

Nature Strategy: Guidance for tree planting

Final version

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Achieving more for nature



GLNP
GREATER LINCOLNSHIRE
NATURE PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

In November 2020, the Forum of the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) agreed to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Greater Lincolnshire. This will replace the 3rd edition Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), which came to an end in March 2020, to inform the GLNP Nature Strategy workstream. The development of the LNRS will be informed by, as yet unpublished, national guidance, but it is expected to be established by 2025. There is therefore a gap between the end of the BAP and the start of the LNRS, which is where this guidance document falls. It is intended to be updated as the LNRS is developed, and when the new national England Tree Strategy and Forestry Commission England Tree Planting Programme are published. This guidance has been produced with the GLNP Trees and Woodland Habitat Group, and agreed by the GLNP Steering Group.

Most of the local authorities in Greater Lincolnshire have declared a climate emergency, and they, and other Partners, are looking to plant trees for carbon capture in order to help to achieve the target of net zero carbon emissions. However, tree planting is just one option amongst a wider set of measures to absorb carbon dioxide, restore biodiversity, and other benefits. These measures include the restoration of habitats such as saltmarsh, peatland, reedbed, and species-rich grassland.

Trees can provide multiple other benefits to society - including creating more opportunities for wildlife, flood prevention, and water quality - and to people - including health and wellbeing, recreation, and community and cultural connections.

Also in November 2020, the GLNP Forum agreed on targets for habitat restoration and creation, to produce functioning ecological networks. These targets are:

By 2025:

- No net loss of priority and other semi-natural habitat.

By 2045:

- 10% land area of Greater Lincolnshire (70,000 ha) is priority habitat;
- 25% land area of Greater Lincolnshire (175,000 ha) is semi-natural habitat within a functioning ecological network.

The key principle that the GLNP supports is **‘the right tree in the right place’**. Ways to achieve this are set out below.

This guidance is primarily aimed at supporting tree planting for the restoration of biodiversity. The GLNP also supports nature-based solutions linked to tree planting, such as carbon sequestration and natural flood management, where appropriate. This guidance does not cover tree planting for the production of timber or biofuel. In any tree planting scheme, the purpose for planting should be made clear.

Where to plant trees

- Target planting in areas identified by the Biodiversity Opportunity Map produced by the GLNP, National Character Area (NCA) objectives, and local landscape assessments and guidelines (including the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan).
- Areas that have been identified as having particularly good opportunities for woodland and hedgerow restoration and creation include the Lincolnshire Limewoods, Wolds edge, and within the Trent and Belvoir Vales and Kesteven Uplands NCAs. There are also opportunities to connect fragmented woodland elsewhere, integrating other habitats and wildlife corridors.
- Seek to connect woodlands and hedgerows, to increase habitat connectivity at the landscape scale. Linear corridors can link up smaller woodlands, increasing the overall biodiversity value without requiring large areas of land to be taken out of agricultural production.
- Target 'gapping-up' of existing hedgerows and restoration of lost hedgerows.
- Consider natural regeneration of woodland as an alternative to planting where there are appropriate seed sources, and where browsing and grazing can be controlled. This will also allow for successional habitats to develop. Planning to develop woodlands over a longer timescale (up to 100 years) would encourage more natural regeneration and a more natural ecosystem.
- Consider tree planting as part of the restoration of grazed parkland, wood pasture, or traditional orchards.
- Large woodland creation schemes (over 50 ha) should include a mosaic of habitats within the area, for the highest biodiversity value.
- Consult widely to avoid conflict with designated sites, important habitats and species, archaeology, the historic environment, important open landscapes, underground services, local people and neighbouring land uses.
- Consider future management of the trees before planting.
- Woodland creation accessible to urban centres will provide the highest public benefit, but not necessarily the highest direct biodiversity benefit. However, publically accessible woodland increases the value of nature to the public, and thereby increases public support for restoring biodiversity more widely.

Where not to plant trees

- Trees should not be planted where there would be harm to important habitats and species, archaeology, the historic environment, important open landscapes, underground services, local people or neighbouring land uses.
- Important open landscapes include the Isle of Axholme, coastal grazing marsh, open fenland, and the hinterlands of the Humber Estuary and the Wash.
- Where semi-natural habitats are already present, restoration is likely to be more appropriate than tree planting, for example to species-rich grassland.

What trees to plant

- In the open countryside, plant primarily locally native species of high biodiversity value.
- In habitat creation schemes, use stock of local origin where possible, but consider a proportion of plants from more southerly counties of the UK, to allow for climate change adaptation.
- In built areas, plant locally native species, but more ornamental species of high biodiversity value may also be included. This could include a proportion of species from more southerly zones, to allow for climate change adaptation.
- Tree planting in built areas must take into consideration factors such as distance from buildings and site boundaries, and sight lines and road junctions. Existing/old trees should be retained as part of development where safe and practical.
- Aim to plant a variety of species, varieties and genotypes to provide greater resistance to pests and diseases. In new woodland planting, include at least three canopy species with no one species greater than 35-50%.
- Species should be appropriate to the soil type/texture of the site.
- Maintain biosecurity when purchasing stock.
- Ensure that suppliers are peat free.
- Apply the UK Forestry Standard for sustainable woodland management.
- For more detailed advice, follow the links in the Further Information section.

What trees not to plant

- Non-native species, unless as part of a mix of native species and non-native species of high biodiversity value for planting in a built environment.
- Native species sourced from outside the UK.
- Any trees grown using a peat-based compost.

Management of new and existing trees, hedgerows and woodland

- When planting trees, consideration must be given to their ongoing management, and associated costs. Woodland and hedgerows will require ongoing management for many years.
- Existing trees, hedgerows and woodland may also require management to ensure that their value for biodiversity remains high. In some cases non-intervention may be the best management strategy.
- The dead and decaying wood component of existing woodland is important, with 20% of all woodland fauna and 6% of the British invertebrate fauna dependent on dead or decaying wood. This should be taken into account within a management plan.

- Management can bring light to the woodland floor, allowing high quality habitat to develop, and also promoting natural regeneration and evolutionary adaption to a changing climate.
- In woodland with limited species diversity, management provides the opportunity to introduce appropriate species to enhance resilience to climate change and pests and disease outbreaks.
- It is sometimes necessary to cut trees down or clear saplings as part of active management, for example to remove inappropriate species allowing natural regeneration of native species, to thin young maturing woodland, or for disease prevention.
- Existing woodlands provide good sources of seed to grow plants (both trees and ground flora) for habitat restoration and creation.

Larger tree planting schemes may need to be advertised on the Forestry Commission Public Register and schemes over 2 ha, or those in sensitive areas, may require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

Further information

Forestry Commission – Create woodland overview: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/create-woodland-overview>

Forestry Commission – Responding to the climate emergency with new trees and woodlands. A guide to help local authorities and landowning businesses achieve net zero:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leaflet-responding-to-the-climate-emergency-with-new-trees-and-woodlands>

Forestry Commission - The UK Forestry Standard:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard>

Lincolnshire Wolds AONB – Trees and Woodland: <https://www.lincswolds.org.uk/living-in/trees-and-woodland>

Natural England - National Character Area profiles:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>

Woodland Trust – Tree planting advice: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/advice/>

Woodland Trust – UK sourced and grown trees: why is it important to buy them?:
<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/uk-sourced-and-grown/>

Case study 1 – The right trees in the right places

Lincolnshire Limewoods

The Lincolnshire Limewoods area covers nearly 16,000 ha. Starting just five miles to the east of Lincoln the area is centred on the Bardney Limewoods National Nature Reserve, a collection of 13 woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Whilst only covering 2.3% of Lincolnshire, the Limewoods project area contains just over 25% of all Lincolnshire's ancient semi-natural woodland, this being the most important woodland for wildlife.

The outcomes of the Lincolnshire Limewoods Project, a partnership project running between 2005 and 2011, included over 80 ha of new woodland planting by local farmers and landowners to extend and join up existing woodlands, and over 20 km of new hedgerow planting to create links between established habitats.

The Limewoods area is the right place to plant trees because of the opportunity to extend and link the extant ancient woodlands. Trees were planted not just as new woodland, but also as linking hedgerows. Much of the new planting was supported by the Woodland Trust, ensuring that the right native species were selected, and were sourced and grown in the UK, including locally grown small-leaved lime. New woodland planting also included areas of grassland and wetland, as a habitat mosaic to increase biodiversity, and areas where new woodland will be established through natural regeneration from adjacent established woodland.

Coppice management and the opening up of routes within the existing woodlands led to increases in ground flora and rare butterfly populations, and reintroduced dormice are now dispersing into the wider area.



Photo credit: Lincolnshire Limewoods Project

Case study 2 – Where not to plant trees

Lincolnshire Coastal Grazing Marsh

Lincolnshire's grazing marshes stretch from Grimsby to Gibraltar Point just inland from the coast. This priority habitat is particularly important for a number of waders, wildfowl and other bird species, visiting each winter in nationally and internationally important numbers. For these birds, the seasonally wet grassland is key for feeding and roosting. The grasslands supply grazing and hay for sheep and cattle, as well as an array of grass and flower species, supporting pollinator invertebrates. Ditches can have a high value for wildlife, especially where they retain water for a lengthy period with their banks providing rough grass habitat.

This is an open landscape where it is not appropriate to plant trees or hedges. Moreover, trees can provide shelter for predators that can attack the birds for which the area is important. If there is an opportunity to create semi-natural habitat, then wet grassland would be the best choice.



Photo credit: Barrie Wilkinson

Nature Strategy Interim Position Statement: Planting trees

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