 direct jobs and attracting more than 275,000 trips in 2023 alone¹⁹. The Borough's natural landscape, heritage assets, and outdoor recreation opportunities contribute significantly to its tourism offering.

Recognising this, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has launched the *Tourism 2025 – Shaping Success in Mid and East Antrim* strategy, which sets out a vision to strengthen the tourism sector through collaborative development, enhanced visitor experiences, and sustainable infrastructure investment. This includes a focus on developing tourism in line with environmental priorities and green growth.

Trees and woodlands are a critical component of the Borough's green infrastructure and play a direct role in supporting tourism objectives. Enhancing canopy cover and increasing greenery at key visitor destinations—particularly through native planting, shade provision, and visual enhancement—can improve the overall visitor experience, contribute to wellbeing, and reinforce the environmental identity of these sites. Prioritising accessible green space in areas with high tourism potential delivers measurable environmental, social, and economic benefits, and aligns closely with both the Borough's green infrastructure goals.



Sources and references:
19 Invest MEA, 2023. <https://investmideastantrim.com/key-areas/tourism/>

Link to relevant corporate policies
Climate & Sustainability Action Plan
Corporate Plan
Community Plan
Local Development Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Expand accessible green spaces, prioritising areas with high tourism potential.	MEA Council Tourism	2027
2. Conduct regular visitor satisfaction surveys to track and improve experiences.		
3. Measure and report economic benefits from eco-tourism activities to inform future strategies.		

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Low	Limited green spaces for tourism, minimal visitor engagement, and no tracking of economic benefits from eco-tourism	Some expansion of green spaces, initial visitor satisfaction surveys, and basic economic impact assessments	Regular expansion of accessible green spaces, improved visitor satisfaction ratings, and noticeable economic benefits from eco-tourism activities	Extensive, GIS-mapped green spaces, high visitor satisfaction, substantial economic growth from eco-tourism, and comprehensive tracking and reporting systems

C7 Regional Collaboration

Regional collaboration involves engagement with both Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council and Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council, as well as the other districts within Northern Ireland that share common environmental goals.

Individual woodlands, Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs), and particularly designated sites such as the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB often extend across boundaries. The species that rely on these habitats, including key pollinators, birds, and protected mammals, do not adhere to administrative borders, and so co-ordinated management strategies and joint public engagement efforts between districts ensure more effective conservation outcomes while optimising resources.

The Council actively supports Northern Ireland’s Nature Recovery Network, which aims to reverse biodiversity decline and enable nature’s recovery at scale. Trees and woodlands within MEA play a critical role in this effort by creating ecological corridors and linking fragmented habitats, enhancing connectivity for wildlife across urban and rural landscapes.

The Council also maintains working relationships with neighbouring Councils beyond Northern Ireland, as well as with other climate-focused organisations. These connections help foster knowledge exchange, biodiversity initiatives, and climate resilience strategies.

Further collaboration exists with DAERA (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs) and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) on biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. These partnerships help mobilise funding for expanded tree planting efforts, habitat restoration, and wider sustainability projects.

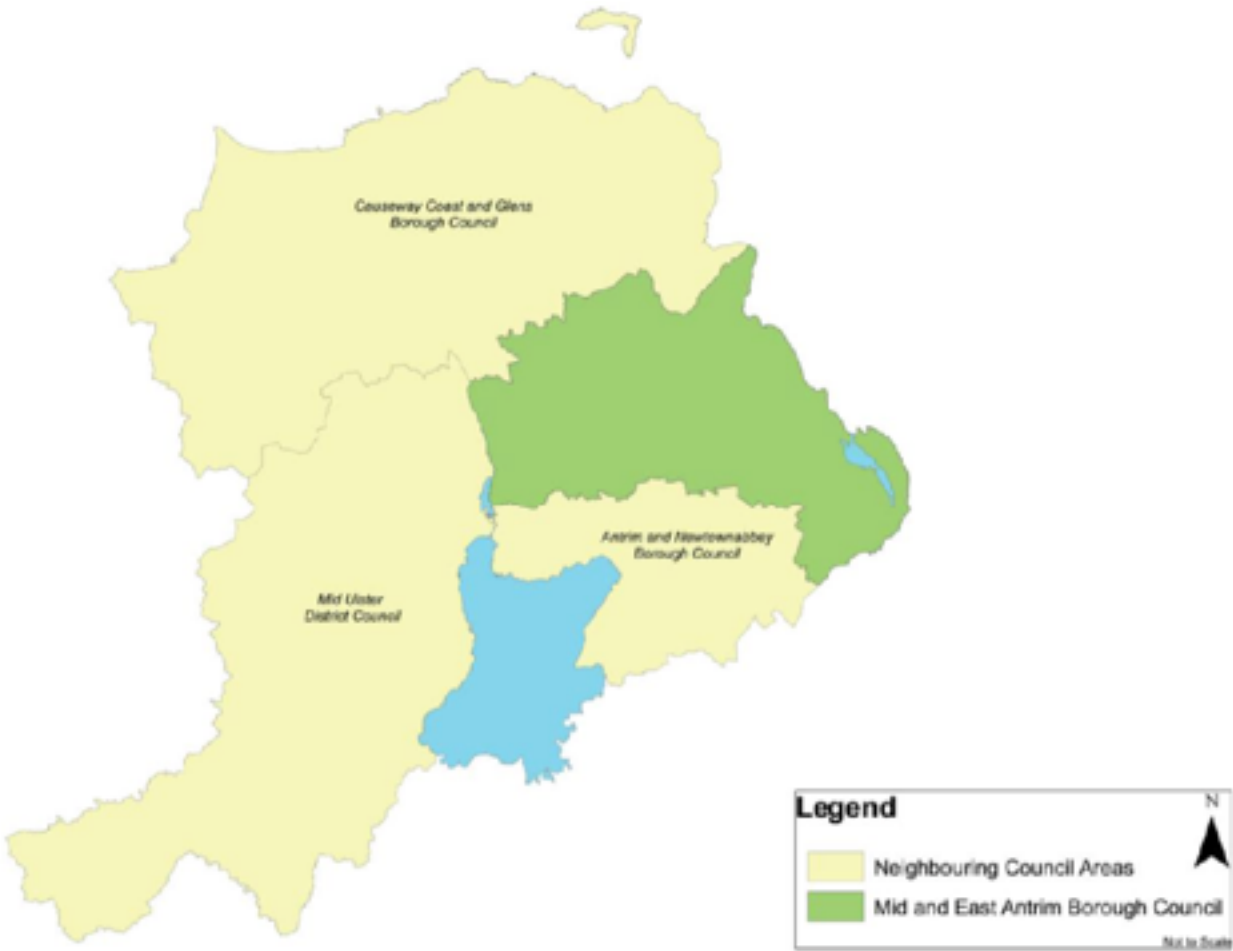


Figure 5. Mid & East Antrim Neighbouring Council Areas (Local Development Plan, 2017)

Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
Local Development Plan Corporate Plan	1. Ensure participation of all significant groups within MEA. 2. Investigate opportunity for collective approach across Borough on carbon sequestration measurement.	Climate Manager and Parks Development	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current () and Target () positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Low	Councils have no interaction with each other or the broader region. No regional planning or coordination on trees & woodlands.	Some neighbouring authorities and regional agencies share similar policies and plans related to trees & woodlands.	Some tree & woodland planning and cooperation across authorities and regional agencies.	Widespread regional cooperation resulting in development and implementation of regional tree & woodland strategy.

C8 National Collaboration

To bring Mid and East Antrim to the forefront of urban forestry within the UK, the Borough should aim to align itself with nationally recognised initiatives that promote ambitious, forward-thinking approaches to green infrastructure. UK-based programmes and networks provide platforms through which MEA can showcase its commitment to sustainable urban forestry, biodiversity enhancement, and community-led environmental stewardship.

Gaining such recognition would demonstrate that Mid and East Antrim is managing its treescapes to a high and consistent national standard. These schemes offer more than just formal acknowledgement — they foster connections with peer organisations, support knowledge-sharing across councils and regions, and contribute to a collective vision for greener, healthier communities across the UK.



Link to relevant corporate policies
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development FAO Green Cities Initiative UN Habitat -The New Urban Agenda

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Research UF national initiatives, awards and schemes and review which may be suitable for application. 2. Continuous horizon scanning for new initiatives, techniques and awards.	MEA Council - Parks Development	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Low	There is no vision - aspiration or consideration of MEA as a treescape of national reputation.	MEA is considered for its leadership in national contexts, based on specific efforts and projects.	MEA has signed up to national programs and makes good use of these networks to further its tree & woodland program.	MEA is regarded as an national example and leader in its tree & woodland management and is prominent on the national stage for its treescape.

Key Performance Indicator	Current Performance Level				Priority
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal	
C1 - Governance & Council departmental co-operation					Medium
C2 – Community involvement and neighbourhood action					High
C3 – General appreciation of trees as a community resource					High
C4 – Green industry co-operation					Medium
C5 – Involvement of large private landholders					Low
C6 – Tourism & trees					Low
C7 – Regional collaboration					Low
C8 - National Collaboration					Low

Section 3.3

Sustainable Resource Management Approach

This section deals with the practical management of the trees and woodland resource. For much of the trees and woodlands of Mid East & Antrim, this can mean seeking to engage and influence other land owners.



R1 Tree and Woodlands Inventory

A tree and woodland inventory is a vital tool for understanding the full extent of tree assets across the Borough. It provides a baseline overview of the structure of the urban and rural treescape - including the number of trees, species diversity, and age distribution - which is essential for informed planning, management, and future monitoring.

To be effective, inventory methodology must reflect the nature of the assets being assessed. Individual trees, such as those covered by risk management protocols or Tree Preservation Orders, can often be recorded in detail. In contrast, woodland areas or large tree groups are more efficiently assessed using sampling techniques, which provide reliable data at a lower cost.

Sampling is particularly useful when working across mixed ownerships, where access may be limited. In such cases, a combination of remote sensing and targeted site visits can effectively gather the required information without extensive on-the-ground surveys.

Ultimately, a comprehensive inventory allows for the creation of a measurable baseline, from which progress can be tracked and proactive management strategies developed - ensuring the long-term health, value, and resilience of Mid and East Antrim’s trees and woodlands.

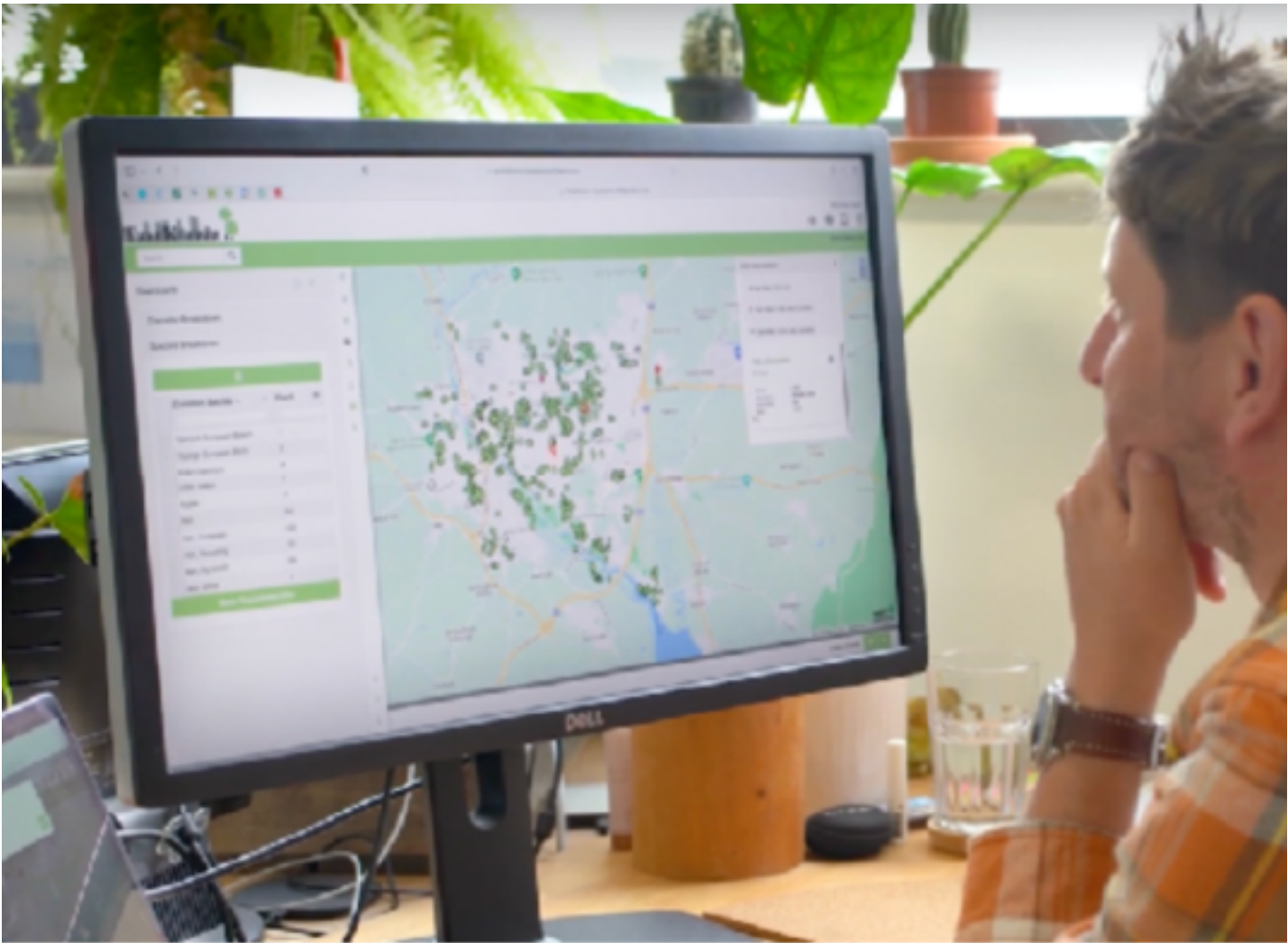


Figure 6. Treekeeper tree inventory management system developed by Davey Resource Group.

Link to relevant corporate policies
UK’s Nationally Determined Contribution The UK Climate Change Act The 25 Year Environmental Plan Clean Air Strategy & Clean Growth Strategy

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Adopt Tree Management Software and update if required with additional data on Street Trees and Woodlands.	MEA Council GIS Dept	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	No inventory.	Complete or sample-based inventory of Council-owned trees.	Complete inventory of Council-owned trees and sample-based privately owned trees that is guiding management decisions.	Systematic comprehensive inventory system of entire treescape – with information tailored to users and supported by mapping in authority-wide GIS system.

R2 Tree Valuation and Asset Management Approach

Tree valuation is an important part of managing and promoting trees and woodlands. With the trees valued, local people can understand the value of trees beyond the material worth. With these figures to hand, advocating for trees becomes easier.

Capital Asset Valuation of Amenity Trees (CAVAT) was developed by the London Tree Officers Association (LTOA) and others in 2008. It is one of the principal methods of tree valuation in the UK, and aims to provide a method for managing trees as assets rather than liabilities. It can be used for individual trees or for the tree stock as a whole. Documents related to CAVAT including a user guide and the spreadsheet calculator can be viewed online at: <https://ltoa.org.uk/documents-1/capital-asset-value-for-amenity-trees-cavat>.

The CAVAT system is only really appropriate when applied to individual trees that are visible to the public. Furthermore, MEA's individual woodlands are currently not subject to an asset valuation. These knowledge gaps will be addressed in the future.

The various valuation systems all use tree measurements as their starting point, larger trees generally being worth more. This infers that any valuation of trees can only be done following the creation of a tree inventory. See R1.



Figure 7. Example CAVAT calculation of single street tree (Arboricultural Association)

Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
Local Development Plan Climate & Sustainability Action Plan	1. Investigate CAVAT as an addition to council tree inventory system.	MEA Council - Parks Development / Assets	2026

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current () and Target () positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	Tree valuation nor assessment management are in place.	Some form of tree valuation is used, at least for key projects involving Council trees.	Tree valuation and asset management are implemented across the authority, for most Council trees.	Tree valuation and asset management are implemented for all Council trees - and in some cases also private trees.

R3 Tree Equity

This target involves assessing existing canopy cover in detail and setting goals based on both the reasonable potential for increased cover and practical steps to achieve it. This links directly to Target T1: *Relative Tree Canopy Cover*, and provides the necessary baseline for tracking progress. It is important that any canopy target is ambitious yet achievable within a reasonable timeframe and considered in the wider context of the overall strategy.

The IUCN Urban Alliance recommends a 30% tree canopy cover target, a figure that has been adopted by many cities worldwide. However, it is equally important to consider *where* canopy cover is distributed - not just how much exists. Tree equity is the principle that everyone should have fair access to the benefits of trees, regardless of where they live. In urban areas, canopy cover often varies significantly between neighbourhoods, reflecting underlying social and economic inequalities. Lower canopy cover is frequently linked to poorer health outcomes, greater exposure to heat, and reduced wellbeing.

Tree equity mapping helps identify priority areas for planting - highlighting where increased canopy would bring the most benefit. This is especially useful in urban settings where space is limited and strategic decisions are needed to deliver the greatest impact. A tree equity map of Mid & East Antrim, produced by the Woodland Trust, is shown in Figure 8.

It should also be noted that tree planting does not result in an immediate increase in canopy cover. In urban areas, tree loss due to development, disease, or safety concerns is ongoing. Without adequate and proactive planting, efforts may only compensate for this loss - rather than achieving a net gain in canopy cover.

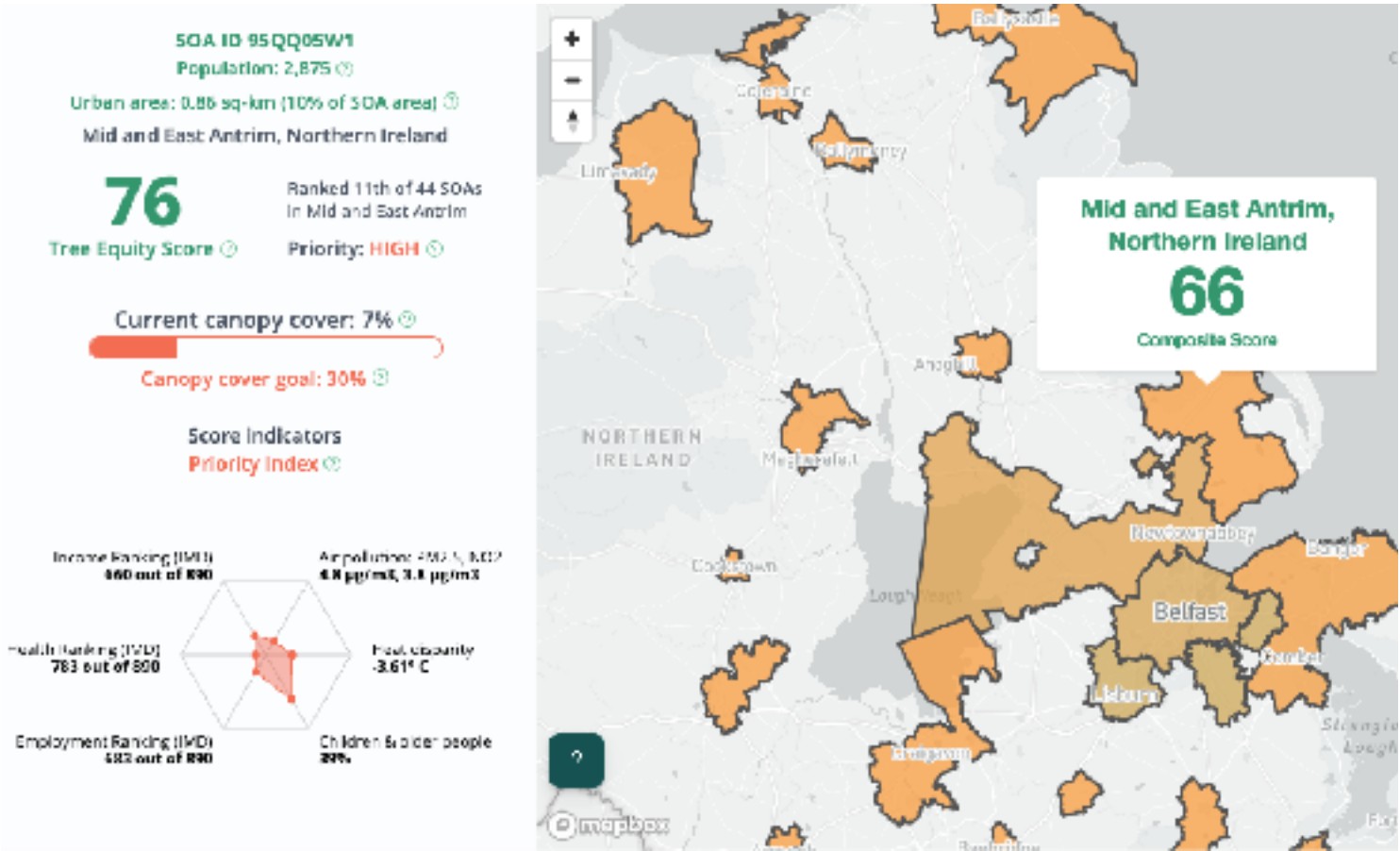


Figure 8: Tree Equity Score Map for Mid & East Antrim. <https://uk.treeequityscore.org/>

City	Dublin	Belfast	MEA
Existing Canopy Cover	18.9% (2017)	18% (2023)	8.8% (2024)
2050 Target	30%	30%	30%

Table 2: Other Canopy Cover Estimates and Goals

Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
Local Development Plan Climate & Sustainability Action Plan	1. Include 3-30-300 rule as a target for new developments. 2. Assess potential plantable space and model canopy growth and planting scenarios to determine suitable timeframe for 30% tree cover.	MEA Council - Parks Development / GIS / Planning	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current () and Target () positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	No assessment or goals.	Low-resolution and/or point-based sampling of canopy cover using aerial photographs or satellite imagery – and limited or no goal-setting.	Complete, detailed, and spatially explicit, high-resolution Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) assessment based on enhanced data (such as LiDAR, Satellite or NTM) – accompanied by comprehensive set of goals by land use and other parameters.	As described for “Good” rating – and all utilised effectively to drive tree & woodland policy and practice authority-wide and at neighbourhood or smaller management level.

R4 Trees & Development

Considering the requirements for existing and new trees early in the design and planning stages for new development will help to ensure their successful retention and/or establishment. This includes providing adequate protection and space for them to thrive and avoiding conflicts with underground and overhead services. Some losses of existing poor quality and non-native trees and hedges may be acceptable, but standing dead wood should be retained where possible for wildlife benefit.

Current, Council planning policies require the appropriate retention and enhancement of existing trees on development sites and provision of new planting. Existing policies could be strengthened to ensure adequate compensatory planting for any losses of trees and hedges and provision of additional tree and hedge planting to meet potential tree canopy targets.

The preparation of a Trees and Hedges Supplementary Policy Document (SPD) could provide more detail on requirements for tree retention, together with planting and maintaining new trees and hedges, than can be covered in Local Plan policies and, if adopted, would be a material consideration in determining planning applications. Key aspects that could be considered for inclusion in an SPD would be soil protection, handling and preparation; species selection; tree pit design; soil volume requirements for trees in areas of hard paving; co-ordination of services to avoid conflict with tree planting; and management and maintenance requirements.



Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
Local Development Plan	1. Publish Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for Trees & Development. 2. Screen planning applications against updated GIS TPO data. 3. Use planning conditions to secure the retention and protection of existing trees during and after development.	MEA Council - Planning / Parks Development	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	Tree planting in new developments will achieve less than 10% potential tree canopy cover. 30% success of new tree establishment after 5 years.	Tree planting in new developments will deliver improved tree cover in comparison to existing urban levels	Tree planting in new developments will achieve potential 25% canopy cover. 70% success of new tree establishment after 5 years.	Extensive tree planting and maintenance in new developments. New developments achieve the 3-30-300 rule. 90% success of new tree establishment after 5 years.



3.3 Targets, Priorities and Actions

R5 Tree Protection, Development and Enforcement

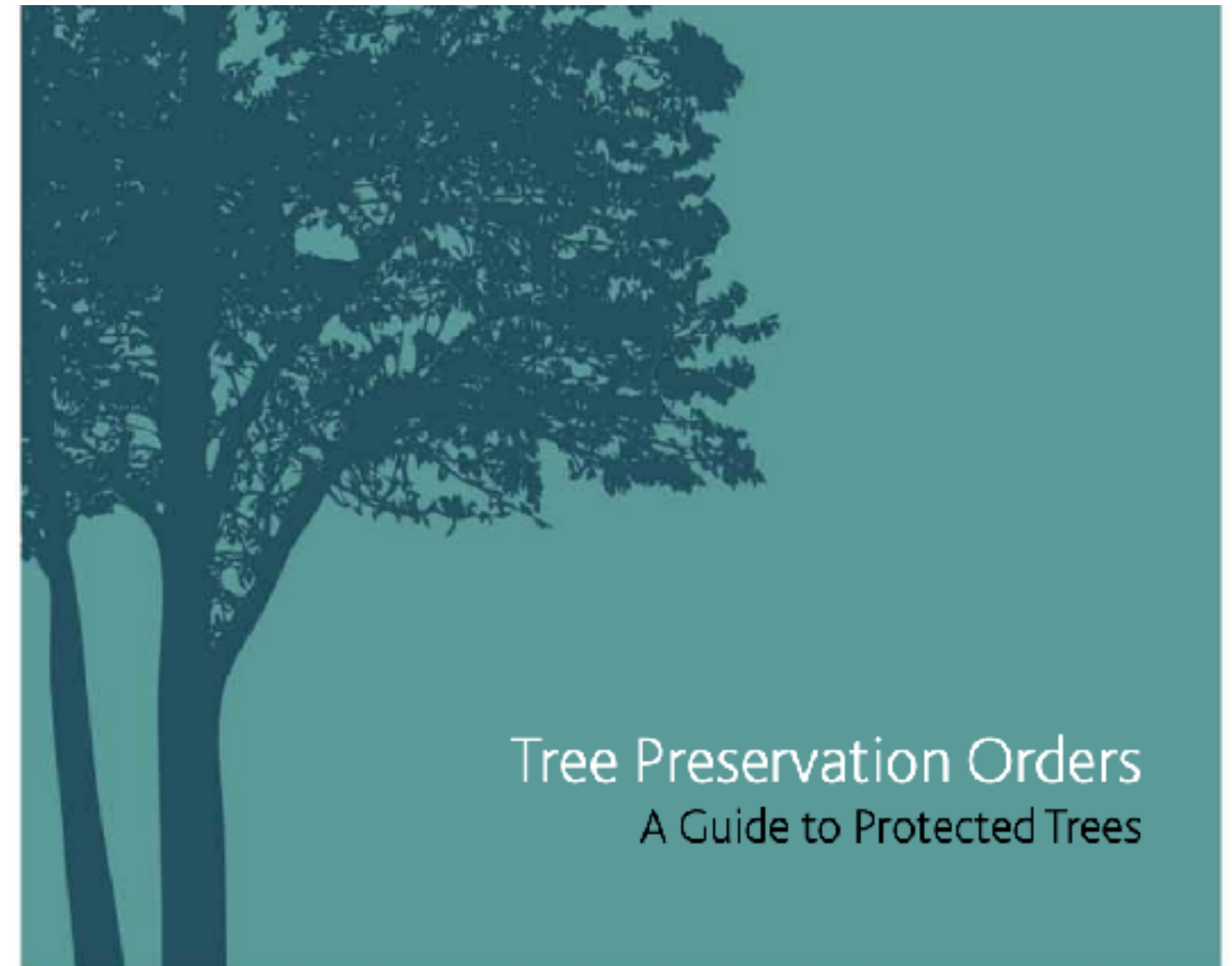
Urban trees are sometimes seen as a nuisance or a financial burden - dropping leaves on lawns, blocking drains, or causing damage to foundations and underground pipes with their roots. When poorly managed, they may also be perceived as a safety risk. As a result, some individuals may seek to remove trees from public spaces or private land. However, healthy trees should be retained and protected wherever possible.

The Council is committed to safeguarding trees where appropriate. One tool used to assess whether a tree should be protected is TEMPO (Tree Evaluation Method for Preservation Orders). Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Conservation Areas (CAs) are two key mechanisms through which the council fulfills its duty to protect trees and hedges. (https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/downloads/TPO_GUIDE.pdf). In addition, trees and hedgerows may also be protected through conditions attached to planning permissions.

The Council is committed to protecting trees that contribute to the Borough's canopy cover, biodiversity, and quality of life. Formal enforcement action is possible where trees or hedgerows are protected by legislation - such as Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Areas, planning conditions, or relevant biodiversity laws. The Council does not support the unnecessary removal of healthy trees. In line with its environmental responsibilities, the Council encourages the retention of trees wherever possible and expects landowners and developers to take a precautionary and considered approach to tree management. Unauthorised works to protected trees may result in enforcement action, and all cases are reviewed on an individual basis in consultation with tree and planning officers.

All TPOs are outlined and available to view online by visiting the Council website Local View Mapping System available online here:

<https://meabc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ce454d263cf341ba8925579b760b57dd>



Link to relevant corporate policies

Local Development Plan
BS5837

Actions

1. Review and Update current TPO database and digitise.
2. Cross departmental working across parks and planning.

Responsibility

MEA Council - LDP

Review

2027

Priority

Low

Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions

Low

No tree protection policy.

Moderate

Policies in place to protect Council-owned trees and employ industry best management practices, but inconsistently enforced.

Good

Policies and practices in place to protect Council-owned and private trees, generally enforced.

Optimal

Integrated authority-wide policies and practices to protect Council-owned and private trees, consistently enforced and supported by significant deterrents.

R6 Tree & Woodland Funding

Securing consistent annual funding is essential - not only to maintain and grow local investment, but also to diversify the overall funding base for tree and woodland initiatives. While government schemes support various types of tree planting, from woodland creation to urban forestry, funding for ongoing management and monitoring is more limited and needs further attention.

In addition to public funds, private-sector investment and one-off project funding offer additional opportunities. As many trees and woodlands in Mid and East Antrim are privately owned, support from residents, landowners, and institutions is also crucial.

There are three broad funding routes to consider:

- External government funding**, directed at different stakeholders, including:
 - Forest Expansion Scheme (FES) – Supports the creation of new woodlands.
 - Small Woodland Grant Scheme (SWGS)– smaller-scale native woodland creation projects (minimum 0.2 hectares).
- Funding from major NGOs and charitable sources**, such as:
 - Woodland Trust’s Emergency Tree Fund, which supports local authorities in accelerating tree planting and woodland expansion.
- Levies and planning obligations**, secured through the development process:
 - Best practice recommends that developments offset or exceed tree loss using meaningful, fully funded metrics. This includes approaches that account for the ecosystem service value of lost mature trees—not just the number of replacements. In Northern Ireland, Section 76 agreements may be used to secure environmental improvements such as tree planting, habitat enhancement, and long-term maintenance, particularly when used to offset impacts from development.



Link to relevant corporate policies
The 25 Year Environmental Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Cost up the actions arising from this strategy and seek budget to enable it to be actioned. 2. Identify all major external funding streams for MEA and other landholders for trees and woodlands and the best route to securing them. 3. Review internal budgets.	MEA Council - Parks Development	2026

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	Little or no dedicated funding.	Funding only for emergency, reactive management.	Funding sufficient for some proactive management based on tree & woodland management plan.	Sustained funding from public and private sources to fully implement the strategy .

R7 Tree & Woodland Capacity and Staffing

Ensuring the effective implementation of Mid and East Antrim's tree and woodland initiatives requires a well-trained and adequately staffed workforce. This encompasses roles such as Tree Officers, parks and countryside personnel, Tree Wardens, and volunteers.

Funding remains a primary constraint. A comprehensive financial plan for the Trees and Woodland Strategy is essential to secure resources for both immediate and long-term objectives. Notably, in October 2022, the Council secured nearly £300,000 from the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund for the Climate Canopy Project, which includes staffing for two officers²⁰.

Investing in staffing and training is pivotal for the success of tree and woodland programmes, ensuring the Borough's green infrastructure is effectively managed and preserved. If team capacity allows, a work experience programme could also be developed to help train the next generation in land-based careers - supporting a "grow your own" approach to workforce development.



Sources and references:
 20 Love Ballymena, 2024. <https://www.loveballymena.online/post/mid-east-antrim-council-to-develop-tree-planting-strategy-for-borough?>

Link to relevant corporate policies
Community Plan
The 25 Year Environmental Plan
Clean Air Strategy

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Build internal capacity. 2. Recruit appropriate staff to deliver strategy inc consider entry level routes for next generation of tree officers.	MEA Council - Parks Development / Operations	2026

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	Team severely limited by lack of personnel and/or access to adequate equipment. Unable to perform adequate maintenance, let alone implement new goals.	Team limited by lack of trained staff and/or access to adequate equipment.	Team able to implement many of the goals and objectives of the tree & woodland management plan.	Team able to implement all of the goals and objectives of the tree & woodland management plan.

R8 Tree Establishment - Planning and Implementation

Tree planting is more complex than most people realise; it is more than simply sticking trees in the ground. In order to ensure the trees survive, thrive and reach their full potential, the right tree species must be selected, be planted in the right place, be planted for the right reasons, and planted and maintained in the right way. This way, the trees are given the best chance to survive and avoid being removed again further down the line.

Right reason Tree planting should focus not just on quantity, but also quality. trees can benefit future generations by mitigating climate change, improving biodiversity, and enhancing health and well-being.

Right place Location is key when planting, particularly where conditions can be less than ideal. Trees require space to grow, both above ground and below, of a scale appropriate to its size when fully grown. Potential conflicts should be understood early before deciding to plant.

Right tree The benefits and drawbacks of different species must be considered, including site suitability, climate tolerance, size, rooting characteristics, aesthetics (canopy, leaves, flowers, etc.), ecosystem service provision, biodiversity, and more.

Right way How the tree should be planted may vary depending on where the tree is, but all trees need the same essentials; good soil volume for root establishment; water, particularly for young trees and trees in urban areas which may struggle; air and support to keep it upright whilst its roots establish; protection from damage, and maintenance. In urban areas, hard paved impermeable surfaces present challenges which trees are not adapted to deal with, such as soil compaction, nutrient recycling and reduced water infiltration. These issues should be considered to help establish a healthy, long-lasting urban forest.

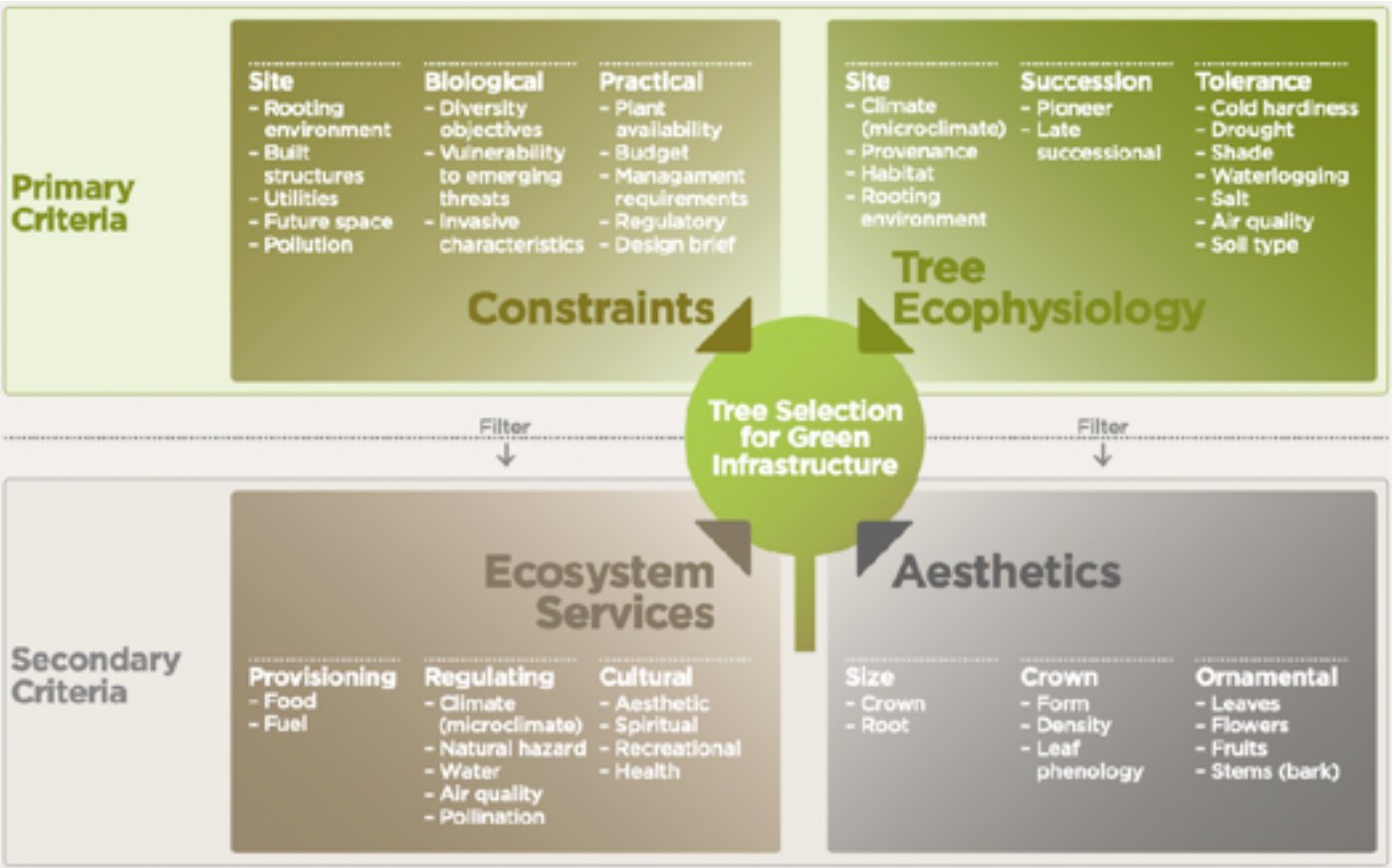


Figure 9: Trees and Design Action Group species selection criteria guide²¹.

Sources and references:
 21 Trees and Design Action Group. (2018). Tree Species Selection For Green infrastructure : A Guide for Specifiers: <https://www.tdag.org.uk/tree-species-selection-for-green-infrastructure.html>

Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
UK's Nationally Determined Contribution The UK Climate Change Act The 25 Year Environmental Plan Clean Air Strategy	1. Complete a comprehensive prioritised plan and opportunity map for tree and woodland planting/ creation in urban areas and on Council managed land, identifying opportunities for active travel and wildlife corridors. 2. Develop SMART targets for implementing the planting plan including private landowner planting initiatives.	MEA Council - Parks Development	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	Little or no tree planting; tree establishment is ad hoc.	Some tree planting and establishment occurs, but with limited overall authority-wide planning and post-planting care.	Tree planting plan is guided by authority-wide goals, with some post-planting establishment care.	Tree establishment is guided by canopy and other assessments, supports species and age diversity, includes planting and young tree care, and advances canopy cover goals.

R9 Growing Site Suitability

This target links to the R8 target, specifically on choosing the right tree. Often trees are selected purely for their aesthetic attributes, however this can mean that the the tree suffers if the site conditions have not been taken into account.

Site suitability should be investigated from the ground up, starting with soil. Urban soils are often very poor or non existent, so it is vital to know what is there and what the tree will need before it is planted. Other site considerations include the amount of light, i.e. if the tree will be in permanent shade from buildings or not; the amount of impermeable surface surrounding the site which would limit the amount of water infiltrating through to the roots, and the amount of space both above ground and below ground to facilitate tree growth. Once these things have been assessed, the right tree can be planted in the space.

Guidelines should be put into place for all tree planting, to ensure that trees can fulfil their maximum potential and provide the maximum benefit for the city. In particular, trees must be a priority in planning and development rather than an afterthought, to ensure they are given enough space to mature. This should be extended for both public and private development and consistently enforced. This links to R10-‘Tree Protection Policy Development and Enforcement’.



Sources and references:
22 Trees & Design Action Group, (2014).
23 Trees in Hard Landscapes; A Guide for Delivery. A. Hirons & H. Sjoman, (2019). Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure: A Guide for Specifiers

Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
Local Development Plan Climate & Sustainability Action Plan	1. Determine basic guidelines and tree palette. 2. Ensure best practice advice shared with stakeholders on tree planting to include a list of 'preferred' species, size, planting & maintenance requirements. This could be either from existing sources eg: Trees Design Action Group (TDAG) species selector or drafted especially.	MEA Council - Parks Development / Operations	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■, □) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	Trees selected and planted without consideration of site conditions.	Appropriate tree species are considered in site selection.	Council-wide guidelines in place for the improvement of planting site conditions and selection of suitable species.	All trees are planted in sites with suitable soil, space, and conditions to achieve their genetic potential and thus provide maximum ecosystem services.

R10 Maintenance of Council Owned Trees

Mid East & Antrim acknowledged a climate emergency in 2019, recognising the threat to people, animals and habitats worldwide. Those threats are likely to arrive in the form of hotter drier summers and warmer wetter winters - more periods of drought, more heat and a greater risk of surface flooding.

Trees have a significant role to play in creating resilient places to live for both humans and wildlife. Their largest contribution is the through the active cooling created by evapotranspiration as the trees draw water up from the ground when actively photosynthesising. Combined with physical shade, this can lower temperatures to a point where it can still remain quite pleasant to be outdoors even in the heat of the day.

Trees also, by virtue of their expansive canopies capture water before it gets to the ground, reducing surface water run off. In using water as part of their natural growing processes, they also create space in the soil for new water ingress to take place at the next rainfall.

Trees are one of the most important tools in the climate resilience toolbox. It is important that they are deployed on as wide a basis as possible, which will require identifying and then addressing areas with lower tree cover.

This target aims to ensure that the planting and management of trees can be focussed in the areas where it will most benefit the local people, by increasing planting in the areas with the lowest canopy cover. Tree management plans in these areas to include community engagement and neighbourhood outreach to maximise the benefits of trees in the area.



Link to relevant corporate policies
Local Development Plan
Climate & Sustainability Action Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Develop an overarching audit regime for Tree Risk Management.	MEA Council - Parks Development / Operations	2028
2. Implement training and standardisation of tree maintenance methods.		
3. Draft up SMART targets for tree maintenance including 3rd party planting initiatives.		

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	No maintenance of Council-owned trees, or on a reactive basis only.	Council-owned trees receive only periodic inspection and maintenance.	Council-owned trees are inspected and proactively maintained on a cyclical basis.	All Council-owned, intensively managed trees are routinely and thoroughly maintained on ongoing basis according to a comprehensive management plan.

R11 Management of Council Owned Natural Areas

Extensively managed trees are typically found in parks, woodlands, and other natural areas where growth is allowed to occur more freely than in intensively managed settings. While these spaces may appear more natural, they still require careful oversight to ensure they remain healthy, safe, and ecologically diverse.

Given that these areas are frequently accessed by the public, risk management remains a key consideration. The intensity of land use and the potential risk to people should inform inspection schedules, with higher-use areas receiving more frequent monitoring and maintenance.

A substantial and highly valued portion of Mid & East Antrim trees and woodlands fall into this category. It is therefore vital to promote best practice in their care, working in close partnership with landowners, charities, and volunteers. In MEA, key landholders include the Forest Service, NI Water, NI Housing Executive, DFI and individual farmers.

The Council currently manages over 100 parks and open spaces, with a variety of habitats including coastline, woodland, peat bogs and amenity grassland.

Additionally, the Borough is home to 40 Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs)²⁴, encompassing a wide variety of habitats including upland bogs, coastal cliffs, species-rich grasslands, and ancient woodlands. The most significant of these is Garron Plateau ASSI, a 4,652-hectare upland bog and Ramsar site of international importance for both biodiversity and carbon storage²⁵.

Sources and references:
24 Mid & East Antrim Borough Council (2015)
25 DAERA, 2024



Link to relevant corporate policies
Local Development Plan
Climate & Sustainability Action Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Map and identify Council-owned areas, and refine so that there is a constant idea of what and where green space is.	MEA Council - Parks Development / Operations	2027
2. Develop an overarching system for recording trees in woodlands and groups, assign a management unit to each and develop an appropriate management overarching plan.		

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	No natural areas management plans or implementation in effect.	Reactive management efforts to facilitate public use (e.g., hazard abatement, trail maintenance).	Specific management plans in place for each Council-owned natural area to facilitate appropriate public use.	Each Council-owned natural area has a management plan aimed at sustaining and, where possible, improving overall ecological integrity, while facilitating appropriate public use.



3.3 Targets, Priorities and Actions

R12 Biosecurity

Biosecurity refers to the need to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful pests and diseases from abroad. It plays a critical role in protecting forestry, agriculture, and horticulture sectors from potentially devastating organisms.

History shows the damage that invasive diseases can cause. For example, Dutch Elm Disease (*Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*) led to the loss of approximately 25 million mature English elm trees between the late 1960s and 1990—over 85% of the British population²⁶. Today, Ash Dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) poses a similar threat, with estimates suggesting that more than 90% of ash trees in Northern Ireland show signs of infection²⁷.

Such diseases have far-reaching consequences, not only for the landscape but also for the wider ecosystem. Native trees support hundreds of dependent species, and their loss creates significant ecological gaps. One major pathway for disease introduction is the importation of trees, particularly large, mature specimens sourced from across Europe and beyond. This increases the risk of bringing new pests and pathogens into the country.

Mid and East Antrim must play its part by ensuring that all trees are responsibly sourced, favouring local stock where possible, and by adopting strong monitoring and management practices to reduce the risk of existing and emerging threats to its treescapes.Sources and references:

Sources and references:
26 Brasier, C.M., 1996. New horizons in Dutch elm disease control;
27 Defra, 2014; Defra, 2018.
28 A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment; The Woodland Trust: State of the UK's Woods and Trees 2021.

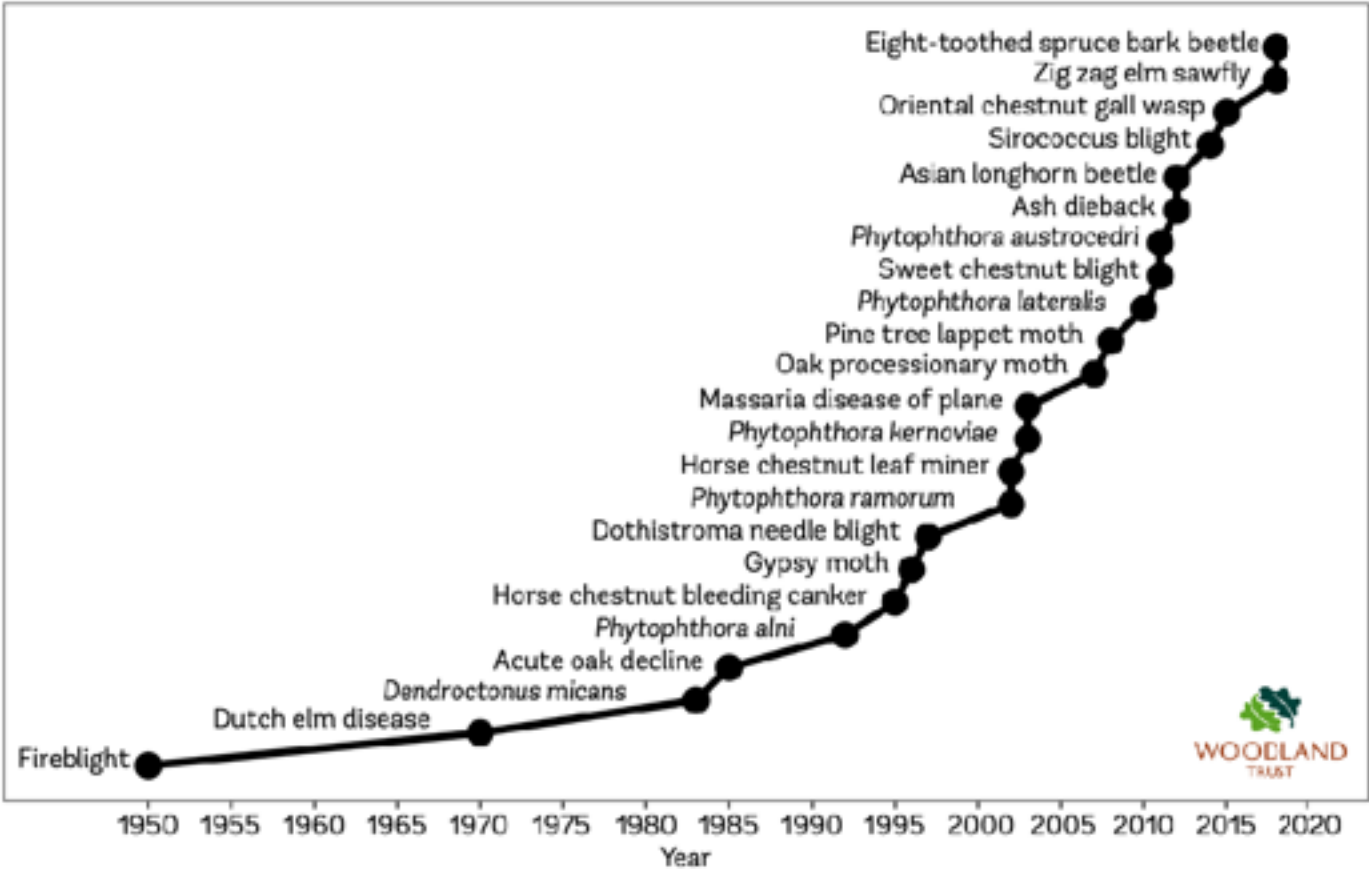


Figure 10: Tree pest and disease introduction in the UK.

Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
Strategic Planning Policy Statement The 25 Year Environmental Plan	1. Ensure internal procurement procedures are in line with biosecurity needs. 2. Engage with other major landowners on the topic to disseminate best practice. 3. Support local community tree nurseries. 4. Work closely with tree nurseries to develop a tree supply plan based on a tree planting strategy.	MEA Council	2029

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current () and Target () positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	No biosecurity strategy nor actions in place	Some consideration of biosecurity aspects, e.g., through pest management.	Biosecurity management actions are integrated in tree & woodland management.	Biosecurity strategy developed and implemented. Integration of this into day-to-day tree & woodland management.

R13 Vegetation Species Selection (Native / Non-Native)

The urban forest is a diverse place, consisting of a range of trees and plants from all over the world. Whilst diversity is key to a healthy treescape, native plants should be selected above non-native species whenever appropriate. Native species of trees, shrubs, fungi, ferns, insects, mammals, birds and more have evolved together in the UK, each finding and filling an ecological niche in which to thrive. The balance between species in an ecosystem is delicate, and just one missing link could tip the system out of balance. Trees provide habitats for a whole range of species.

In the UK, English oak (*Quercus robur*) supports more organisms than any other tree; more than 1,000 insect species have been identified to date on oaks in central Europe, with at total of 2,300 different species relying oak in the UK²⁹. Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is frequently used as a nesting site for birds, and the bark is important for certain lichen due to its pH. Without native trees, other native species may struggle to find suitable habitats and therefore suffer.

In Northern Ireland, areas of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) are protected by the Forest Service. Unfortunately, these woodlands are now represented by very small fragmented remnants of woodland that once covered most of the country. Only three types of Semi Natural Woodland can be found today; upland oakwoods, upland mixed ashwoods, and wet woodlands. Though these environments are crucial to the overall wellbeing of NI's natural capital, urban forests are very different environments from ancient woodlands, and therefore tree selection should be carefully considered.

Sources and references:
 29 PuRpOsE: Protect Oak Ecosystems, 2019. <https://protectouroaks.wordpress.com/work-packages/wp4/purpose-impact-event/>
<https://herbaria.plants.ox.ac.uk/bol/ancientoaksofengland/distribution>



Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
FAO Guidelines on Urban and Peri-urban Forestry	1. Prioritise the use of native species in public landscaping and development projects, allowing for alternatives only where project-specific needs clearly justify their inclusion.	MEA Council - Parks Development / Operations	2026

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	No coordinated focus on native vegetation.	Voluntary use of native species on Council and privately owned lands; invasive species are recognised.	Use of native species is encouraged on a project-appropriate basis in all areas; invasive species are recognised and discouraged on Council and private lands.	Native species are widely used on a project-appropriate basis.

R14 Research & Development

Mid and East Antrim has the opportunity to be a leader in urban forestry within Northern Ireland by developing a coordinated and evidence-based approach to managing its tree and woodland assets. By working in partnership with leading research institutions, the Borough can strengthen its understanding of the urban forest and develop innovative management strategies that benefit both local communities and the wider region.

Collaboration with academic partners, such as universities and research bodies including the Nevin Economic Research Institute, can bring valuable expertise, access to funding, and long-term research capacity. These partnerships can support the delivery of the strategy’s goals by involving researchers and students in projects that treat the Borough as a ‘living lab’ - where practical urban forestry initiatives are developed, tested, and refined.

Alongside this, Mid and East Antrim should look outward and engage with relevant national and international research and best practices. Participation in global networks such as the International Society of Arboriculture, Tree Cities of the World, the UN Green Cities Network, and the Biophilic Cities Network will help ensure the Borough stays aligned with the latest thinking, tools, and standards in sustainable urban forest management.



Link to relevant corporate policies
The 25 Year Environmental Plan

Actions	Responsibility	Review
1. Liaise with Universities and Forest Research and other agencies on potential joint research projects. 2. Create a research agenda that will identify work packages that could go to Masters students, PHD's, etc.	MEA Council - Parks Development	2027

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	No coordinated focus on research.	Some coordinated focus on research, and participation in / contracting R&D on a case-by-case basis.	Frequent coordination and assigning of research and development in support of trees & woodlands.	MEA has a clearly defined agenda for research which it requires to help further its ambitions under the TAWS. It is engaged with other leading institutions on research programs.

R15 Open Data and Web-map (Management and Assessment Tools)

Management and assessment tools are fundamental and indispensable when considering a resource as vast as the urban forest. Being able to clearly see tree data would help the trees and woodland management team keep track of the trees, and make the public aware of them and their value.

A web-map is an interactive tool for displaying information to the public about trees and woodlands, and data can be broken down by parish and ward. They can display a range of things including tree benefits such as canopy cover, annual ecosystem benefits (avoided runoff, carbon sequestration, air pollution removal), and tree condition, to name a few. They are an excellent way to engage with the public and communicate benefits of trees.

In creating a public web-map, tree data could be easily communicated and compared. Ideally the tool will be accessible, easy to use and comprehensive for all the trees and woodlands of Mid & East Antrim. The data should be kept up to date with the most recent reviews of the urban forest.

Implicit in the creation of a web map is the collection of the data that underpins it - see R1.

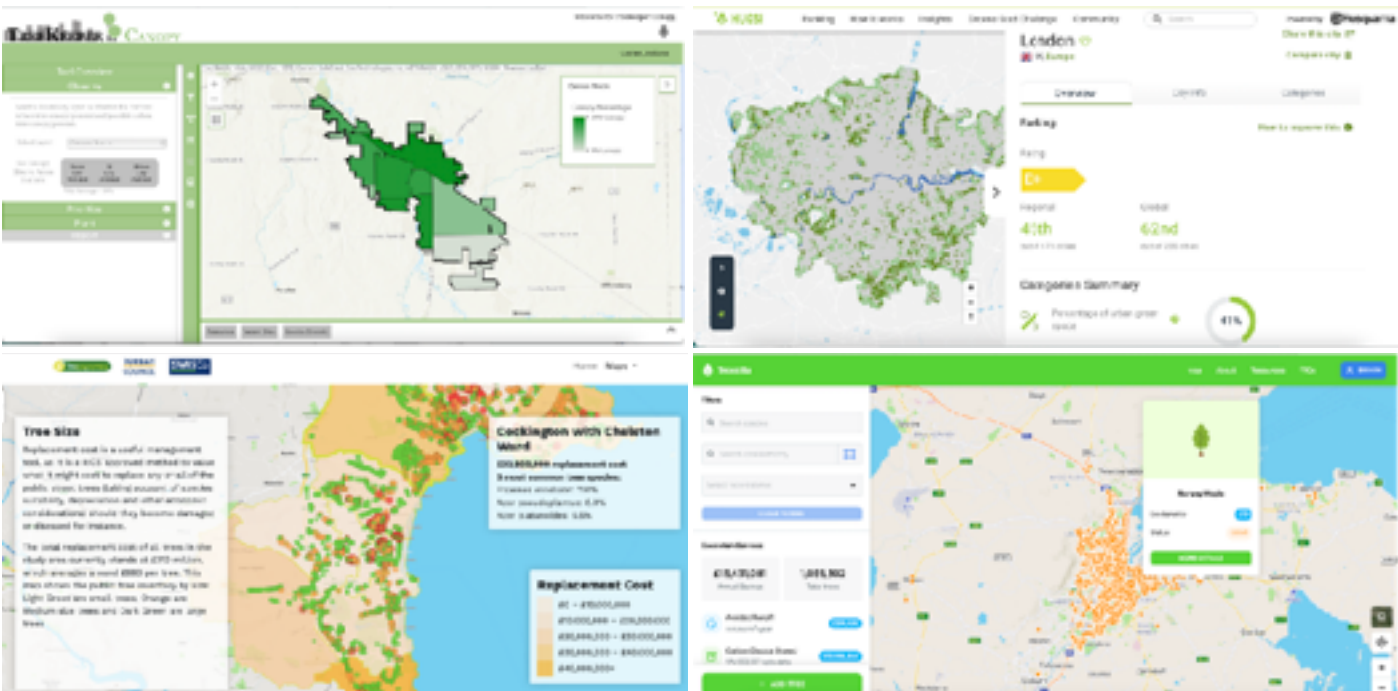


Figure 11: A selection of online mapping tools.

Top Left - TreeKeeper Canopy (<https://canopy.treekeepersoftware.com/goshenin>)
Top Right - Hugs! (<https://www.hugsi.green/city/?London>)
Bottom Left - Torbay's open access webmap (<http://torbay.urbantreecover.org>)
Bottom right - Treezilla (<https://treezilla.org>)

Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
The 25 Year Environmental Plan	1. Research and compare other Urban Forest web-maps. 2. Assess what information should be displayed for MEA and collate data. 3. Proceed with building a web-map suitable for public use.	Policy/GIS	2026

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
Medium	No open source mapping resource is available to the public.	Information on some elements of the treescape is available through a web map.	Large parts of the authority's treescape are presented through web maps.	MEA has a clear and openly accessible tree management portal for all tree data.

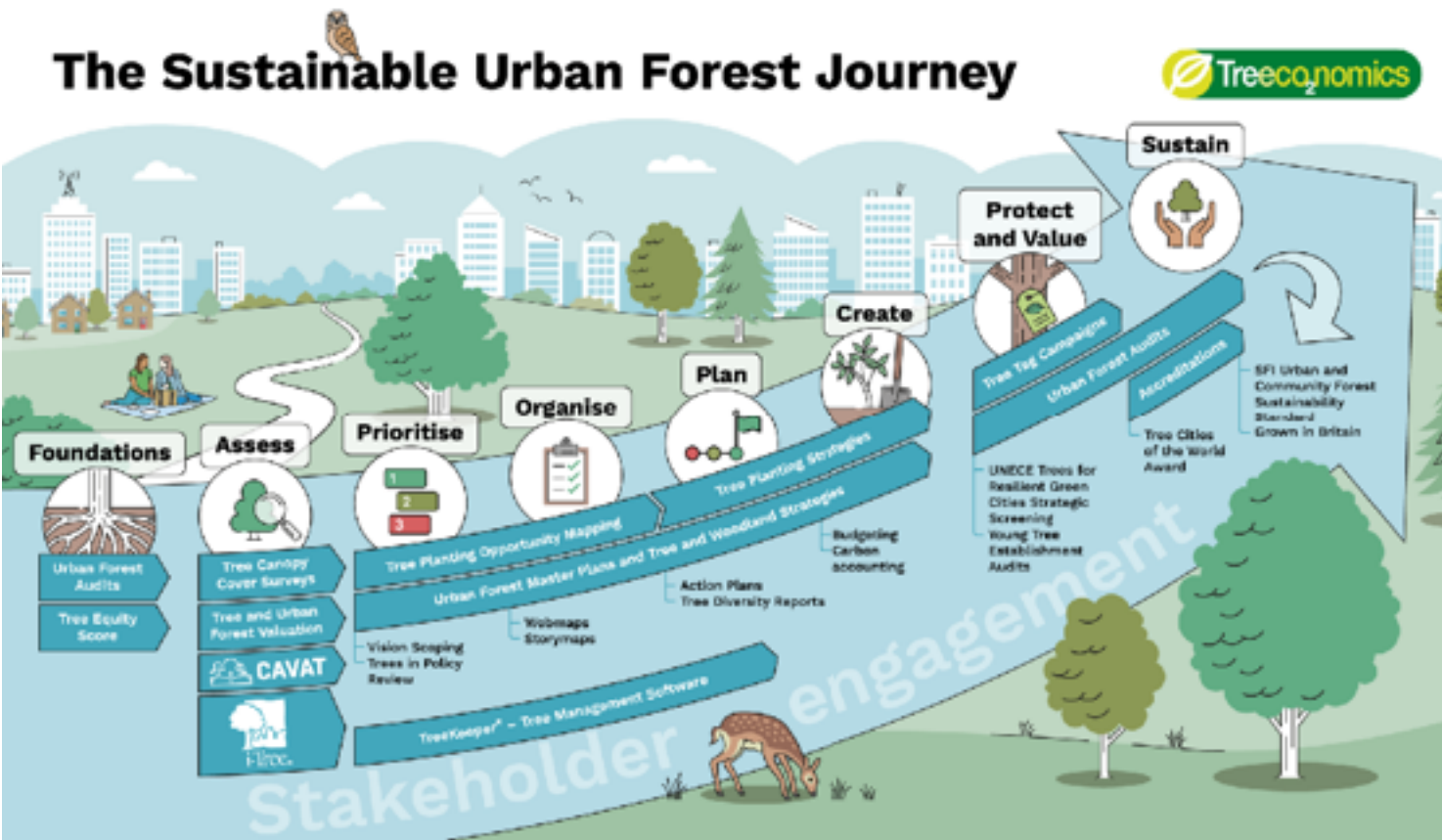
R16 Reviewing and Improving the Strategy

The Council is taking a strategic approach to its trees and woodlands. It follows an action based model more widely used in countries like the US and Canada. The Plan will help Mid & East Antrim set and work towards a vision for its trees that is sustainable well into the future.

The Trees and Woodlands Strategy outlines a vision for the development of the urban and rural tree resource. It provides a long-term framework in which strategic plans can be developed. Tree-planting programmes are just one element of tree and woodland management, and long-term management plans are just as important. With a tree and woodland management plan in place, tree planting programmes can be focused and strategised, as well as better guiding the achievement of a long-term vision.

With agreement on an ambitious vision, the Trees and Woodland Strategy can be divided into management periods, with goals and targets clearly outlined. A series of performance indicators are then be put into place to monitor performance and help progress towards the achievement of goals and the wider vision. It is important that progress is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis, and actions modified as necessary. This way, the Council can focus on the most relevant and urgent areas going forward.

The Trees and Woodland Strategy is an ongoing piece of work and this document represents the first step and will be subject to ongoing improvement and updating. For each and every target within the plan further detail will be added, projects will be planned and actioned to take MEA towards its vision.



Link to relevant corporate policies	Actions	Responsibility	Review
The 25 Year Environmental Plan	1. The Strategy and Action Plan will be reviewed after 12 months and thereafter every 3 years to ensure that it remains relevant and is compliant with current legislation, guidance and industry best practice.	Cross Departmental	2026

Priority	Performance Indicators showing Current (■) and Target (■) positions			
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal
High	No plan.	Existing plan limited in scope and implementation.	A recent comprehensive plan guides management of Council-owned forest resources, covering both intensively managed trees and broader populations in natural areas.	A strategic, multi-tiered plan aligned with other MEA and government strategies (e.g., Climate Strategy, Sustainability Strategy, Parks Strategy).

Key Performance Indicator	Current Performance Level				Priority
	Low	Moderate	Good	Optimal	
R1 – Tree and Woodlands Inventory					High
R2 – Tree valuation and asset management approach					High
R3 – Tree Equity					Medium
R4 – Trees & Development					High
R5 – Tree protection, development and enforcement					Low
R6 – Tree & Woodland Funding					High
R7 – Tree & Woodland capacity and staffing					High
R8 – Tree establishment planning and implementation					Medium
R9 – Growing site suitability					High
R10 – Maintenance of Council-owned trees					High
R11 – Management of Council-owned natural areas					High
R12 – Biosecurity					Medium
R13 – Vegetation species selection (native / non-native)					Medium
R14 – Research and Development					Medium
R15 – Open data management and assessment tools					Medium
R16 – Reviewing and improving the Tree Strategy					High

4

Appendices

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Abbreviations

BSI - British Standards Institution
CAVAT - Capital Asset Valuation for Amenity Trees
MEABC - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
ISA - International Society of Arboriculture
LPA - Local Planning Authority
NFI - National Forest Inventory
NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation
NTSG - National Tree Safety Group
NTM - National Tree Map
RTC - Relative Tree Canopy
SSSI - Site of Special Scientific Interest
TB - Tree Board
TPO - Tree Preservation Order
TDAG - Trees and Design Action Group
USDA - United States Department of Agriculture

Glossary of terms

Arboriculture- The selection, production, planting, maintenance, and removal of all woody plants for amenity purposes.

Biodiversity- A measure of biological variation, whether represented by gene, species, habitats or ecosystems.

Biosecurity- A set of precautions to reduce the risk of accidentally introducing or spreading alien invasive species, including potential pests and pathogens.

Canopy Cover- A 2-dimensional metric quantifying the area of ground covered by tree canopy when viewed from above, where tree canopy is the collective branches and foliage of the tree.

Carbon sequestration- Processes that remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Carbon storage - The amount of carbon bound up in the above-ground and below- ground parts of woody vegetation.

Community forestry- Addresses the social benefits of the urban forest: community pride, community planting and care projects, reduction of violent crimes and a sense of safety.

Conservation- Use, management and protection of natural resources that insures use and enjoyment for future generations

Ecosystem Services- The ways in which humanity relies on ecosystems for the continued provision of clean air, drinking water, an equitable climate, the productivity of agriculture, forestry and oceans, control of flooding, soil erosion, coastal erosion, carbon sequestration etc.

Ecosystem- A unit of ecology consisting of a more or less discrete community of species, interacting with each other and their physical environment.

Environment- The prevailing conditions which reflect the combined influence of climate, soil, topography and biology (other plants and animals) present in an area.

GIS (Geographic information system)- A collection of computer hardware, software, and geographic data for capturing, storing, updating, manipulating, analysing and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information.

Green infrastructure (GI)- An interconnected network of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, greenways, parks, forests, and other open spaces that support native species, maintain natural ecological processes, sustain air and water resources and contribute to health and quality of life. Includes parks, parkways, riparian buffers, residential landscaping, street trees, rain gardens, green roofs, and window boxes.

Green roof- A specially designed roof that incorporates plants. Depending on the structural capacity of the building, depth and type of soil, and desired maintenance. Green roofs can be planted with anything from sedums to trees.

Green space- Any vegetated land or water within an urban area that serves as recreation or open space. This includes neighbourhood and regional parks, gardens, cemeteries, playing fields, bike and walking paths, and urban landscaping.

Greenway/green corridor- Corridor composed of natural vegetation. Greenways can be used to create connected networks of open space that include traditional parks and natural areas.

Habitat- Food, water, shelter and space that supports plant or animal life.

Impervious surface- A hard surface (such as a car park or rooftop) that prevents infiltration of water into the ground, causing water to run off the surface.

Infiltration- The downward movement of water from the land surface into the soil.

Inventory, Tree- Gathering of accurate information on the health and diversity of the community forest which can include: listing and description of trees and planting sites.

Microclimate- The climate of a site as modified by local site factors.

Native Species- Species present in a defined region for a certain amount of time without having been brought by humans (cf. exotic), for instance in Britain since the English Channel was flooded around 6,000 years ago.

Non-native species- A species that due to direct or indirect human activity occurs in locations beyond its known historical or potential natural range. Refers to species from another continent, region, ecosystem, or habitat.

Pollution- Substances introduced into the environment by human actions that contaminate the environment.

Stormwater runoff- Precipitation that falls on impervious surfaces (such as roofs and roads). Because it is not absorbed by soil and vegetation, it flows into storm drains.

Subsidence- In relation to soil or structures resting in or on soil, a sinking due to shrinkage when certain clay soils dry out, sometimes due to the extraction of moisture by tree roots.

TDAG - The Trees Design Action Group

Tree Protection Order (TPO)- A legally enforceable document made by the local planning authority to protect trees and woodland in the interests of public amenity. While trees in conservation areas are automatically protected, individual trees outside these areas may be protected with a Tree Preservation Order.

Urban Forest- Trees, woody shrubs, hedges, herbaceous plants, waterways, wildlife, grasses, and other green infrastructure (including green roofs, green walls etc.) within the built environment, considered collectively over an extensive area.

Urban heat island effect- A phenomenon where air temperatures in urban areas are 2-10°F hotter than surrounding rural areas due to the high concentrations of buildings and pavement in urban areas.

Stem Diameter- The diameter of a tree at around 1.5 metres above ground level.

