



LEICESTER

# tree strategy

2018 - 2023



ABOVE: Silver birch and cherry trees at Victoria Park

All photographs by Ian Davis

[leicester.gov.uk/treestrategy](http://leicester.gov.uk/treestrategy)



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**LEFT:**  
Autumn colours in  
Museum Square

**FRONT COVER:**  
Victoria Park



Trees bring enormous environmental and ecological benefits to our city.

They enhance our streets and grace our parks, making a huge contribution to our health and wellbeing.

This five-year strategy will guide us in sustaining and increasing our tree stock and help us improve the quality of the city's trees.

It will also help promote the important role trees can play in maintaining a high-quality city environment, reducing air pollution and contributing to flood risk management.

*Peter*  
—

Sir Peter Soulsby  
CITY MAYOR

*Adam*

Cllr Adam Clarke  
DEPUTY CITY MAYOR FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



- CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT:**
- The Ellis Meadows nature park features wetland areas, wildflower meadows and more than 600 new trees
  - A native woodland mix of ash, oak, pine and hazel provides a green screen between homes and traffic on Evington Lane
  - Three new disease-resistant elm trees were planted in Victoria Park in 2018 to replace the 'Three Sisters', which were lost to Dutch elm disease in the 1970s
  - Willow, hawthorn and elder line the canal at Watermead Country Park, where thousands of trees have been planted to create a network of woodlands and nature reserves

**F**ollowing years of significant and sustained investment by the city council, almost 16% of Leicester's 28 square miles is now covered with trees.

Since the 1980s, the council has been responsible for the planting of more than 57,000 trees. As a result, the city's woodland has more than doubled in size – from around 40 hectares to 107 hectares (or one million square metres) today. No other

comparable UK council has invested as much or achieved such impact.

From recent schemes like the award-winning Ellis Meadows, where more than 600 new trees have been planted, to the now well-established woodlands in Castle Hill Country Park, we have taken direct action to increase the city's tree canopy, improve its biodiversity and create some wonderful outdoor spaces.

At Watermead Country Park, on derelict gravel pits, thousands of trees have been planted and a cluster of lakes has been created. On Aylestone Meadows an open waste tip has been transformed into woodland and a network of footpaths created.

New wooded areas have been created in our parks, including Western Park and Victoria Park, and new spinneys have been planted on roadside verges, such as Evington Lane.

Smaller schemes have had an impact too. In Jubilee Square, for example, we replaced a car park with a new green space that includes 10 large trees – while in neighbouring Applegate, the haphazard planting has been replaced with a new avenue of oak trees.

In an urban environment like our city, trees are an important natural resource – but it's a resource that must be actively managed.

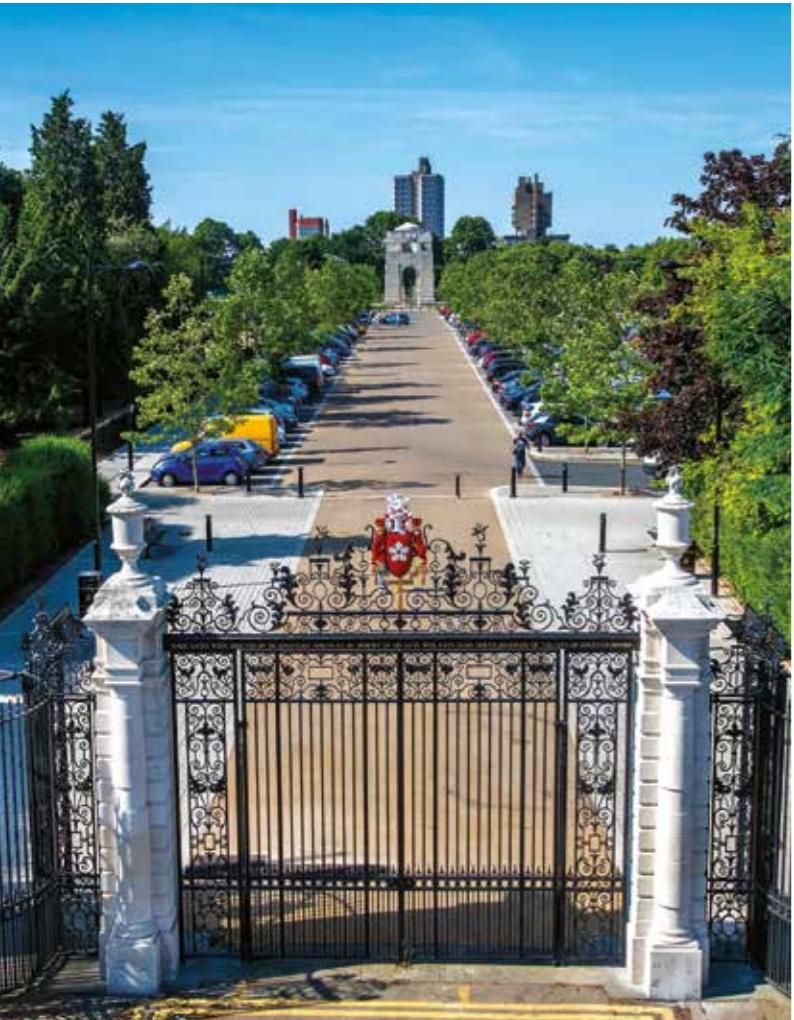
As new trees are planted, others may need to be cut back, thinned or sometimes removed.

The recent work at Victoria Park and De Montfort Hall, for example, has shown how the carefully considered removal and replacement of trees can have a huge impact on making an area more welcoming and attractive.

The scheme has opened up views of the historic hall and created a tree-lined approach to our city's magnificent Arch of Remembrance.

Similarly, the removal of some of the trees we planted when we created Prebend Gardens is making an overgrown and unsafe area usable again and restoring it as an important local amenity.

**BELOW:** A tree-lined avenue, flanked with London planes and fastigate oaks, has restored the link between the city's Arch of Remembrance and Victoria Park's historic gates on London Road  
**RIGHT:** Japanese maples provide a burst of autumn colour in the Friendship Garden, Abbey Park



The city council's policy of planting more than one replacement for any tree that is felled ensures that our total tree stock is maintained – and means that future generations will be able to enjoy the sight of mature trees in our city too.

Protecting the trees and areas of woodland that enhance our environment is an important responsibility, and the council has more than 500 Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) in place that cover many thousands of trees in private ownership. These TPOs provide protection for important trees, as well as for large areas of woodland.

From saplings to ancient oaks, the 150,000 trees in the council's ownership are expertly maintained by our highly-skilled workforce, who prune, tend and nurture the trees on our streets, in our parks and in our woodlands.

The expertise of our arboricultural team – which comprises 28 arborists and seven technical staff – is nationally recognised, with Leicester one of just two councils in the country to be accredited by the highly-respected Arboricultural Association. The council is also a proud signatory of the Woodland Trust's Tree Charter.

Maintaining Leicester's tree stock is a huge responsibility and every year the city council spends around £2million planting, protecting and managing trees in our city.

That investment is our commitment to ensuring that our tree stock is sustained, maintained and replenished for present – and future – generations to enjoy.

**RIGHT:** New planting provides the finishing touches to a major scheme on King Street. Himalayan birch, honey locust and London plane trees complement the mature horse chestnut on New Walk





ABOVE: Western Park's 'Old Major' – an ancient oak, believed to be more than 500 years old LEFT: Native species, such as willow, poplar, birch, rowan, hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, hazel and alder, provide dense tree cover at Watermead Country Park

## Leicester's new tree strategy

Our new strategy builds on existing tree policy, and draws particularly from the Air Quality Action Plan, Biodiversity Action Plan, Green Infrastructure Strategy and Sustainability Action Plan. It is complemented by a more detailed supporting document, which is available at [leicester.gov.uk/treestrategy](http://leicester.gov.uk/treestrategy)

The strategy will help to ensure that Leicester's 'urban forest' will continue to be a major asset for generations to come.

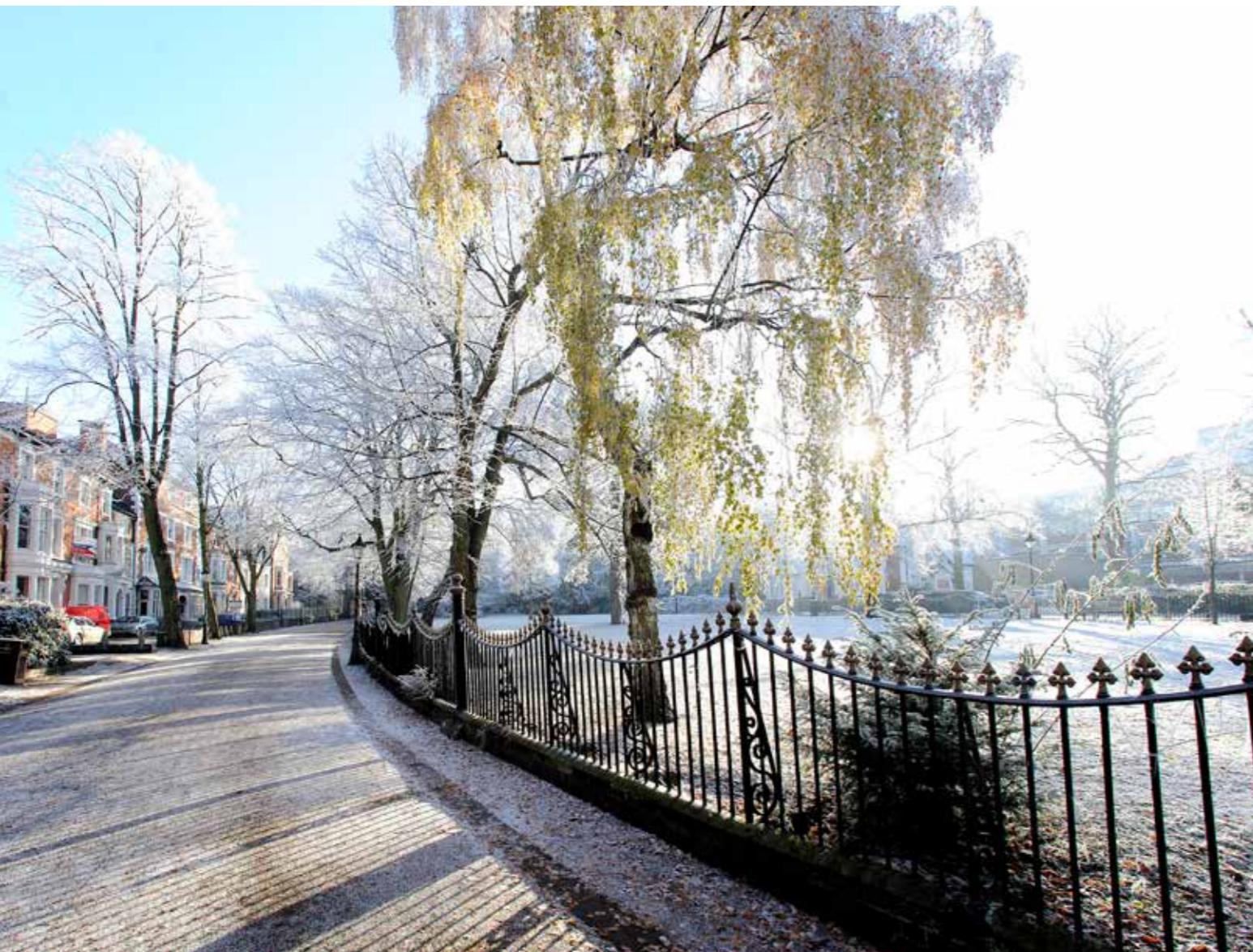
### OUR AIMS

#### The city council will:

- Ensure that the current level of tree canopy and tree numbers under the city council's control are extended and the quality improved.
- Ensure trees under the council's control are managed with the intention of resolving conflicts and problems in a rational, consistent and economic way – listening to different views, taking them into account but ultimately taking responsibility for, sometimes difficult, decisions.
- Encourage other landowners to plant and manage their trees through advice, guidance and, where necessary, the use of tree protection legislation.

#### It will also:

- Compensate adequately for the loss of significant trees in the landscape by planting more than one replacement - wherever practical at, or near, the location of the removed trees.
- Ensure that public realm infrastructure schemes that involve tree removal or tree planting will incorporate quality planting and design and that designers and lead agents liaise with the council at appropriate stages of planning, design and implementation.



**ABOVE:** A dusting of snow transforms a silver birch on the Oval, New Walk

## PROMOTING AMENITY

### The city council will:

- Monitor the health of the council's trees.
- Maintain trees with the aim of reducing nuisance, hazard and complaint.
- Use a variety of species and cultivars.
- Reduce problems that can be associated with the presence of trees when making decisions about planting design and the positioning of trees in the landscape
- Purchase planting stock of good quality and prepare an underground environment that is conducive to good tree growth.

## PROMOTING HABITAT AND WILDLIFE

### The city council will:

- Encourage the planting and management of woodland and groups of trees.
- Where it is compatible with amenity, seek to retain old tree stock, including trees in decline, and manage them in a way that promotes their value to wildlife.
- Favour native trees over exotics when specifying, planning and implementing new planting.
- Protect and conserve protected or rare species through appropriate compensation when loss cannot be avoided.



**ABOVE:** Around 100 new trees were planted as part of the £2.3m Victoria Park improvement scheme  
**LEFT:** Careful landscaping complements the natural environment at Watermead Country Park

## RESPONDING TO GLOBAL OBLIGATIONS

### As the city council increases the city's overall canopy cover, it will:

- Respond appropriately and proportionately to the threat of pest and disease epidemics.
- Recycle the materials that arise from the management of trees, including the use of wood as a carbon-neutral fuel.



ABOVE: Castle Hill Country Park comprises 250 acres of woodland, wetland and grassland

## MANAGING THE PRESSURE ON TREES IN OTHERS' OWNERSHIP

### The city council will:

- Seek to preserve amenity afforded by trees when considering our response to tree work applications made under planning controls.
- When assessing planning applications, take into account the effect on trees and protect them where the balance of factors favours preservation.
- Where landscaping that includes tree planting is made a condition of planning consent, incorporate quality design and specification.
- Work directly with landowners and developers to support them with the management, inclusion and retention of trees affected by the planning process.
- Provide a 24/7 call-out service ensuring a response to tree emergencies at any time.
- Respond within 24 hours to reports of other contraventions, actionable nuisance and hazards and deal with these quickly and proportionately - making appropriate resources available.
- Be bound by the relevant planning practice guidance when managing protected tree regulation.



ABOVE: Pine, walnut, cherry, ash, larch, whitebeam, oak, Norway maple and sycamore all feature in this spinney at Victoria Park

## DELIVERING THIS STRATEGY

### The city council will ensure that it makes available:

- Adequate financial resources from council budgets and income generation.
- Appropriately qualified, skilled, motivated and experienced staff.
- The organisation, systems, depots, facilities and good quality equipment that our staff need.
- Support from all appropriate sections of the council.

BELLOW: Careful tree management ensures this pocket park in Prebend Gardens provides a welcome green space in an area of high-density housing



RIGHT: Veteran oak at Castle Hill Country Park

## MONITORING AND REVIEWING THIS STRATEGY

### The city council will:

- Report on its implementation to the public and to the council's scrutiny committees every year and fully review it next in 2023

