

Torfaen Tree Strategy and Action Plan 2021 -2031



Wales Tree of the Year 2019 in Pontypool Park

'Protect, Plan, Plant and Manage – Growing for our Current and Future Generations'

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Cwmbran street tree

FOREWORD



Councillor Mandy Owen

Executive Member for Environment

I am very pleased to present to you the first comprehensive Tree Strategy for the County Borough of Torfaen.

The character of Torfaen's landscape is influenced by its wooded upland valleys, hedgerows, urban woodlands and tree lined streets. It is no surprise then, that our county borough has the largest urban tree canopy in Wales. It is this green infrastructure that provides a range of benefits for those of us living, working and visiting Torfaen.

At a time of increasing global uncertainty we should not ignore the contribution our trees and green space make to the local environment and to wider matters such as climate change. We should ensure our environment is passed on to future generations in a condition that is better than the one we have inherited.

This strategy covers a 10-year period and has a vision of protection, management and enhancement that accords with the principle of sustainability as introduced by Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. There is, nonetheless, lots to be done if this vision is to be realised. Work should be co-ordinated to target resources for maximum benefit. Any increase in tree cover through community planting schemes or rewilding initiatives must take account of community views and be in the right place using trees of the right species.

By working together with our citizens, partners, community groups and across council departments we must recognise the value of our treescape and the contribution it makes to improving quality of life and act accordingly. This Tree Strategy sets a framework for that work.

It gives me great pleasure to support this strategy as Executive Member for Environment.

1.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Torfaen Tree Strategy

1.1.1 Although one of the smallest county boroughs' in Wales, Torfaen has a distinctive landscape. Its character in the north is defined by its position on the eastern edge of the south Wales coalfield and its southern half is more akin to the green field landscape of its neighbour Monmouthshire. It does nonetheless include features such as parks, gardens and conservation areas, both natural and cultural in which trees play an important role. Furthermore, a network of linear tree lined transport routes, such as the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, the trunk road estate, cycle ways and footpaths as well as many treelined streets come together to make an important contribution to climate change adaptation, biodiversity protection and enhancement and human well-being, so provides a significant contribution to the County Borough's Green Infrastructure (GI).

1.1.2 The legacy of planting on streets and in parks and the protection of woodland especially ancient woodland has resulted in Torfaen having the largest urban tree canopy in Wales. This is something referred to as its urban forest. Nevertheless, it's against this leafy backdrop that trees can sometimes be taken for granted and easily removed based on having so many.

1.1.3 But Torfaen's tree canopy is under pressure from a combination of land use change, climate change, a risk averse culture, community intolerance and a lack of understanding amongst some who see trees in a less positive way. This strategy aims to pull together in one over-arching document, a coherent approach to the management and enhancement of all trees that are under the custodianship of the local authority. In so doing it aims to direct internal decision making that is consistent with many of the council's statutory obligations. Only by placing them at the centre of environmental decision making will the multi-functional benefits of trees become recognised and valued.

1.1.4 The table below illustrates the approach taken within this strategy to update Torfaen County Borough Council's operational and policy procedures around the protection, enhancement and management of trees.

Traditional Tree Management	Modern Tree Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trees a visual amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trees valued for their ecosystem services
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attention to individual trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on canopy cover
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trees as a low priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trees as important contributors to well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trees have no discernible economic value	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trees valued for their economic value
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on non-native ornamental species	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on large canopy native species
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aesthetic based design only	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multi – purpose based design
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual tree maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall tree population management
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ownership boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tree population seen as a

Traditional Tree Management	Modern Tree Management
determine tree management	continuous resource regardless of boundaries.

Approaches in Tree Management (amended from Wrexham Tree and Woodland Strategy 2016-2026)

1.1.5 The role of this strategy is to provide a council wide framework to tree management and protection. It seeks to quantify and value the tree and woodland resource in Torfaen and in combination with Torfaen’s emerging Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy, act as a platform for council and community tree and woodland planting projects.

1.2 Timescale and delivery structure

This strategy and action plan covers a ten year period (2021-2031) and is a timeframe that aims to focus action in the short to medium term in line with the Torfaen Well-being Plan. It is envisaged that the co-ordination and monitoring of the actions set out in this plan will be reported through the three yearly biodiversity duty reporting requirements.

1.3 Vision

The vision for this strategy is:

‘Protect, Plan, Plant and Manage – Growing for our Current and Future Generations’.

1.4 Aim

That we aim to ensure Torfaen’s street trees, woodlands and hedgerows are protected, valued, managed, enhanced and appreciated for the benefit of current and future generations.

1.5 Strategic objectives

These six strategic objectives are designed to support the delivery of the vision and aims.

Objective 1: A sustainable approach to **tree management** that recognises the social, economic, environmental and cultural value of trees through the ecosystems services they provide.

Objective 2: A strategic approach to **tree planting** that seeks to enhance the green infrastructure of the county borough by working in partnership with all stakeholders.

Objective 3: A Torfaen wide approach to **tree protection** through policy development.

Objective 4: A community led approach to **tree appreciation** through the active involvement of community groups, schools, and residents etc.

Objective 5: A partnership approach to the **monitoring and review** of the Torfaen Tree Strategy through established forums such as the Public Service Board (PSB) and Local Nature Partnership (LNP).

Objective 6: A **tree risk** management approach to ensure risks to people, infrastructure and property are minimised wherever possible.

1.6 Definition of trees for the purpose of this strategy and action plan

For consistency with existing statutory duties, this strategy and action plan adopts the same approach as that taken for Tree Preservation Orders and as defined by the High Court. Therefore, a 'tree' is anything which ordinarily one would call a tree so includes the following examples:

- **All trees** ranging from the smallest sapling to the largest veteran tree;
- **All hedgerows**
- **All street and parkland trees**
- **All woodlands**
- **All fruit trees i.e. orchards**



Ancient deciduous woodland and more recent conifer plantation woodland



Orchard at Greenmeadow Community Farm



Foreground managed beech hedgerow with unmanaged line of beech trees in background.



Mature beech tree within Cwm-y-Glyn ancient woodland

1.7 What services do trees provide for society?

Trees are social, economic, environmental and cultural assets which increase in value the longer they live. There are now techniques in place to quantify the economic value of trees. The CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) system is one such example that provides a basis for managing trees as public assets rather than liabilities.

More information is available via this link:

<https://www.ltoa.org.uk/documents-1/capital-asset-value-for-amenity-trees-cavat>

1.7.1 The following are some of the most widely used examples of the benefits of trees and in particular the urban tree canopy.

- **Cost Reduction:** Trees help improve the environmental performance of buildings. A well planted development can lower heating and cooling costs.
- **Asset Value Increase:** Maximise your investment. Trees have the potential to increase property value.
- **Environmental Enhancements:** Urban trees help reduce temperature extremes.

- **Social Improvements:** Evidence has shown that in some location's areas with high numbers of trees experience less crime. Trees also help to reduce noise pollution, absorbing and deflecting sound.
- **Create a Sense of Place:** Trees help to improve local identity. Large tree species equal big improvements. Trees can encourage social activities in areas with higher tree numbers, creating stronger and friendlier communities.
- **Safer Streets:** Tree-lined streets promote calmer driving so are safer for pedestrians and thus enhance both walking and cycling.
- **Health and Well-being:** Trees improve the urban environment. Trees and urban greening have been shown to reduce stress levels and to increase feeling of well-being.
- **Stabilising Storms:** Trees help reduce the effects of flash flooding by intercepting rainfall and can readily absorb water through their fibrous roots.
- **Wildlife Enhancements:** Tree planting is a great way of increasing biodiversity. They are a major element in creating urban green links and wildlife corridors as part of green infrastructure.
- **Improve Air Quality:** The benefits of urban trees in reducing urban air quality will vary according to circumstance. Where vegetation acts a barrier, concentrations of vehicle pollutants immediately behind the barrier are reduced.
- **Carbon capture and Storage:** Trees capture and store significant quantities of carbon and as such help reduce the impact of climate change.

1.8 Current tree management approach

- 1.8.1 The current approach to tree management by Torfaen County Borough Council is set out in the Tree Policy prepared by the Department for the Environment (Technical Services Division) around 20 years ago. It is a policy that provides an operational framework for tree management. It sets out clearly and concisely the types of tree complaints that will be dealt with and those that won't. This strategy aims to refresh the Tree Policy.
- 1.8.2 There are several council departments that make day to day decisions in respect of trees. The most notable will be the planning department through the allocation of development sites and the administration of the TPO system along with the Asset Management team that sell or lease land which supports trees. The Natural Environment Policy and Street Scene Team is responsible for the management of trees that pose a health and safety risk, and/or cause a highway obstruction. This team is also responsible for the proactive management of trees for the purpose of nature conservation.



Examples of tree work on Public Rights of Way

1.9 Torfaen's Tree Coverage

- 1.9.1 *Town Tree Cover in Torfaen County Borough: Understanding Canopy Cover to Better Plan and Manage Our Urban Trees (Natural Resources Wales)* is the main source of information concerning urban tree cover in Torfaen. In addition, Natural Resources Wales Ancient Woodland Inventory and the Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/> provides additional information.
- 1.9.2 Data taken from the town tree canopy study shows that Torfaen's urban cover was estimated to be 23.2% in 2013, down from 24.4% in 2009 – **the most canopied county in Wales**. Differences exist between towns due to landscape character but all three main urban areas in Torfaen exceed the national average – Cwmbran (23.9%), Pontypool (23%) and Blaenavon (19.8%).
- 1.9.3 Urban woodland represents 35% of Wales' urban canopy cover, however in Torfaen it is as much as 45%. The rest is made up of so-called 'amenity' non-

woodland trees, such as individual and groups of trees growing along streets, gardens, car parks and other urban public and private open spaces.

- 1.9.4 Public open space hosts 53% of all tree cover in our Welsh communities despite making up only 22% of urban land. This is 57% in Torfaen where public open space accounts for 25% of urban land.
- 1.9.5 Private residential gardens make up 35% of Wales' urban areas and provide 20% of all our urban tree cover. This is 33% in Torfaen with gardens providing 15% of all canopy. This underlines the responsibility of homeowners and the importance of the good use and management of the Tree Preservation Orders. It also highlights the responsibility of developers and planners as part of the development process to ensure landscape proposals protect existing trees and plant new ones.
- 1.9.6 Transport routes, including verges and pavements make up 16% of Wales' urban land but they only provide 9% of tree cover. In Torfaen these figures are 17% and 8% respectively. Motorised traffic causes much of the urban air and surface water pollution, which trees can remove.
- 1.9.7 Overall Torfaen lost 37 hectares of tree canopy between 2009 and 2013 with all three towns contributing to canopy loss. Similarly, 159 of Wales' 200 urban areas showed a decline in canopy. When comparing loss and gain of trees between 2006 and 2013, 7,000 large trees appear to have been lost overall across Wales. However, Torfaen appears to be one of the few counties where trees have been recruited from the medium age category - as many as 985. Nationally however there appears to be a steady erosion of Wales' Victorian and Edwardian tree legacy.
- 1.9.8 Whilst variation exists across Wales, 65% of more affluent wards have cover greater than 15% compared to 23% for less well-off wards. There is however great variation in the tree cover within Wales' 10 most deprived wards (2014), from as little as 2% in Rhyl West to 19% in Merthyr Vale, Aberfan. Of the 18 wards in Torfaen 12 exceed the national canopy average with four in excess of 30% - St Cadocs and Penygarn has 46%. Only two - Abersychan 1 (8%) and Trevethin (5%) fall below 10%. Where high tree cover and high level of deprivation coexist, this seems to be associated with local urban woodland being present rather than amenity trees. Wood of this nature can sometimes be unmanaged and inaccessible.

More information is available via this link:

<https://cdn.naturalresources.wales/media/682950/torfaen-tcwtc3-technical-annex.pdf>

2. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Legislative and policy obligations

2.1.1 Statutory obligations steer how the local authority addresses tree related issues in areas under its control. Several important pieces of legislation and policy frame this work and are set out in the following sections.

2.2 Torfaen County Borough Council Corporate Plan 3 2016 - 2021

2.2.1 This plan sets out how Torfaen County Borough Council intends to work together with the communities to create an improved, more equal and sustainable future for the people of Torfaen.

2.2.2 Three plan priorities are:

- A clean and green Torfaen County Borough Council
- Raising educational attainment
- Support for Torfaen's most vulnerable residents

More information is available via this link:

<https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/AboutTheCouncil/ImprovingTorfaen/CorporatePlan/Corporate-Plan-3.aspx>

2.3 Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) – sustainable development

2.3.1 The Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) places a duty on public bodies to carry out sustainable development. Sustainable Development is defined as a process of improving economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.

More information is available via this link:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/2/contents/enacted>

2.4 Torfaen Well-being Plan 2018-2023

2.4.1 The Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) also establishes the Public Services Board (PSB). The PSB in Torfaen is a local partnership which brings together public services to deliver the goals of the act and to put in place a Well-being Plan for the area.

2.4.2 The Torfaen Well-being Plan (2018-2023) was prepared following a place-based assessment of the views of the residents of Torfaen. Most respondents said they valued green spaces, want safe clean streets, affordable housing and good health.

From this assessment seven objectives were agreed by the PSB, as follows:

1. Develop a functional connected network of natural areas that support the current and future well-being needs of the local populations;
2. Develop mitigation and adaptation responses to the impacts of climate change;

3. Provide children and young people with the best possible start in life;
4. Prevent chronic health conditions through supporting healthy lifestyles and enabling people to age well;
5. Tackle the inter-generational patterns of poverty and develop economic resilience;
6. Improve local skill through work-force planning, training, apprenticeships, and volunteering opportunities;
7. Create safe, confident communities and promote community cohesion.

Enhancement of trees and woodlands can contribute to many of these objectives, but the main contribution will be to objectives 1, 2 and 3.

More information is available via this link:

<http://www.torfaenpublicservicesboard.co.uk/en/Planning-Together/Well-being-Plan.aspx>

2.5 Sections 197 and 198 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990)

- 2.5.1 The Town and Country Planning Act (1990) is the principal legislation for regulating the development of land in England and Wales. Sections 197 and 198 are primarily concerned with trees, and where possible planting more trees and establishing Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

More information is available via this link:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents>

2.6 Environment (Wales) Act (2016)- biodiversity and ecosystem resilience

- 2.6.1 As part of Welsh Government's commitment to reversing the decline in biodiversity in Wales and increasing the resilience of our ecosystems, the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduces a new public duty, which highlights biodiversity as an essential component of ecosystem resilience.
- 2.6.2 **Section 6** of the act places an enhanced duty on all public authorities. So, when carrying out their functions in Wales, public bodies must 'maintain and enhance biodiversity' where it is within the proper exercise of their functions. This ensures that biodiversity is an integral part of the decisions that public authorities take.
- 2.6.3 To assist in complying with this new duty, public authorities must also take account of relevant evidence as required. Furthermore, public authorities will also be required to prepare and publish a plan on how they intend to comply with the biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty.

Some examples of what public authorities could do to meet this biodiversity duty are:

- Raise awareness across an organisation about how each and every role can impact and influence biodiversity and consider measures to enhance biodiversity and ecosystems in all policies, plans and projects.

- Explore all opportunities to support biodiversity and to demonstrate compliance with the duty – e.g. plant native species of tree, wildflower areas for pollinators, leaving areas of grass unmown and improving ecological connectivity.
- Work to deliver biodiversity enhancements across all activities.

2.6.4 Public authorities, in complying with the Section 6 duty **must have regard to** the Section 7 lists, which provides a focus on species and habitats of principal importance. This will also assist public authorities in meeting obligations under The Nature Recovery Plan for Wales. Trees and woodlands form a major component of the section 7 list.

More information is available via this link:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/contents/enacted>

2.6.5 **Area Statements** are also a requirement of the Environment Wales Act. The act placed a duty on Natural Resources Wales to publish and implement Area Statements covering the whole of Wales. The South East Wales Area Statement covers Torfaen and has themes relating to habitat connectivity, health, climate change and partnership working.

More information is available via this link:

<https://naturalresources.wales/about-us/area-statements/south-east-wales-area-statement/?lang=en>

2.7 Hedgerow Regulations (1997) – rural hedgerows

2.7.1 The purpose of the Hedgerow Regulations (1997) is to protect hedgerows from loss and/or damage. Hedgerows are a row of bushes formed from managed tree species. There is no definition in the regulations as to what constitutes a hedgerow but a hedgerow that through lack of management has grown into a line of trees is not covered by the regulations.

2.7.2 Hedgerows that form the curtilage of a dwelling house are also not subject to the conditions of the regulations.

2.7.3 For the Hedgerow Regulations to apply, the hedgerow must be at least 20 metres long or connected at each end by another hedge. Gaps of up to 20 metres are included as part of the hedgerow. Where a landowner intends to remove all or part of a hedgerow a Hedgerow Removal Notice must first be submitted to the local planning authority.

2.7.4 The authority will then determine if the hedge is important or not, if important, a Hedgerow Retention Notice will be issued. The local authority must consult community councils and consider their views. An important hedgerow can be one that marks an historic parish boundary, supports species listed on Schedules 1, 5 & 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), adjacent to a Public Rights of Way. Also, the hedgerow must include a specific number of woody species (see regulations for full details).

Further information is available via the following links :
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1997/1160/made> and
<http://naturenet.net/trees/hedgerow/>

2.8 Forestry Act (1967) – felling licences

- 2.8.1 Consent for cutting down or carrying out works on a protected tree is not sought from the local planning authority where a felling licence is required. In such cases an application must be made to the Forestry Authority (currently Natural Resources Wales) in the first instance. Section 9 of the Forestry Act (1967) and subsidiary Regulations sets out situations where a felling licence is not required.

More information is available via this link:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/10/part/II/crossheading/restriction-of-felling>

2.9 Section 154 Highways Act (1980) – roadside trees

- 2.9.1 A requirement of the Highways Act 1980 is that a public highway should be kept clear of obstructions. Trees and other roadside vegetation if unmanaged can impede the movement of vehicles and pedestrians. The act gives the highway authority powers to remove trees and other vegetation that can obstruct highway users.

More information is available via this link:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/contents>



Tree lined street in Pontnewynydd

2.10 Anti -Social Behaviour Act (2003)_ - high hedges

2.10.1 Hedges have many qualities for homeowners, by providing privacy and supporting wildlife in urban areas. Nonetheless unmanaged garden hedges can be cause of neighbour disputes if allowed to grow too tall.

2.10.2 Unresolved issues around high hedges are dealt with under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. In this act a 'high hedge' means a barrier to light or access and,

- (a) is formed wholly or predominantly by a line of two or more evergreens; and
- (b) rises to a height of more than two metres above ground level.

More information is available via these links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/over-the-garden-hedge>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/9408/hedgeheight.pdf

2.11 Building a Healthier Gwent

This strategy will contribute to building a healthier Gwent:

<https://abuhb.nhs.wales/files/building-a-healthier-gwent/building-a-healthier-gwent-leaflet/>

2.12 Trees and Plant Health Orders

2.12.1 The Plant Health Act 1967 empowers Welsh Ministers to make orders to prevent the introduction and spread of plant pests.

2.12.2 *Phytophthora ramorum*

A disease management strategy for *Phytophthora ramorum* is in place for Wales. The strategy deals with the management of a fungus-like organism *Phytophthora ramorum* that affects the larch tree

More information is available vis this link:

<https://gweddill.gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/140224-p-ramorum-disease-management-strategy-en.pdf>

2.12.3 *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* (Chalara ash dieback)

Ash die back is caused by fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* that effects mainly wild ash trees. This disease is now widespread in Torfaen, showing in mature trees as well as young self-seeded trees alike.

Currently no particular action is required unless a Plant Health Notice is served. However, where an ash tree poses a risk it should be managed in accordance with the current TCBC Tree Policy. It is also recommended that public bodies consider preparing an Ash Die Back Action Plan.

More information is available via these links:

<https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/forestry/tree-health-and-biosecurity-1/chalara/?lang=en>



Evidence of die back in two ash saplings near Abersychan.

2.13 Planning Policy Wales

2.13.1 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government and is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs). The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

More information is available via this link:

<https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/PlanningAndDevelopment/Planningpolicy/LocalDevelopmentPlan/Local-Development-Plan.aspx>

2.13.2 The Distinctive and Natural Places theme of PPW, covers several topic areas including the historic environment, landscape, biodiversity and habitats, coastal characteristics, air quality, soundscapes, water services, flooding and other environmental (surface and sub-surface) risks.

It is acknowledged in this theme that trees support aspirations around clean air and flood prevention targets, biodiversity enhancement, historic settings such as conservation areas and parks and gardens, as well as being major contributors to Green Infrastructure Assessments.

More information is available via this link:

<https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/planning-policy-wales-edition-10.pdf>

2.14 Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5: Nature Conservation and Planning

2.14.1 This Technical Advice Note provides advice about how the land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity, and sets out in detail how trees, hedgerows and woodlands must be valued through the land use planning system.

More information is available via this link:

<https://gov.wales/technical-advice-note-tan-5-nature-conservation-and-planning>

2.15 Technical Advice Note (TAN) 10: Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)

2.15.1 Local planning authorities are empowered, in the interests of amenity, to protect trees and woodlands by making Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). There is a duty on local planning authorities to make adequate provision where appropriate for the preservation and planting of trees when granting planning permission by imposing conditions and/or making TPOs.

2.15.2 The principal effect of a TPO is to prohibit the cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, wilful damage or wilful destruction of a tree or trees without the consent of the local planning authority.

Further information on TPOs is available via this link:

<https://beta.gov.wales/technical-advice-note-tan-10-tree-preservation-orders>



Urban green space Cwmbran showing an even aged treescape with closely mown grass

2.16 Torfaen Local Development Plan (LDP)

2.16.1 The Torfaen Local Development Plan covers a period up to 2021 and sets out the development strategy and detailed policies and proposals for future development and the use of land within the Torfaen County Borough area.

2.16.2 The following objectives and policies contained within the LDP are considered relevant to the management and enhancement of trees within Torfaen.

LDP Objectives

- To ensure the highest quality design in all developments and delivering safe, healthy and attractive environments;
- To protect, manage and enhance biodiversity and ecological networks across Torfaen;
- To minimise climate change impacts through reduced emissions of greenhouse gases in both new and existing development, and to adapt to climate change through considerations of its effects in the design and location of new development;
- To protect and enhance the valued landscape character of Torfaen, including important open space and sense of rurality between settlements.

More information is available via this link:

<https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/PlanningAndDevelopment/Planningpolicy/LocalDevelopmentPlan/Local-Development-Plan.asp>

2.17 Health and Safety and trees

2.17.1 The risk of being struck and killed by a tree or branch falling is extremely low (in the order of one in 10 million for those trees in or adjacent to areas of high public use). However, the low level of overall risk may not be perceived in this way by the public, particularly following an incident.

2.17.2 Doing all that is reasonably practicable does not mean that all trees must be individually examined on a regular basis. A decision must be taken on what is reasonable in the circumstances and this will include consideration of the risks to which people may be exposed.

2.17.3 There are several reasons why LAs (as duty holders) and others may want to manage their tree stocks, for example responsibilities under other legislation and the risk of civil liabilities to:

- reduce the risk of property damage from subsidence;
- maintain stocks to preserve their amenity, conservation, and environmental value;
- prevent personal injury through trips and falls on footways disturbed by tree roots; and
- prevent vehicle damage and personal injury from obscured sightlines on the highway.

More information is available via this link:



Cut timber can be used as habitat piles or as biomass.

2.18 Woodlands for Wales – The Welsh Government’s Strategy for Woodlands and Trees

2.18.1 This is a 50-year Welsh Government (WG) Strategy that describes the type of woodland WG wishes to see. It seeks to broaden people’s engagement with the wooded landscape to ensure that the full range of opportunities and services are accessible to all sections of society. The vision for woodlands and trees is:

‘Wales will be known for its high-quality woodlands that enhance the landscape, are appropriate to local conditions and have a diverse mixture of species and habitats. These will

- ***Provide real social and community benefits, both locally and nationally;***
- ***Support thriving woodland-based industries; and***
- ***Contribute to a better-quality environment through Wales.’***

2.18.2 While the whole of this document is relevant to the work undertaken by Torfaen County Borough Council to manage trees and woodland, the following paragraph taken from this strategy is particularly relevant to urban woodlands and trees.

WG wants to see woodlands and trees playing a more valued role as components of the green infrastructure in and around Wales’ urban areas. Urban trees reduce air and noise pollution and the public health issues associated with them, and outdoor recreation in urban woodlands improves both physical and mental well-being. Urban woodlands can also provide a focus for community action and

volunteering, helping to increase social capital, improve community cohesion and reduce antisocial behaviour.

2.18.3 WG wishes to see Local Authorities take the following actions:

- Woodlands and trees are used more creatively in the green infrastructure in and around urban areas (e.g. new developments and restoration of industrial sites, active travel routes and green corridors), to provide people with better quality, easily accessible green space;
- Local authorities and others further develop their programmes of urban tree planting and woodland management;
- Continued use of the Councils tree database or similar tools to quantify the structure and environmental effects of urban trees and calculate their value to society;
- Improvement to access to urban woodlands, especially for people who currently do not have easy access to green spaces;
- Local authorities, landscape designers, architects and other relevant stakeholders ensure that the environmental benefits of trees in modifying microclimate and drainage are taken into account in planning guidance and development control, and when creating sustainable urban drainage systems;
- Promotion of the message that urban woodlands and trees make a positive contribution to many other policy agendas, including those which concern climate change, health and social welfare, lifelong learning and biodiversity, and the management of water and soil resources.

In the context of this strategy, Welsh Government has made a commitment to creating a **National Forest for Wales** to create areas of new woodland and help to restore and maintain some of our irreplaceable ancient woodlands

More information this available via this link:
<https://gov.wales/woodlands-wales-strategy>



Veteran pollarded tree

2.19 The State of Natural Resources Report (2016)

2.19.1 This report is a requirement of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. It states that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) must prepare and publish a report on the state of nature in Wales.

2.19.2 The key messages from this report for woodlands and urban environments (street tree cover) are:

- Woodland area in Wales has nearly tripled since 1800s. However, Wales is one of the least wooded countries in Europe (14.8% of land area compared to the EU average of 38%).
- 40% of Wales' woodland have little or no management which reduces their resilience and ability to provide well-being benefits. Fragmentation is a significant pressure affecting native condition. There are nearly 22,000 woodland identified as being smaller than 2.0 ha.
- The total area of woodland in Wales has changed little in the past 20 years. The rates of new woodland creation are low. Woodland condition and extent in Wales have already been and will in the future be affected by climate change. Tree health is already declining. The pressures from pests and diseases will increase in the future. Woodland carbon sequestration by Welsh woodlands is estimated to be about 1,419,000 tonnes annually.

More information is available via this link:

<https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/the-state-of-natural-resources-report-assessment-of-the-sustainable-management-of-natural-resources/?lang=en>

3.

THE STRATEGY



Trees add to the character and ecological functionality of the canal at Ty Coch, Cwmbran.

3.1 Tree Management

3.1.1 Trees are dynamic natural features providing a range of services that benefit society. However, to ensure these services are maximised trees require regular inspection and management. Maintenance of urban trees will often be a combination of actions based on the specialist advice from Torfaen's Tree Officer. Actions may include crown lifting, pruning, pollarding and coppicing, only rarely will a tree be considered for removal. Where complete removal is recommended it is generally where a tree is dead, dying or supporting a disease that is detrimental to the safety of the tree. To maintain the extent for tree canopy in Torfaen (see NRW Tree Canopy Report) this Tree Strategy recommends a programme of tree replacement as discussed in this section.

3.2 Privately-owned trees

3.2.1 The value of trees in private parks and gardens to Torfaen's Green Infrastructure should not be underestimated. They make a significant contribution to the canopy cover of urban Torfaen. In some localities such as Llantarnam Abbey trees can provide character setting for historic built features. More contemporary urban

settings such as Cwmbran New Town are characterised by extensive street tree planting and housing developments framed by the retention of blocks of ancient woodland. Owners should seek to manage trees to ensure they are safe and well maintained.

3.3 Publicly owned trees

- 3.3.1 Torfaen County Borough Council is responsible for the safety and management of all trees on land and property it owns, except in circumstances where land is leased, for example to sports clubs, and where the management of trees is explicitly highlighted within the terms of the lease agreement.

3.4 Proactive tree management work

- 3.4.1 Currently council tree management work is conducted on a reactive basis with little planned maintenance programme in place. Where management is to be undertaken, this is conducted in a manner that seeks to secure the longevity of the tree or trees to be managed.
- 3.4.2 All tree work will seek to adhere to the recommendations set out in British Standard BS 3998:2010. All council staff and contactors conducting tree work will be appropriately qualified and trained including knowledge of protected species.

3.5 Protected species and the public bodies biodiversity duty

- 3.5.1 Where tree works have the potential to affect legally protected species such as bats and nesting birds, this must be considered when making tree management decisions. When a tree requires urgent works to manage a health and safety risk it is recommended that advice is sought from a fully qualified ecologist beforehand. Where this cannot be achieved, work should proceed in a manner that is reasonable and appropriate, including modifications to working practices to reduce the risk of conflict with biodiversity legislation. It must be considered that while a decision to fell or manage a tree will be in accordance with health and safety obligations etc. this does not override protected species law.

3.6 Tree features and biodiversity

- 3.6.1 **Ivy:** It is only rarely that ivy will cause significant direct damage to a supporting tree and therefore should normally be retained due to its biodiversity value. Ivy provides a valuable food source for mammals, birds and insects, and nesting and roosting sites for bats and birds. Exceptions to this can be justified through health and safety concerns and where, in more formal settings, ivy growing on specimen trees can be considered a visual distraction.

More information is available via this link:

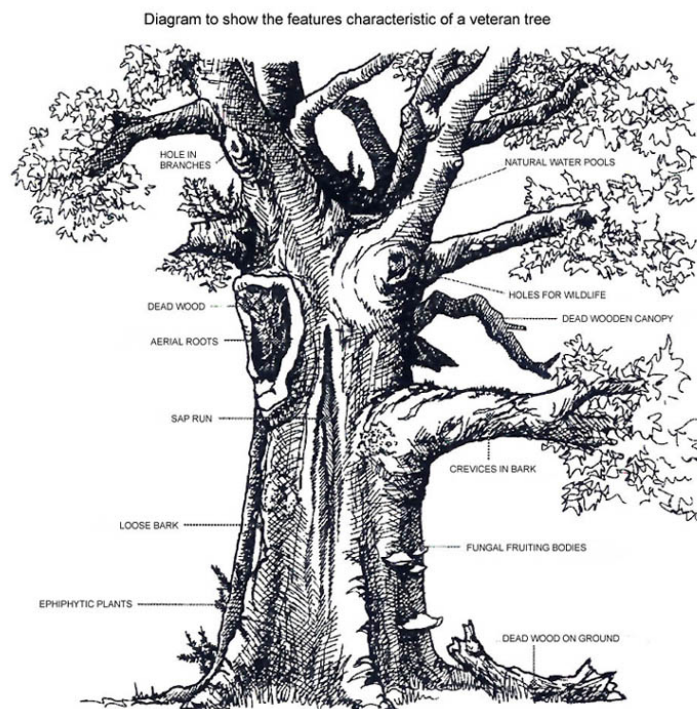
<http://www.canonburysociety.org.uk/pdf-files/APN10%20Ivy%20-%20Boon%20or%20Bane.pdf>

- 3.6.2 **Standing deadwood:** Decaying timber is a valuable biodiversity commodity. Where it is safe and reasonable to do so, opportunities to keep some standing deadwood will help protect and enhance biodiversity that is consistent with Torfaen county Borough Council's public bodies biodiversity duty.

More information is available via this link:

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/documents/4947/RIN241.pdf>

- 3.6.3 **Fallen deadwood:** Relating to the above section on standing deadwood, where deadwood can't be retained as a standing biodiversity feature, consideration will be given to retaining timber as fallen deadwood. Where safe and reasonable to do so this will be close to the tree felled or managed, but if this is not possible fallen deadwood may be placed in a more convenient location such as nearby woodland. Deadwood may also be included in habitat piles along with other woody cut material.
- 3.6.4 **Cut woody material:** Where safe to do so, deadwood and other cut woody material should be retained as close as possible to the location where it was sourced. This material can either be left randomly or collected and stacked into habitat piles. Piles of brash and smaller branches can also be left for the same purpose. These features may not always look tidy, but an overly tidy natural environment generally has lower levels of biodiversity.
- 3.6.5 It is also sometimes beneficial to leave entire intact tree trunks on the ground. This too is designed to allow the natural decaying process to take place. Unfortunately, it is often the case that some people see these features as either untidy or a free source of timber for a log burner for example. Taking timber without the landowner's permission could be considered as theft.



3.7 Management of scrub (trees) for nature conservation.

- 3.7.1 Torfaen County Borough Council is responsible for the management of an upland Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), seven Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and numerous Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). The control

of scrub (young to medium sized trees) on many of these sites is crucial, and in the case of the Bloreng SSSI, the council has an obligation work towards improving this habitat by removing self-seeded lodgepole pine trees.

3.7.2 Management of scrub is required to prevent a more desired habitat from disappearing. However, the reduction of scrub can be difficult to achieve and can absorb large amounts of resources. Furthermore, cutting alone does not always result in eradication. The following approach to managing scrub is recommended:

1. An early approach to eradication;
2. When undertaking early action ensure roots are removed or stumps are treated;
3. Before implementing actions to remove scrub ensure a follow up management regime is in place to help limit re-colonisation.

3.8 Tree risk management

3.8.1 Risk is ever present in our daily activities and the way these risks are managed and accommodated is to make informed choices. A risk from falling trees exists only if there is both potential for the tree to fail and for it to cause harm as a consequence. It is acknowledged by the Health and Safety Executive that risks from falling trees are generally very low with high risks only in areas with high levels of human occupation. Where levels of human occupation are low the assessment of trees for weakness will not usually be necessary. Doing all that is reasonably practicable does not mean that all trees have to be individually examined on a regular basis. (HSE 2013)

More information is available via this link:

http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/sims/ag_food/010705.htm

3.8.2 This Strategy and Action Plan aims to promote a balanced approach to the management of tree risk. A document produced by the National Tree Safety Group puts in context the actual public risks against the benefits trees provide to society. A *Common Sense Risk Management of Trees: Guidance on Trees and Public Safety in the UK for Owners, Managers and Advisors* (2011) is endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and provides guidance for inspecting and maintaining trees that is reasonable and proportionate to the low risk of trees, the benefits of trees and the health and safety obligations of responsible tree ownership.

Some local authorities in Wales are now adopting tree risk assessment techniques. One such approach is the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) that enables the assessor to identify and analyse the risk from tree failure in three key stages.

1. To consider land-use in terms of vulnerability to impact and likelihood of occupation;
2. To consider the consequences of an impact, taking account of the size of the tree or branch concerned;

3. To estimate the probability that the tree or branch will fall onto the land-use in question.



Trees add value to strategic ecological corridors such as the Afon Lwyd



Hedgerow restoration on council owned land



Sustainably managed veteran tree on roadside at Blaenavon



Sculpture in Pontypool Park created from locally sourced timber



Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site sustainably sourced wooden waymarker

3.9 Sustainable uses of locally sourced timber

- 3.9.1 Locally sourced timber used sustainably reduces CO2 emissions. Carbon can be locked up when used for building materials, timber artwork along with other features such as fencing, stiles and finger posts. Turning trees into timber and wood into art and craft products and furniture can add economic value to trees.
- 3.9.2 There are some very good examples of products made from locally sourced timber in Torfaen. Artwork in Pontypool Park, Cwmavon Corridor Local Nature Reserve and the Pontypool Riverside Link have all included artwork from cut timber. Furthermore, many of the way marker posts deployed in the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site were constructed from local timber. These posts are now becoming colonised by mosses and lichens adding to their character and ecological value. Timber from local sources will continue to be used where possible.

3.10 Policy for the management of tree related enquires

- 3.10.1 If a tree is deemed to be healthy and safe, there is no legal requirement to undertake tree work. However, work may be considered that is consistent with sound tree management procedures.
- 3.10.2 The Council will follow the 'four D's' category when deciding if a tree needs felling of pruning:

Dead – A tree that is no longer generating any growth and is assessed as likely to pose a risk in the short to medium term.

Dying – A tree identified as dying must be regarded as in terminal decline prior to a decision to fell. It is a characteristic of some ancient, veteran and mature trees to show a degree of decay or die back that is not necessarily terminal.

Diseased – A tree that has a pathogenic fungus that in the long term will cause the death of a tree. Some trees supporting fungi can survive for a number of years so trees displaying severe fungal decay will be prioritised for felling or other suitable management action. Trees covered by a Plant Health Order will also be felled.

Dangerous – A tree that has been damaged and as consequence is deemed to be a risk will be considered for appropriate management work including felling where this is the only appropriate course of action.

3.11 Public requests for tree work

3.11.1 The Council receives hundreds of enquiries each year for work to be undertaken on trees that are regarded as a problem to residents and/or property. While some will require appropriate action, many requests do not accord with Torfaen County Borough Council's existing Tree Policy and are therefore rejected. The following list of common requests or scenarios updates the Council's operational policy and procedure on such matters.

Leaf Fall

The Council will not fell or prune a tree to remove or reduce leaves from falling onto private property.

A fall of leaves from trees in the autumn and at other times during the year, especially during periods of high wind is a natural process and cannot be avoided. The council does conduct street cleaning services in areas where the accumulation of leaves presents a hazard. The maintenance of rainwater goods to keep them leaf free is the responsibility of the property owner and/or landowner.

Overhanging trees and/or garden root encroachment

The Council will not fell or prune a tree that overhangs neighbouring properties unless the tree (s) are considered to be dangerous or a causing an actionable nuisance.

There is no legal obligation to manage overhanging trees unless it can be demonstrated they are causing damage or are in imminent danger of failing. This approach is consistent with the Council's obligations as an owner of thousands of trees and the resources available. There are many trees that overhang boundaries, to manage all these assets to reduce overhang would not be a good use of public resources and would result in significant tree canopy loss.

It is commonplace for roots from trees on adjoining Council land to appear in gardens. These roots cannot be controlled by pruning. Nonetheless where it can

be demonstrated that roots are exceptional and severe and are likely to cause structural damage, these will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Trees touching built structures

Where it can be demonstrated that a tree under the ownership of the Council is touching a built structure on private property the Council will consider appropriate action to remove or minimise the impact.

The Council will prune trees to provide clearance from built structures. In some cases, it may be necessary to fell a tree. This will only be considered as a last resort and on a case by case basis.

Trees and damage to built structures

In the majority of cases trees growing near to built structures cause no issues. Where irrefutable evidence is provided that demonstrates a Council owned tree is the cause of the damage, it will take proportionate and appropriate action on a case by case basis.

The concern of damage by tree roots near buildings etc. is often unwarranted. Direct impacts result from pressure that maybe exerted by tree roots and/or trunks. This may affect lightly loaded structures such as garden sheds. Tree roots are unlikely to penetrate sound footings. Where evidence is provided which demonstrates a tree under the ownership of the Council is causing damage, action will be taken in a case by case basis.

Shading

Tree works will not normally be carried out to reduce the shading of direct sunlight onto habitable properties.

Requests for removal or management of trees to reduce the alleged nuisance of over shading will not normally be considered. There is no existing legal right to direct sunlight and there is no presumption that trees shading existing buildings or other structures will be removed for this reason.

Nonetheless, where it can be demonstrated that a tree or trees are genuinely blocking daylight from habitable rooms to an exceptional, severe and unreasonable degree, these maybe dealt with on a case by case basis. Minor works will always be preferred to felling, however, any decision would need to take into account the health and significance of the tree, its contribution to wider public amenity, its ecological significance, orientation of the house and whether the tree was already present when the occupier moved into the property. As stated, it is expected that tree management or removal for over shading will only be undertaken in exceptionable circumstances. Where this occurs a discretionary charge maybe be applied to cover the costs of the work.

Obstruction of a view

Tree works will not be carried out to improve the view from a residential or business property.

There is no legal right to a view. Vegetation and trees grow over time providing a range of ecosystem services. To remove all trees for views could potentially have a significant environmental impact and have a negative impact on public amenity.

Tree considered too large

The council will not prune or fell a council owned tree because it is regarded as too large.

Residents may feel concerned about the size of a nearby tree and consider it to be dangerous. However, trees are not dangerous just because they are too big or tall and move in the wind. Tree movement is a natural occurrence enabling it to adapt to strong winds.

Trees and drains

The council will not fell, prune or cut the roots of a tree to prevent roots from entering a drain that is already damaged.

The council will not normally take action in response to complaints that trees are damaging drains. Tree roots do not have the ability to damage sound drains but may take advantage of those that have existing damage. Roots in a drainage system can be an indicator of drains in need of maintenance.

Privately owned trees that overhang neighbouring private properties

Privately owned trees that overhang adjacent properties are entirely the responsibility of the owner.

Early dialogue with the owners of adjacent private property is always the first option when trying to resolve an issue with trees or hedges. These issues are private or civil matters and are dealt with entirely through the parties concerned.

Tree and hedge disputes between private landowners

As mentioned above in 4.5.9 issues in relation to hedges and trees on neighbouring properties are best addressed through the parties concerned or through independent legal advice. Tree disputes on private land are not part of the remit of the council. However, there is legislation in place dealing with High Hedges.

Trees and Photovoltaic Panels

The council will not prune or fell a council owned tree to facilitate the installation or improvement of natural light to a photovoltaic (solar) panel.

Whilst the council recognises the role played by photovoltaic panels in contributing to climate change mitigation, trees too have an important contribution to make. The presence of trees must be appreciated when considering a suitable location for the placement of solar panels.

Television, broadband, telephone and satellite reception

Tree works will not be carried out to improve reception of the above services where the trees in question would not otherwise require works.

The council acknowledges the importance of the above services in modern day society and how important these are to residents. However, a balance must be struck between technology and the wider ecosystem services provided by trees. Residents should seek reasonable alternative solutions to improve reception of these services rather than requesting tree work from the council.

Honeydew deposits

The council will not prune or fell a council owned tree to remove the impact of honeydew deposits from trees.

Several species of street tree are prone to aphids and result in the production of honeydew. Honeydew is natural sticky and seasonal deposit that varies from year to year. A balance should be struck between any inconvenience caused and the wider environmental benefits of urban street trees.

Residents are advised to make arrangements to minimise this problem by finding where possible, an alternative car parking location. Where honeydew affects cars, warm soapy water will easily remove the substance without long term damage.

Bird droppings

The council will not prune or fell a council owned tree to remove the risk of bird droppings.

Bird droppings can be an inconvenience but is not considered a problem of sufficient magnitude to prune or fell a tree. Birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Warm soapy water will usually be enough to remove bird droppings.

Nuts/Berries/Blossom etc.

The council will not fell or prune a council owned tree to remove the risk of nuts, berries and blossom etc.

Falling fruit, nuts, berries and blossom are natural occurrences and are regarded as a minor, seasonal inconvenience. Fruiting trees add variety to the urban environment and support biodiversity.

Insects

The council will not fell or prune a council owned tree to remove incidence of pollinating insects such as wasps and bees.

Pollen

The council will not fell or prune a council owned tree to reduce the release of pollen.

Trees affecting CCTV

The council will not normally manage trees that affect the operation privately owned CCTV.

Where trees were present prior to the installation of CCTV, trees will only be considered for management should it be evidenced that they are affecting the operation of the camera.

Table 1. Quick reference guide to local authority tree policy obligations.

Tree Issue Note: Refer to policy text for full explanation	Action		
	Yes	No	Maybe
1. Leaf fall		✓	
2. Over hanging trees/root encroachment		✓	
3. Tree touching a building.			✓
4. Trees and damage to a building.			✓
5. Shading		✓	
6. Obstruction of view		✓	
7. Tree considered too big		✓	
8. Trees and drains		✓	
9. Privately owned trees overhanging properties		✓	
10. Tree and hedge disputes		✓	
11. Trees and Photovoltaic Panels		✓	
12. Television, broadband, telephone and satellite reception.		✓	
13. Honeydew deposits		✓	
14. Bird droppings		✓	
15. Nuts/Berries/Blossom		✓	
16. Insects		✓	
17. Pollen		✓	
18. Trees affecting CCTV			✓

3.12 Replacement Tree Planting

3.12.1 Subject to available resources the Council will require that every tree felled is replaced. To ensure the maintenance of tree stock, the ratio of new replacement trees will vary depending on the canopy cover of the tree felled or to be felled. The larger the tree the larger the number of replacement trees required. This is to ensure Torfaen's tree stock does continue to decline and is therefore secured for the benefit of future generations.

3.12.2 It may not always be possible to plant a replacement tree in the same location or position of the one lost, however, it is recommended that the approach to new tree planting adopts the proximity principle that is replanting as close as practically possible to the tree to be lost. All replacement trees are to be planted within one calendar year and relevant information uploaded to Torfaen County Borough Council tree recording programme.

3.12.3 The Torfaen Green Infrastructure Strategy and Torfaen's Urban Green Grid project will provide strategic guidance on where best to plant replacement trees and help inform tree planting ratios.

3.13 Developing a strategic approach to new street tree and woodland tree planting

3.13.1 As mentioned above new tree planting will be necessary to replace trees lost and to enhance Torfaen's current tree stock. Along with new street trees it is suggested a programme of new woodland tree planting is developed. All new woodland planting should take a strategic approach with planting encouraged to maximise ecosystem services and to help enhance our Green Infrastructure. Council owned green space should be prioritised for planting, but this must ensure the existing amenity and ecological value of the green space is not comprised.

3.13.2 Memorial tree planting has the potential to be an important part of a strategic approach to new tree planting. However, before any such scheme can be promoted careful consideration will be required to identify a suitable location that is accessible but where the risk of damage is low.

3.13.3 Some new orchards have been established in Torfaen over recent years. Tree planting, especially on urban areas, should consider the merits of planting fruit trees.

3.14 Right tree in the right place

3.14.1 Any new policy for replacement tree planting must adhere to the approach of right tree in the right place. It is important all newly planted trees are appropriate for the location and context within which the tree or trees are to be planted.

3.14.2 *Trees in the Townscape: A Guide for Decision Makers (Trees and Design Action Group)* is a good guide to the issue 'right tree in the right place'. Factors to consider when addressing this issue relate to the type of tree, its location and the people who will maintain it. These might include

- Function – the desired benefits from the tree.
- Character – the historic and landscape character of the area.
- Diversity - the characteristic and profile of the wider tree population.
- Design – the scale, balance, impact, texture, and colour expected from the tree.
- Site constraints – soil types and conditions, amount of sun, surrounding building heights and available space both above and underground. Potential nuisance, including pollens, obstruction of light to habitable rooms, sightlines for CCTV, highway and street lighting, clearances for overhead cables and vehicles. Risk of damage to structures the tree may cause (this requires an awareness of soil type, the tree species and its characteristics as well as of the design of foundations).
- Support capacity – alignment with community aspirations as well as with long-term management and maintenance capacity.

3.15 Trees and Development: Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

3.15.1 This section of the Torfaen Tree Strategy introduces the importance of Trees and Woodland (Biodiversity) Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). It provides a framework for developers and others engaged in the planning process on how trees and hedgerows etc. will be considered by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) as part of the land use planning process. The action plan schedule for 2021-2030 set out in section 4 has timetabled a detailed SPG to be prepared by 2021.

3.15.2 Survey Requirements

Where trees could be affected by development proposals an appropriate tree survey will be required and must be prepared by a fully qualified arboricultural consultant. It is best practice to submit this work with a planning application. All supporting tree surveys must be undertaken in accordance with BS5837:2012 '*Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations*'. The survey report should include the following elements:

- Tree categorisation
- Tree constraints plan
- Tree protection plan
- Other required information may include a method statement and details of supervision and monitoring.

3.15.3 Trees and roots protection zones (RTZs)

The above survey requirements must include details of tree root protection zones (RTZs). Once again BS5837:2012 provides guidance on this. Consideration must also be given to the shading of buildings and open spaces by trees.

3.15.4 Ancient Woodland, mature and veteran trees buffer zones

BS5837:2012 sets out general principles around RTZs notably an appropriate buffer from the woodland edge to the nearest development footprint. Nonetheless, special attention must be paid to mature and veteran trees and ancient woodland. Ancient woodland in particular must be sufficiently protected by a buffer zone that may go beyond the 15 metres stated in BS5837:2012.

UK Government guidance '*Ancient Woodland, Ancient Trees and Veteran Trees: Protecting them from Development 2018*' expands on the purpose of buffer zones. 15 metres from the nearest tree trunk must be regarded as the minimum distance, however this could increase where it can be demonstrated that a larger buffer is required.

More information is available via these links:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

Areas of ancient woodland can be found on Natural Resources Wales Lle website.
<http://lle.gov.wales>

3.15.5 Landscaping and the selection of species.

Landscaping proposals are often an integral part of development layouts. Where possible landscaping should be designed to ensure that it is functional, supports biodiversity and forms part of a connective open space provision. Careful landscaping can enhance the appearance of a development and the selection of native species will provide ecological enhancements.

3.16. A community led approach to tree appreciation

3.16.1 The Council will actively engage the local community, businesses, Community Council's, health and education providers, community woodland owners and other public and private sector stakeholders in tree related initiatives. This may involve tree planting, designing wood-based artworks, promoting woodland walks for well-being, seed collecting and growing, academic surveys and studies, active habitat management etc. By doing so it is hoped a greater sense of appreciation and ownership will be fostered for all of Torfaen's trees, woodlands and hedgerows.

3.17 Monitoring and review

3.17.1 The delivery of this strategy and action plan will be monitored and reviewed by Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Plan Officer Delivery Group with progress reported through the three yearly reporting requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act. The Group will seek to ensure the strategy and plan remains updated to reflect any relevant policy or legislative changes.



Invasive Lodgepole pine on Mynydd y Garn-fawr part of the Blorenge Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

4. Action Plan Schedule 2021 -2030

The actions set out below follow the objectives introduced in section titled The Approach. Some actions may be applicable to several objectives.

4.1 Objective 1: A sustainable approach to tree management

Action	Timescales
1.1 Organise a collective and corporate approach to trees, planting, protection and management.	2021-24
1.2 Design and publish an 'easy read' version of the Torfaen Tree Strategy.	2021
1.3 Map and monitor changes in tree canopy cover. Consider as part of an overall green infrastructure approach.	2021-22
1.4 Consider adopting and implementing an in-house tree valuation system.	2021-22
1.5 Establish, a consistent approach to the management of trees and woodland that is consistent with this strategy.	2021-22
1.6 Where applicable develop tree and woodland management plans for publicly owned key parks and woodland.	2021-25
1.7 Develop tree – focused opportunity mapping for woodlands, parks and street trees and an element of the green infrastructure approach	2021-22
1.8 Ensure trees are given due consideration in all planning related developments and council run projects.	2021-30
1.9 Develop ecosystem and climate – resilient approaches to woodland and tree management.	2021-25
1.10 Work with schools to encourage seed collecting and sapling growing within school grounds.	2021-30
1.11 Use the tree database to help inform decision making.	2021-30
1.12 Explore opportunities for using woody material as biomass fuel	2022-23

4.2 Objective 2: A strategic approach to tree planting

Action	Timescales
2.1 Reverse decline in urban tree canopy cover returning to 2009 figures (see NRW Torfaen Urban Tree Canopy Cover report)	2021-30
2.2 Establish council agreement for the replacement of all trees felled by the local authority.	2021
2.3 Develop a metric for the number of trees to be replanted in relation to tree canopy lost.	2021
2.4 Seek council agreement to develop new tree planting schemes on council owned land and to be informed by a green infrastructure approach.	2021

2.5 Where funding can be secured continue to establish new community orchards.	2021-30
2.6 Consider developing a memorial tree area in each of the main Torfaen towns, Blaenavon, Pontypool, Cwmbran.	2022-23
2.7 Work with Community Councils to investigate funding opportunities for new tree and woodland planting.	2021-23
2.8 Develop a palette of climate – resilient trees (e.g. disease resistant) to help inform new urban tree planting.	2021

4.3 Objective 3: A Torfaen wide approach to tree protection

Action	Timescales
3.1 Consider practicalities of introducing a Tree Bond through the land use planning process.	2022-23
3.2 Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) - review TPOs in accordance with TAN 10 requirements.	2022-23
3.3 Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for trees and woodland (biodiversity)	2021-22
3.4 Develop appropriate mitigation and compensation measures for tree and woodland loss that is consistent with section 6 of The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 duty to protect and enhance biodiversity.	2021-22
3.5 Through the proposed SPG, agree a mandatory size for buffer zones around ancient woodland.	2021-22
3.6 Where appropriate continue to designate new TPO's.	2021-30
3.7 Where appropriate continue to designate new Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).	2021-30
3.8 Proactively report all alleged instances of illegal tree and woodland felling and hedgerow remove to the relevant enforcement body.	2021-30
3.9 Use planning conditions to ensure protection for trees and woodland in accordance with planning policy and all relevant British Standards.	2021-30
3.10 Ensure the Local Development Plan includes a clear policy statement on trees and woodland	2021-22
3.11 Undertake a desk top review of all TPO's.	2022-23
3.12 Review the success of planning approvals that incorporated tree planting, to ensure compliance.	2023-25
3.13 Encourage use of the 'Ancient Tree Inventory' and give all trees on the inventory consideration through the planning system.	2021-30

4.4 Objective 4: A community led approach to tree appreciation

Action	Timescales
4.1 Update Green Infrastructure evidence base in relation to trees, woodland and hedgerows.	2021-22
4.2 Raise awareness of the benefits of trees through social media platforms.	2021-30

4.3 Work with schools to develop awareness of local trees and the importance of growing trees of local provenance.	2021-30
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4.5 Objective 5: A partnership approach to the monitoring and review of the **Torfaen Tree Strategy**

Action	Timescales
5.1 Develop key performance indicators in relation to tree canopy cover and trees planted etc.	2021-22
5.2 Undertake annual reporting with links to the BERP Officer Delivery Group.	2021-30
5.3 Review the Torfaen Tree and Woodland Strategy on an annual basis.	2021-30
5.4 Prepare an updated Tree Strategy every ten years	2030
5.5 Report progress through the three yearly reporting requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016	2022, 2025 & 2028.

4.6 Objective 6: A **tree risk** management approach to ensure risks to people, infrastructure and property are minimised.

Action	Timescales
6.1 Implement the council's tree risk inspection programme. Annual inspection for school grounds and every 5 years elsewhere.	2021-30
6.2 Carry on remedial work on trees identified within the inspection programme.	2021-30
6.3 Maintain a database of enquires/complaints and the types of complaints.	2021-30
6.4 All tree professionals to ensure all instances of notifiable pests such as ash die back is reported to NRW and enter onto Ezy-treeev tree recording system.	2021-30
6.5 Explore the benefits of adopting the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) system of Tree Safety Management.	2022-23
6.6 Develop a protected species protocol for officers involved in the management of trees	2021-22