

Tree planting and the climate emergency

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This paper outlines what Dorset Council is doing in relation to trees, tree management and tree planting as part of its response to the climate and ecological emergency. It also covers how Dorset Council can support tree planting by town and parish councils, organisations groups and individuals.

Atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) is one of the major contributing elements to climate change. Trees are considered important in relation to climate change as they trap (or 'sequester') CO₂ from the atmosphere to make carbohydrates that are used for plant growth. They give oxygen back into the atmosphere. To support this Dorset Council will:

- Follow the principle of "right tree in the right place" to avoid damaging other valuable habitats and heritage assets in the process
- Promote carbon sequestration in trees as well as conserved/re-created natural habitats and soils of all kinds
- Work with a range of partners, organisations and groups in relation to tree planting

Dorset Council In-house tree planting

We are investigating land owned by Dorset Council to consider options for future tree planting by ourselves and/or partner organisations. A group has been established led by the Greenspace Manager to explore the different options and make recommendations to Committee on the preferred approach(s). It is expected that recommendations will be ready for April 2020.

Dorset Council Tree Policy

The existing predecessor council tree policies will need to be revised considering the amalgamation of several local authorities and the need to have one standard policy rather than several. This will be completed by 1 April 2020. Within the current Policies, there is an onus on us to replace every tree that we must remove for safety reasons on the highway verge.

There is no specific budget allocation to replace these trees and this cost must be found from within the existing maintenance budget or from income that we have generated. This can mean that tree planting to replace the trees along the highway is not guaranteed.

Moving forward and in order to contribute effectively to the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency we will determine a realistic number of trees to be planted annually on Dorset Council land and identify a budget or alternative funding streams to carry out this work.

Non-Dorset Council tree planting

Dorset council will provide a comprehensive advice note/check list that will provide advice to others on what needs to be considered when thinking about tree planting. This will be made available on the Dorset Council website. It is expected that this will be ready by February 2020.

We will work with our partners to provide advice and work together on tree planting schemes especially in relation to our land.

Current development work and trees

The Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol (DBAP) has been established to protect, support and provide gain on biodiversity species and habitats. It is the preferred approach for Dorset Council and has been developed and run by the Dorset Council Natural Environment Team. This covers the many construction projects submitted to the

council (housing development) as well as DC construction projects including Council property, highways projects and mineral and waste planning. Within the DBAP there are points that relate to trees and tree planting and relating to both biodiversity and climate change:

- Through the DBAP it requires construction projects to mitigate and/or compensate for loss of all trees (not just Native British Species) of all sizes.
- By adhering to the mitigation hierarchy we require developers to avoid impacts on trees if possible, and felling will only be allowed as a 'last consideration'
- Veteran, ancient and notable trees are given separate consideration because of their status in National Planning Policy Framework, the value of these trees as individuals and for the species found living on/in them.
- Mitigation/compensation for all other trees is always required and always stipulates use of Native British Species as replacement trees.
- The number of trees required to be planted is calculated using the DBAP Guidance which, for trees, uses the Bristol City Council SPD which is widely accepted as the industry standard for trees in planning. This goes further than counting the number of trees lost but incorporates tree size and age through consideration of tree girth at breast height.
- If mitigation planting for trees cannot be achieved on site, then the DBAP guidance stipulates off site compensation but always seeking to locate compensatory planting as close as possible to the construction site to ensure the effect on the ecological network is properly compensated for
- In line with the updated National Policy Planning Framework, the DBAP also now requires construction projects to achieve net gain.