Climate Impact Assessment

Summary

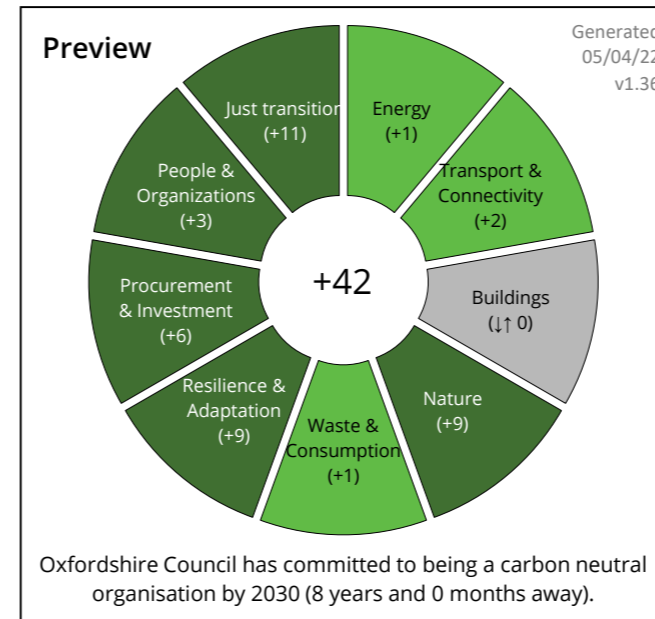|	
Directorate and Service Area	Environment and Place, Countryside Operations and Volunteer Coordination, Tree Service
What is being assessed	Tree Policy for Oxfordshire
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	Existing Policy but heavily revised
Summary of assessment	The assessment of the impacts for the Tree Policy for Oxfordshire provides positive outputs across 8 of the 9 categories assessed. More significantly 5 of the 9 categories have a significantly positive impact by adoption of the new policy.
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Assessment date	44644

Preview

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Just transition (+11)
Energy (+1)
Transport & Connectivity (+2)
Buildings (↓↑ 0)
Nature (+9)
Waste & Consumption (+1)
Resilience & Adaptation (+9)
Procurement & Investment (+6)
People & Organizations (+3)

+42

Oxfordshire Council has committed to being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 (8 years and 0 months away).

Detail of proposal

Context / Background	For the majority of the last 30 years, Oxfordshire have focused on maintaining existing trees on a reactive basis. Driven by budgetary constraints and concerns associated with risk, there has been minimal investment, overall, in the County Council's tree-scape, which includes Highways, PRoW, Schools, Estates, Facilities and other land holdings where the County Council have a responsibility for trees. The most significant omission has been tree planting. Trees provide a multitude of climate, biodiversity, amenity, societal, health and wellbeing benefits. They take a significant time to establish and with the realisation of the Climate Emergency that was declared in 2019, the need for a drastic change to address the need for increasing canopy cover and provide proactive tree care for the County Council's treescape is now essential for the long-term benefit of existing residents and future generations of Oxfordshire. Whilst the council has an existing tree policy, it does not fulfil the ambition and priorities of the Fair Deal Alliance. The existing policy was maintenance and management focussed, mainly related to Highway trees. The new document is broader in scope as well as being much firmer with its policy and bolder in requirements and long-term ambition.
Proposal	The new 'Tree Policy for Oxfordshire' outlines a clear priority change to a 'presumption in favour of trees' to directly enhance and improve the landscape and streetscapes of Oxfordshire. The new Policy has been created and framed in a clear and concise document to enable the County Council's vision and ambition to be easily shared, understood and implemented. It is a central component of the Council's Climate Adaptation response, and has the potential to improve wellbeing and health of residents. The main aims of the new policy are: A - To protect and maintain the trees across Oxfordshire and in particular, trees the County Council are directly responsible for. B - Set the platform to increase canopy cover across Oxfordshire and specifically for areas the County Council are directly responsible for (Highway, Public Rights of Way (PRoW), Schools, Estates & Property) by increasing the number of trees to address the current and future climate adaptation and environmental needs. C - Ensure that existing trees and the potential space for new tree planting are considered front and foremost in streetscape designs and take appropriate priority against other infrastructure needs. D - Increase the diversity of tree species to deliver climate adaptation. E - Support and enable local communities to identify the potential for increasing canopy cover within the existing streetscape.
Evidence / Intelligence	By investing in regular, proactive tree inspections, the County will be able to maintain an existing and established tree stock that provide more benefits to the residents of Oxfordshire than newly planted trees. Planting and maintaining trees provides direct and indirect benefits to the community, as well as contributing to addressing and improving: ~ flood alleviation; ~ climate adaptation; ~ landscape resilience; ~ carbon sequestration; ~ noise and air pollution; ~ wildlife corridors (both urban and rural); ~ health and wellbeing; ~ speed reduction.

Alternatives considered / rejected	Currently, no tree planting is undertaken by the County and only the Highway trees are managed under a proactive tree programme, leaving the County Council at significant risk across all other County Council land / property that have trees and remain the County Council's responsibility. Continuing in the same way of disproportionate management and not replacing trees that are removed has long-term implications for public amenity, biodiversity and climate change within Oxfordshire as well as putting the County Council at significant risk from litigation. Doing nothing is not an option and does not support the commitments outlined in the Fair Deal for Oxfordshire.

Category	Impact criteria	Score (-3 to +3)	Description of impact	Actions or mitigations to reduce negative impacts	Action owner	Timeline and monitoring arrangements
Energy	Increases energy efficiency	1	Reduces urban heat island effect by planting trees and increasing canopy cover. This will reduce the need for electrical colling systems being required and reduces energy consumption in warmer, more urban areas.	N/A		
Energy	Promotes a switch to low-carbon or renewable energy	0	Not applicable			
Energy	Promotes resilient, local, smart energy systems	0	Not applicable			
Transport & Connectivity	Reduces need to travel and/or the need for private car ownership	0	Not applicable			
Transport & Connectivity	Supports active travel	1	Priority for trees, especially within a highway context will support positive active travel through shade lined cycleways and streets.			
Transport & Connectivity	Increases use of public transport	1	Tree lined streets increase footfall and provide shade for waiting passengers at public transport sites.			
Transport & Connectivity	Accelerates electrification of transport	0	Not applicable			
Buildings	Promotes net zero new builds and developments	0	Not applicable			
Buildings	Accelerates retrofitting of existing buildings	0	Not applicable			
Nature	Protects, restores or enhances biodiversity, landscape and ecosystems	3	Proactive tree inspections, maintenanc eand management increases life expectancy for existing trees. In addition, tree planting restores lost trees, maintains landscape and ecosystem features while creating new areas for biodiversity connectivity.			
Nature	Develops blue and green infrastructure	3	Tree planting will increase green infrastructure and utilising tree planting straegically can positively impact on flood control and prevention.			
Nature	Improves access to nature and green spaces	3	More trees in urban areas will increase direct access to trees, improving health and wellbeing for all.			

Waste & Consumption	Reduces overall consumption	1	Food growing trees can be utilised in specific locations to enable local, natural food for residents
Waste & Consumption	Supports waste prevention and drive reuse and recycling	0	Not applicable
Resilience & Adaptation	Increases resilience to flooding	3	Utilising tree planting straegically can positively impact on flood control and prevention.
Resilience & Adaptation	Increases resilience to other extreme weather events (e.g., storms, cold snaps, heatwaves, droughts)	3	Reduction in Urban Heat Island Effect, capture water run-off, store carbon.
Resilience & Adaptation	Increases resilience of council services, communities, energy systems, transport infrastructure and/or supply chains	3	Significant push for tree planting and exploring the potential to develop our own tree nursery(s) in partnership with established suppliers will reduce carbon footprint for sourcing trees, protect oxfordshire against biosecurity threats, increase economy opportunitites , develop local jobs and contribute directly to the communities we serve in a positive way.
Procurement & Investment	Procurement practices prioritise low-carbon options, circular economy and sustainability	3	Significant push for tree planting and exploring the potential to develop our own tree nursery(s) in partnership with established suppliers will reduce carbon footprint for sourcing trees, protect oxfordshire against biosecurity threats, increase economy opportunitites, develop local jobs and contribute directly to the communities we serve in a positive way. This text mirrors the same benefits and impacts as those outlined in Resilience and Adaptation, which is why the same text has been used.
Procurement & Investment	Investment being considered supports climate action/ is consistent with path to net zero	3	Yes. Tree planting (once budget is secured) will enable reducing urban heat island effect, carbon sequestration, interception of stormwater and flodd water run-off, enable resilience of long-term climate adaptation.

People & Organizations	Drives behavioural change to address the climate and ecological emergency	1	Local input and involvement in tree planting planning and initiatives can be used to promote cultural change and promote climate adaptation and increase awareness.
People & Organizations	Drives organizational and systemic change to address the climate and ecological emergency	2	The policy is not directorate specific and therefore promotes the need for proactive tree management and strategic tree planting across all facets of the County Councils functions.
Just transition	Promotes green innovation and job creation	2	Has the potential to do both. This could result with reduced carbon footprint through Oxfordshire grown trees and increase potential for local job opportunities in tree related fields.
Just transition	Promotes health and wellbeing	3	Yes and in a positive way. Greenspaces and access to trees and nature is proven to be beneficial to positive mental health and improve wellbeing.
Just transition	Reduces poverty and inequality	3	Reduces inequality by strategic plan to deliver planting in priority of low canopy areas. This is associated with social and financial deprevation.