Dear Member

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2022

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Thursday, 8 September 2022 meeting of the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was published.

Agenda Item No
15   **Plan Tree** (Pages 1 - 92)

Yours sincerely

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel

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From: **Susan Carey, Cabinet Member for Environment**

               Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

To: **Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee, 8th September 2022**

Subject: **Adoption of Kent Plan Tree - Kent County Council's Tree Establishment Strategy**

Key decision: **22/00089**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: n/a

Future Pathway of report: For Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Kent wide

Summary: Plan Tree is Kent County Council's Strategy for tree establishment. This Strategy sets out an ambition for the county's tree cover to be extended by 1.5 million by 2030 and that by 2050, Kent will have an average tree canopy cover of 19%. Working in partnership across the county, we will not only increase our tree canopy cover but protect and restore existing trees, hedgerow and woodland and, in turn, support the recovery of wildlife, provide natural climate solutions and enrich people's lives. This report provides summary of the public consultation findings, an overview of the changes made in the document's finalisation and presents the final version of the Strategy ahead of its adoption.

Recommendation(s):
The Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations in relation to the proposed decision to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Environment, to adopt Plan Tree as the Council's Tree Establishment Strategy as shown at Appendix A.

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1.   **Introduction**

1.1   In November 2021, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee endorsed for public consultation the draft Kent Plan Tree, Kent County Council's Tree Establishment Strategy. This Strategy set out an ambition for the county's tree cover to be extended by 1.5 million by 2030 and that by 2050, Kent will have an average tree canopy cover of 19% (an increase from the current 17%). The delivery of these new trees, alongside the protection and restoration of existing trees, hedgerow, and woodland, will support the recovery of wildlife, provide natural climate solutions and enrich people's lives. These new trees will be delivered by working in partnership.

1.2   The Strategy also sets out Kent County Council's commitment to delivering against this target, by establishing, at a very minimum, 28,600 trees on land we

own, manage or influence, representing a tree for every person in our own workforce. Further, Kent County Council members will have the opportunity to contribute by establishing trees within their own divisions. Based on a target of 350 trees per division, this will account for another 28,350 trees within the county. It is hoped that the scheme can be launched in time for members to have the opportunity to undertake tree planting in the 2022/23 planting season.

1.3 We will endeavour to deliver more trees than this by applying for government grants for tree establishment, to supplement our own resources dedicated to this agenda. Applications have once again been made, in 2022, to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund and Urban Tree Challenge Fund, where we hope to replicate last year's bidding successes. We will continue to make applications to these, and other funds as they arise, to ensure we access all available resources to support our tree ambitions.

1.4 In March 2022, Kent County Council launched an eight-week public consultation on the draft Plan Tree to seek the public and stakeholder's views on the Strategy.

2. Summary of the public consultation findings

2.1 The consultation, which ran for eight weeks between 8 March and 2 May 2022, had a good response rate, with a total of 569 responses, 561 of which were received online, the others as direct emails or letters. During the consultation period, the draft Tree Establishment Strategy was downloaded 1,742 times and the consultation webpage was visited 5,018 times by 4,568 visitors. 90% of those reviewing the draft Strategy found it easy to understand.

2.2 The consultation showed strong support for, and agreement with, the Strategy's ambition of extending tree cover by 1.5 million and a target of achieving an average tree canopy cover of 19% by 2050. The consultation illustrated that the protection and restoration of existing trees and woodland, and improving the condition of native and ancient woodland, were of primary importance to many. Whilst this was inherent throughout the Strategy, this strong feedback suggested that it should be more strongly reflected alongside the high-level ambitions of extending tree cover and increasing the canopy cover.

2.3 The consultation also showed that the Strategy's objectives were extremely popular and well supported and that there was strong support for all four of the Strategy's tree establishment principles.

> **Kent Plan Tree Objectives**
> - Contribute to Kent County Council's, and the county's, net zero targets.
> - Reduce and reverse the trend of decline in nature and loss of trees.
> - Tackle the multiple threats to our trees.
> - Deliver nature-based solutions to some of the county's challenges.
> - Provide enhanced and improved recreation and amenity.
> - Address the decline in trees outside woodland and decline in urban trees.
> - Realise the economic benefits.
> - Increase our knowledge and provide better protection.
>
> **Kent Plan Tree four principles for tree establishment**

> 1. Better management and protection of existing stock
> 2. The right tree, in the right place, for the right reason, with the right management.
> 3. Deliver multiple benefits.
> 4. Ensure the biosecurity of new tree stock through application of strict standards.

2.4 Within the feedback, there were calls for the principles to ensure that any new trees delivered under the Strategy would have appropriate maintenance, management, and protection, suggesting that the current management element of the "right tree in the right place" principle was not sufficiently detailed.

2.5 A large majority of respondents considered the Strategy's high-level actions were appropriate and believed they would deliver "to some extent" the Strategy's ambitions and targets. But it was clear that respondents wanted to see clearly defined targets, with a rigorous monitoring process in place.

> **Kent Plan Tree action plan focuses on:**
> 1. Delivering against the tree establishment target.
> 2. Exemplar provision for trees on our own estate.
> 3. Improving protection to trees in Kent.
> 4. Improving our understanding of Kent's trees.
> 5. Developing the Kent carbon offset market for unavoidable emissions.

2.6 The consultation showed that 45% of respondents had limited confidence that the Strategy would deliver the ambitions for Kent, with a number of concerns relating to Kent County Council's long-term commitment to, and resourcing of, this agenda. Feedback also demonstrated concerns over the challenges to tree establishment and how this could impact of the delivery of increased tree cover in the county.

2.7 The full Plan Tree Consultation report is appended to this report for Cabinet Committee's consideration.

3. Finalisation of Kent Plan Tree

3.1 The public consultation did not suggest that any fundamental changes were required in respect of the Strategy's ambitions and objectives, nor to the way in which the ambitions will be delivered.

3.2 However, in light of feedback from the consultation, some aspects of the draft were revised in the finalisation of Kent Plan Tree, to address some of the considerations raised.

3.3 An executive summary, in accessible language and format, has now been added and this will be further developed, with design, to provide a standalone summary of Kent Plan Tree.

3.4 To ensure sufficient attention is given to, and therefore importance is placed on, protecting our existing tree stock, a new high level ambition has been added to the beginning of the Strategy which states:

"In addition to increasing the extent of trees in the county, the ecological condition of the county's native woodland and ancient and veteran trees will be restored. And our existing trees will be afforded better recognition for the vital role they play and, consequently, better protection from loss, so that there is a genuine and significant gain of tree stock within Kent".

3.5 Further, the principles and actions have had minor amendments to more clearly set out what is meant by "protection" and how this might be achieved.

3.6 It was considered that the limited confidence in the Strategy delivering, and the concerns relating to Kent County Council's long-term commitment to, and resourcing of, this agenda may, in part, stem from the lack of a detailed delivery plan. Consequently, the Strategy now makes clear that sitting alongside the Strategy will be an associated implementation plan, which will, amongst other things, more clearly define:

- Specific targets for extending canopy in rural, agroforestry and urban settings.
- Targets for delivery through assisted natural regeneration.
- Targets for improving the ecological condition of native and ancient woodland and associated priority species.
- A tree establishment plan, associated resources and a comprehensive monitoring and reporting process.

3.7 To further emphasise Kent County Council's commitment to this agenda, the authority's action to date has also been updated in the Strategy to not only include the further trees planted in the interim since the draft Strategy was developed, but also include the current planting pipeline. This shows that the County Council has enabled or been directly responsible for the delivery of 111,921 trees and 6,032m^2 of natural regeneration since 2019 and up to the end of the 2021/22 planting season. And further, has a minimum of another 76,493 new trees through projects already in the pipeline. And more tree establishment projects are still to be developed.

3.8 To provide reassurance of the long-term security of new trees delivered under the strategy, the right tree in the right place principle has been amended to show what specifically is meant by "right management". This now states that the right management will ensure that any new tree or woodland receives what it needs to reach maturity. Following from this, the tree or woodland then continues to be maintained, so that it is productive and fully functioning in terms of the many services it may provide. And, where relevant, management mechanisms may be introduced, such as conservation covenants, so that the long-term security of our gained trees is ensured.

3.9 In addition, the principles now also state that any tree establishment work, whether through assisted natural regeneration or planting, must be accompanied by appropriate monitoring so that we know not only what we're gaining but where and to what effect, and the benefits that are being derived.

3.10 Further, an additional action has been added to the plan that makes clear that delivery will involve establishing maintenance, management and monitoring

plans for newly established trees and developing mechanisms that ensure the long-term security of this new tree cover.

3.11 Feedback suggested that the Strategy needed more detail on how it would deliver targeted action for biodiversity. As a result, the founding principle of better management and protection of existing stock now goes further to state that this must enable restoration of our native woodland's ecological condition and improves the connectivity of the wooded landscape, so that woodland biodiversity is recovered and resilient.

3.12 The Strategy also makes reference to how Plan Tree will be intrinsically linked with existing and emerging biodiversity strategies, including the adopted Kent's Plan Bee and the Kent Biodiversity Strategy and the forthcoming Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The action plan now notes that Plan Tree will establish priorities for ecological condition recovery, responses to tree disease and woodland connectivity, and develop targeted action for important and/or threatened woodland species. And that the forthcoming Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy can not only assist in the development of these but also enable their delivery.

3.13 The Strategy now also features a new chapter, which considers the number of challenges facing tree establishment. Whilst many of these exist outside the direct influence of Kent County Council, it is important to reflect on these and set the ambitions within the context of them.

3.14 Although not identified through the consultation, the chapter outlining the importance of trees to Kent has been updated to note in detail the importance of our wooded habitats to rare and nationally threatened species, using the recently published State of Nature in Kent report.

3.15 The final version of Plan Tree – Kent County Council's Tree Establishment Strategy 2022-2032 – is appended to this report for Cabinet Committee's consideration.

4. **Financial Implications**

4.1 As reported to Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee in November 2021, tree establishment will, in the main, be funded through central government grants.

4.2 Where match funding is needed, or funds are required to support tree establishment that falls outside the criteria of available funding, applications may be made to the Strategic Priorities reserve. £300k per annum for the next three years is required to fund the Members Tree Scheme and Kent County Council's 28,600 tree establishment commitment (as detailed under paragraph 1.2).

4.3 Consideration will need to be given to the financial burdens as a result of new trees and their ongoing maintenance and management cost. This will be built into project design costings.

5. Legal implications

5.1 There are no legal implications in relation to the draft Kent Tree Establishment Strategy.

6. Equalities implications

6.1 An equalities impact assessment (EqIA) was presented alongside the draft Plan Tree to Cabinet Committee in November 2021. This EqIA was made available with the consultation documents on the public consultation webpage and was also available on request.

6.2 Within the consultation questionnaire, respondents were given the opportunity to feedback on the EqIA. There were 25 responses to this question (from a total of 569 responses) and this feedback was used to review the EqIA.

6.3 None of the comments received suggested further needed to be done to the current EqIA. As previously noted in the EqIA, the Strategy's principle of the right tree in the right place will ensure that any tree planting does not have unintended consequences, including impacting access or causing obstacles. Likewise, it will be directed to where planting is needed, such as socio-economic and greenspace deprived areas and urban areas; therefore, the positive benefits of tree planting to protected groups can also be realised.

6.4 Consequently, no amendments have been made to the EqIA as a result of the consultation but specific EqIAs will be undertaken, as appropriate, when elements of the Strategy are implemented, such as planting plans.

7. Other corporate implications

7.1 The Kent tree establishment strategy supports the ambitions of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy, the Kent Environment Strategy, the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy and the management plans of the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. By considered planting and natural regeneration projects, it also has the potential to support the Council's pollinator action plan, Kent's Plan Bee. In time Plan Tree will also be linked to the Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy, required under the Environment Act, which will map priority areas for nature and recovery actions.

7.2 It has been prepared in reference to the Government's England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024 (May 2021) and the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Plan for the UK (January 2020).

8. Governance

8.1 There are no governance issues in relation to the draft Kent Tree Establishment Strategy.

9. Conclusions

9.1 Plan Tree received a positive response in its public consultation, with broad support for its ambitions for tree establishment, the objectives it would deliver,

the principles for tree establishment and the high-level actions required to achieve all this.

9.2 The final Strategy has taken into account the comments made and sought to address these, but the consultation did not result in the need for any fundamental changes to be made.

9.3 Consequently, the finalised Plan Tree provides a strong framework for tree establishment in the county and the collaborative delivery of the ambitions of 1.5 million new trees and 19% tree canopy cover. And, as a Kent County Council Strategy, it clearly sets out the county council's intention to deliver against ambitious targets and realise the full benefits of increased tree cover and improved protection in Kent.

10. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): The Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations in relation to the proposed decision to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Environment, to adopt Plan Tree as the Council's Tree Establishment Strategy as shown at Appendix A.

11. Background Documents

11.1 Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision

11.2 Plan Tree - Kent County Council's Tree Establishment Strategy 2022-2032 is provided as an appendix to this report, as is the Plan Tree consultation report.

11.3 Relevant background documents include:

- The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/atta chment_data/file/987432/england-trees-action-plan.pdf
- Woodland Trust Emergency Tree Plan for the UK https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/47692/emergency-tree-plan.pdf
- Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/kent-and-medway-energy-and-low-emissions-strategy
- Kent Biodiversity Strategy http://www.kentnature.org.uk/uploads/files/Nat-Env/Kent%20Biodiversity%20Strategy%202020.pdf
- State of Nature in Kent: https://kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature/

12. Contact details

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:	DECISION NO:
Susan Carey, Cabinet Member for Environment	**22/00089**

For publication

Key decision: YES

Subject Matter / Title of Decision: Kent County Council adoption of Kent Plan Tree – Kent County Council's Tree Establishment Strategy

Decision: As Cabinet Member for Environment, I agree to adopt Plan Tree as the Council's Tree Establishment Strategy.

Reason(s) for decision:
In 2019, off the back of the County Council recognising a climate and ecological emergency, the then Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste stated a commitment for 1.5 million trees to be established, a tree for every person in Kent. Plan Tree, Kent County Council's Tree Establishment Strategy, sets out how we will turn this ambition into a reality and see tree cover across the county extended.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:
The proposed decision is being discussed by Members of the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee at their meeting on 8 September.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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signed

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date

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PLAN TREE

Kent County Council's
Tree Establishment Strategy

2022-2032

September 2022

Contents

Foreword

To be written

Executive summary

Kent Plan Tree sets an ambition for Kent to **extend tree cover by 1.5 million new trees** and increase the county's **average canopy cover to 19%**. Furthermore, our existing woodland and trees health will be restored and afforded greater protection from loss.

Tree establishment in the county will be underpinned by four principles –

The first step is to protect and restore the county's existing trees and native woodland and therefore the founding principle is one of **better management and protection of existing stock**. This not only aims to avoid loss but ensure our existing stock is secure from pests and disease.

Natural regeneration will need to be complemented by considered and well-planned establishment of new tree stock. Where we look to establish new trees, this must adhere to the principle of **the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason, with the right management and right monitoring** to ensure appropriate, successful and sustainable tree establishment across the county that is secured for the long-term.

Investment of public money needs to demonstrate value and therefore the design of any tree establishment will look to **deliver multiple benefits**, including nature based solutions; amenity benefits; nature recovery; and economic benefits.

And finally, we must **ensure the biosecurity of new tree stock through application of strict standards** on the trees we plant and the places we source stock from.

Establishing the right trees in the right places will help deliver benefits for Kent's wildlife, people, and economy. Through extending tree cover in Kent and delivering this Strategy, we aim to deliver the following objectives:

- Contribute to Kent County Council's, and the county's, net zero targets
- Reduce and reverse the trend of decline in nature and loss of trees
- Tackle the multiple threats to our trees
- Deliver nature-based solutions to some of the county's challenges
- Provide enhanced and improved recreation and amenity
- Address the decline in trees outside woodland and decline in urban trees
- Realise the economic benefits
- Increase our knowledge and provide better protection

Since stating the ambition in 2019 for 1.5 million new trees to be established in the county, Kent County Council has delivered over 111,600 new trees and 6,032m^2 of natural regeneration (until March 2022); and more planting is scheduled over the coming years. This Strategy looks to build on this action and provide a more robust framework for tree establishment in Kent and the collaborative action needed to deliver on the ambitious tree targets for the county.

The Strategy sets out some specific actions that Kent County Council will take to progress delivery of the ambitions and objectives of Plan Tree. These actions focus on:

1. Delivering against the tree establishment target.
2. Exemplar provision for trees on our own estate.
3. Improving protection to trees in Kent.
4. Improving our understanding of Kent's trees.
5. Developing the Kent carbon offset market for unavoidable emissions.

The actual delivery of these actions will be laid out in a more detailed implementation plan that will sit alongside the Strategy. In addition to detailing a delivery schedule for this action plan, the implementation plan will also more clearly define:

- Specific targets for extending canopy in rural, agroforestry and urban settings.
- Targets for delivery through assisted natural regeneration.
- Targets for improving the ecological condition of native and ancient woodland and associated priority species.
- A tree establishment plan, associated resources and a comprehensive monitoring and reporting process.

Plan Tree will be delivered by working in partnership with (but not limited to) district and borough and town and parish councils, the Kent Downs and High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Units, the county's Countryside Management Partnerships, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, and environmental charities. We will look to bring together local communities, schools, businesses, and landowners to collaborate on tree establishment projects.

Introduction to the ambitions of the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy

Kent County Council has an ambition that the county's tree cover will be extended by 1.5 million, establishing one new tree for every resident living in the county. By 2050, Kent will have an average tree canopy cover of 19%[1], the target recommended by the Committee on Climate Change.

In addition to increasing the extent of trees in the county, the ecological condition of the county's native woodland and ancient and veteran trees will be restored. And our existing trees will be afforded better recognition for the vital role they play and, consequently, better protection from loss, so that there is a genuine and significant gain of tree stock within Kent.

The delivery of new trees, via a mixture of planting and assisted natural regeneration, coupled with the protection and restoration of existing trees, hedgerow, and woodland, will support the recovery of wildlife, provide natural climate solutions, and enrich people's lives.

These ambitions will be delivered by working in partnership with (but not limited to) district and borough and town and parish councils, the Kent Downs and High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Units, the county's Countryside Management Partnerships, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, and environmental charities. We will look to bring together local communities, schools, businesses, and landowners to collaborate on tree establishment projects.

In addition to this collaborative action, Kent County Council aims to contribute directly to the county target by establishing new trees across its own estate. Although our ambitions will be greater, at a very minimum we will establish 28,600 trees on land we own, manage or influence, representing a tree for every person in our own workforce. Further, Kent County Council members will have the opportunity to contribute by establishing trees within their own divisions across the four-year term; based on a target of 350 trees per division, this will account for another 28,350 trees within the county.

All trees established under our Tree Strategy will follow principles for tree establishment in Kent and the trees will be established by a combination of new stock and through managed natural regeneration. The establishment of new hedgerows will also contribute to the Strategy's target.

The Kent Tree Establishment Strategy has been prepared in reference to the Government's England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024 (May 2021) and the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Plan for the UK (January 2020). It also supports the ambitions of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy, Kent's Plan Bee, the Kent Environment Strategy, the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy and the management plans of the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In time the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy will also be linked to the

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[1] In line with the national and Woodland Trust Emergency Plan target of 19%; the target recommended by the Committee on Climate Change if the UK is to be carbon neutral by 2050.

county's Local Nature Recovery Strategy[2], recognising the critical role of trees and woodland in the response to the nature and climate emergency by integrating them into broader strategic, landscape-scale action for nature's recovery.

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[2] Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a requirement of the Environment Act 2021. Following the required secondary legislation (anticipated autumn 2022), Kent County Council will be appointed Responsible Authority for the LNRS for Kent and Medway, at which point work on this Strategy will commence.

The importance of trees to Kent

A recent tree canopy assessment (July 2020[3]) calculated the county had 64,751ha of tree cover, with an average tree canopy cover of 17% and an urban tree cover average also at 17% (above the England average of 16%). In terms of distribution across the county, west Kent districts have a far greater canopy cover (28-30%) than those in east Kent (4-9%).

Kent has 11% of England's ancient semi-natural woodland, with more ancient woodland than any other county in the UK; and in the south east, the county has 22.5% of the region's ancient woodland resource. Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland is the county's largest semi-natural habitat, covering 44,490ha and just over 11% of Kent[4].

Our two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are heavily wooded – the High Weald has the most wooded landscape in the country with 28% woodland cover; and the Kent Downs has 23% and the majority of this is irreplaceable ancient woodland (70%).

Our woodlands are important to our natural heritage and home to a vast array of wildlife, including some nationally threatened woodland species[5]. Kent is one of the last strongholds of Nightingale in the UK and is also important for the declining and scarce Hawfinch. The county is also one of a small handful of locations where the woodland butterfly, Heath Fritillary, is found and the increasingly rare and now threatened Duke of Burgundy. Our woodlands are also important for some rare moths, including the Common Fan Foot moth and the Heart moth, with Kent being one of only four sites where this species is found. And the Blean Woods hosts Britain's only known population of the money spider, *Walckenaeria mitrata*. The county's woodlands are also important for mammals – along with the other southern counties, Kent is a stronghold for the Hazel Dormouse. And our ancient broadleaved woodlands are hugely important for bats, with Kent's woodlands being home to one of the UK's rarest mammals, the Bechstein's bat.

Our history of fruit production has also left us with traditional orchards found in two main areas, the North Kent Fruit Belt (between Rochester and Faversham) and the Mid Kent Fruit Belt (in the central areas of the High and Low Weald and the Greensand). Many of these have been lost in the past half century and traditional orchards now only account for 0.4% of Kent's habitats; but this seemingly small resource is nationally important, comprising around 10% of the traditional orchard area in England[6].

The great extent of Kent's woodland and tree cover tells a story of how we have used trees and the value of them to us. Today we not only value trees for the food, timber and fuel they provide but also for their recreation, wildlife, ecosystem services and carbon capture and storage benefits.

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[3] https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/111360/Canopy-cover-report.pdf
[4] Kent Habitat Survey, 2012
[5] State of Nature in Kent, 2021 https://kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature/
[6] Kent Habitat Survey, 2012

Kent's trees are not only at risk from land use change and development but also pests and diseases. Our landscape still features the scars of Dutch elm disease and is now impacted again by Ash dieback and other pests and diseases such as the Oriental chestnut gall wasp and sweet chestnut blight. The county is particularly vulnerable given its proximity to the continent, meaning Kent's tree population is often impacted by 'new' pests and diseases sooner than other parts of the country.

The value of trees[78]

- Trees and woodlands are valuable habitats to our county's wildlife. Oak trees support more life than any other UK native tree – they are a haven for a colossal 2,300 wildlife species, providing vital spaces to eat, shelter and breed[9].
- Trees, especially large ones, can store significant amounts of carbon. Kent and Medway's forests store 367,374 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year[10].
- Trees are very effective at mitigating the effects of air pollution and improving air quality by using their leaves and bark to primarily intercept airborne particulate matter but also by absorbing other pollutants from the air, such as sulphur dioxide, nitric acid, nitric oxide, and ammonia from the air.
- Trees provide shade, reducing summer air temperatures and the urban heat island effect.
- Trees provide hydrological benefits in the form of reduced runoff, flood alleviation and water quality enhancement. Conifers intercept between 25-45% of annual rainfall while broadleaves intercept between 10-25%[11].
- Trees improve soil and reduce soil erosion – decaying leaves and bark add a protective layer to the earth, which protects against evaporation from heat and retains water, keeping soil healthy.
- In terms of cultural services, trees are a fundamental part of the cultural landscape of Kent, providing character and local distinctiveness to many areas.
- Within urban areas, people show a generally favourable attitude towards street trees, with the most highly rated benefit being visual attractiveness. In addition, evidence suggests that in urban areas the presence of trees can be used to deter crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 84% of the UK public agree that more trees should be planted in response to climate change[12].
- 95% of UK public value woodlands for their wildlife value[13].
- There is strong and growing evidence linking exposure to trees with enhancements in both physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Broadleaved trees have also been shown to have a positive impact on property values ranging from 5-18%, with larger trees having a greater proportional value[14].

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[7] https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1702/benefits-of-trees-outside-woods.pdf
[8] https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/INPRACTICE73web.pdf
[9] https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/oak-tree-wildlife/
[10] Kent and Medway Emissions Analysis and Pathways to Net Zero report (December 2020)
[11] Calder, I.R., Reid, I., Nisbet, T. and Green, J. C. (2003) Impact of lowland forests in England on water resources. Water Resources Research, 39: 1319 – 1328
[12] Public opinion of forestry – climate change, Forest Research, https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/forestry-statistics/forestry-statistics-2018/uk-forests-and-climate-change/public-opinion-of-forestry-climate-change/
[13] https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/statistics-by-topic/public-opinion-of-forestry/

- Commercial and urban areas with good tree cover tend to attract higher levels of inward investment[15]
- Trees provide us with timber, fuel, fodder, fruit, nuts, berries, and biofuels.

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[14] Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) Trees in Towns II. A new survey of urban trees in England and their condition and management.

[15] Department of Environment (1997) Managing Urban Spaces in Town Centres – Good Practice Guide.

Realising the value of trees in Kent – our objectives for tree establishment

Establishing the right trees in the right places will help deliver benefits for Kent's wildlife, people, and economy. Through extending tree cover in Kent and delivering this Strategy, we aim to deliver the following objectives.

Contribute to Kent County Council's, and the county's, net zero targets
The UK has a net zero target of 2050. Kent County Council is working towards carbon neutrality for its own estate and services by 2030. We are also committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the whole county to net zero by 2050. In order to meet these ambitious but necessary targets to address climate change, not only must we reduce our emissions but we need to remove carbon from the atmosphere.

A new native woodland can capture 300-400 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per hectare by year 50; by 100 years this increases to 400-600 per hectare[16] (typical densities range from 1000 to 2500 trees per hectare). Acting now to increase our tree stock across the county will make a significant contribution towards our targets for 2030 and 2050.

Reduce and reverse the trend of decline in nature and loss of trees
Existing native woodlands are isolated and in poor ecological condition. These factors, coupled with the widespread loss of 'trees outside woods' from the landscape, have contributed to a troubling decline in our biodiversity – 53% of UK woodland species are in decline[17]. Further, woodland birds have declined by 29% since 1970; woodland butterflies by 40% since 1990; and woodland plants by 18% since 2015[18].

Native broadleaved woodlands, managed to a semi-natural condition, can deliver exceptional biodiversity value because of the mosaic of habitats that can exist within. In woodlands with more natural systems, trees seed, grow and die at different times, creating a varied structure of tree maturity and species diversity as more light reaches below the canopy.

Through improved and/or more appropriate management, assisted natural regeneration, restoration of our traditional orchards, an increase in our native woodlands and improved connectivity between our wooded landscapes, we can begin to address the decline in wildlife that depend on these habitats. This work will link in with, and help deliver, other nature recovery work in the county including the forthcoming Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Kent's Plan Bee (the county council's pollinator action plan) and the Kent Biodiversity Strategy.

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[16]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/689431/A5_Leaflet_WC_Carbon_Code_V4_Web.pdf
[17] https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation-projects/state-of-nature/state-of-nature-uk-report-2016.pdf
[18] Putting woods and trees at the heart of nature recovery, Woodland Trust, 2022

Tackle the multiple threats to our trees

Woods and trees are subject to a number of overlapping threats including direct loss, climate impacts, imported diseases, invasive plants, mammal browsing and air pollutants. These threats diminish the benefits of woods and trees for people and for wildlife.

By better management and consideration of our tree stock, and care and attention paid to the establishment of new stock, we can develop a tree resource that has increased resilience to disease, climate change and natural hazards and ensures woodlands are better connected with each other and other priority habitats.

Deliver nature-based solutions to some of the county's challenges

In addition to carbon sequestration, trees provide a wealth of services including:

- Improved soil quality and integrity - woodlands and well-established hedgerows produce high quality soil through increased organic content falling to the woodland floor. They also act as barriers, slowing water flow and preventing soil erosion.
- Improved air quality - trees and vegetation capture pollutants such as sulphur dioxide, nitric acid, nitric oxide, and ammonia, cleaning the air as they do so. Broadleaved trees and hedges take up more pollution through their larger leaves and create turbulent air movement which contributes to increased pollutant uptake and pollutant dissipation.
- Reduction in surface water flooding - woodlands play a vital role in offsetting surface water flooding through water intake from the ground, preventing water saturation. Trees also intercept rainwater in their canopies which reduces the amount of water reaching the ground. Woodlands and hedgerows also slow the rate of surface water flow through their soils.
- Urban cooling - through increasing the tree canopy throughout urban areas, transpiration increases which helps to reduce air temperature and increase humidity, contributing to a cooling effect.

Careful planning and strategically placed trees can be used to deliver multiple benefits and through following the tree establishment principles we can ensure we realise the greatest value of our tree stock within the county.

Provide enhanced and improved recreation and amenity

Woodland, and trees outside woodlands, provide many societal benefits including:

- Opportunities for recreation and education.
- Enhanced and quality outdoor experiences, include a connection with nature.
- Improvements to local amenity and distinctiveness.
- A contribution to people's health and wellbeing.

By increasing tree cover in the county and considering where this is most needed and/or where it would offer the greatest societal benefits, we can boost these benefits across Kent.

Address the decline in trees outside woodland and decline in urban trees

Trees outside of woodlands are among the most valuable to society; people place great value on trees and green spaces in their local communities. 19% of the UK's trees are outside woodland[19], with non-woodland tree cover amounting to 11% of land in urban areas and 3% in rural[20].

Urban trees have a huge value:

- Benefit mental and physical health
- Opportunities to engage with nature
- Reduce surface water flooding
- Provide habitats and connectivity for wildlife
- Lower noise pollution and combat air pollution
- Increase property values
- Reduce temperatures in towns and cities

The strategy will look to tackle urban areas lacking in tree cover and reduce the loss of these important trees. We will work with our district and borough colleagues to ensure that trees are well provided for within Local Plans and are properly considered, with quality designed landscaping, within new development.

Realise the economic benefits

Trees and woodlands have a number of business uses, including timber and wood products, fruit, and fungi, as well as commercial leisure hire. Further to these, a developing market is using established tree stock, and/or land for tree establishment, to offer carbon offset for unavoidable emissions. Growing this market in Kent could deliver some of the investment we need to manage, expand, and connect our tree stock and woodlands.

Further, market development relating to the provision of Plant Healthy tree stock could enable additional jobs and revenue in the county.

In addition, trees and woodland's role in the county's culture, landscape and beauty all have an economic benefit in terms of it making Kent an attractive place to live, work and visit.

Increase our knowledge and provide better protection

In order to ensure our trees have the protection they need, and to ensure efforts of establishment are targeted to where restoration is required or gaps exist, we need to improve our understanding of trees in the county and the benefits (value) they provide.

Kent's residents, business and landowners also need to be supported to assist in the tree establishment agenda with access to good information, professional and advice and accessible guidance.

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[19] State of the UK's Woods and Trees - Woodland Trust
[20] Tree cover outside woodlands in Great Britain - Statistical Report (forestresearch.gov.uk)

Principles for tree establishment in Kent

In delivering our Kent Tree Establishment Strategy, the following principles for tree establishment will be followed.

1. Better management and protection of existing stock

The first step is to protect and restore the county's existing trees and native woodland. This includes ensuring that any loss of ancient woodland, aged and/or veteran trees will be wholly exceptional. And for our broader woodland and trees stock, establishing strong policies across the county that protect these from loss. Where tree loss is unavoidable, these are replaced at a greater ratio to that lost; and for any non-woodland tree removed, there should be the aim, where feasible, of a replacement tree (or more than one) in the new location or as close to the original location as possible and be the same type of planting[21].

We also need to ensure that environmental policy, strategy and action enables the restoration of our native woodland's ecological condition and improves the connectivity of the wooded landscape, so that woodland biodiversity is recovered and resilient.

Our existing stock should also be secure from pests and disease; investment is required to support Kent's (and the South East's) tree nurseries to enable a rapid expansion of locally grown native trees to reduce disease risk of importing trees. Biosecurity of tree establishment should also be improved (see principle below). Further to this, we need to better understand and manage impacts from natural threats (such as deer, squirrels, and climate change) on tree stock.

Another way to ensure biosecurity is to ensure natural regeneration is a key part of the county's tree establishment plans, whereby through appropriate management we allow nature to take its course and provide additional tree cover.

2. The right tree in the right place

Natural regeneration will need to be complemented by considered and well-planned establishment of new tree stock. Where we look to establish new trees, this must adhere to the following principles to ensure appropriate, successful, and sustainable tree establishment across the county:

- The right tree
- In the right place
- For the right reason
- With the right management
- And with the right monitoring

The right tree in the right place principle
Applying the four elements of the right tree in the right place principle, will result in constraints on how and where we deliver our establishment plan. The specifics of

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[21] Woodland Trust Emergency Tree Plan for the UK

these constraints will be defined as part of the Strategy's implementation and will consider (but not be limited to):

- native and local provenance species
- species that deliver a specific service or function
- landscape biodiversity (e.g. grassland and woodland) and character, previous landscape patterns and historical context
- location
- archaeological implications
- soil functions
- habitat types that should be protected from tree/woodland establishment
- land uses
- woodland connectivity
- water recharge and availability
- local issues such as poor air quality or flood risks
- unintended consequences
- the purposes of the tree within that location
- the need for management to have minimal environmental impact (for instance no plastic use for tree guards and shield and water demand).

The right management will ensure that any new tree or woodland receives what it needs to reach maturity; and then continues to be maintained, so that it is productive and fully functioning in terms of the many services it may provide. Where relevant, this management may need to be through mechanisms such as conservation covenants so that the long-term security of our gained trees is ensured.

The right management also includes, ideally, allowing a tree to run its full life cycle; that being not just to maturity, but from seed to 'snag' (decaying tree). Forests absorb carbon from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and store the carbon in living biomass, dead wood, litter, and soil. Some soils can contain as much carbon as the trees; and some soil types can contain considerably more. Both standing and fallen dead wood is important for the health of our woodland. Decomposition is a natural process involving the slow release of nitrogen and carbon storage with many positive impacts including nutrient cycling, natural regeneration and the formation of micro-habitats. As a tree starts to decompose its usefulness to wildlife is about to peak, with deadwood dependant organisms accounting for some 40% of all the wildlife species in woodland. Whilst Plan Tree is looking at how tree establishment can support our net zero targets, it is also about realising the other services trees can provide and therefore the intended life cycle within the management must be considered.

All tree establishment work, whether through assisted natural regeneration or planting, must be accompanied by appropriate monitoring and reporting. We not only need to know what we're gaining but where and to what effect – and the benefits that are being derived.

3. Deliver multiple benefits

Investment of public money must demonstrate value and opportunities to deliver multiple benefits from tree establishment must be realised. This includes:

- Delivery of nature-based solutions, focussing tree establishment in areas of need such as those with high levels of pollution, flood risk and urban heat.
- Provision of amenity benefits and engagement, focussing establishment in areas of need such as those with low tree cover, low levels of quality green space, higher levels of deprivation and poor 'health and wellbeing' outcomes.
- Restore and improve biodiversity, addressing fragmentation through better connecting to other woodland and other priority habitat and establishing appropriate management to enable wildlife restoration.
- Delivery of economic benefits, such as the expansion of existing, and development of new markets for wood products and services; and the provision of new job opportunities.

4. Ensure biosecurity of new tree stock through application of strict standards

Biosecurity should be ensured by utilising UK grown stock of a known provenance, seeking to maximise genetic diversity of genus and species. All stock used should be from nurseries that have adopted the Plant Health Management Standard (PHMS) with Plant Healthy accreditation or equivalent.

Challenges to tree establishment

Our ambitions for tree establishment must be set in the context of the challenges that face extending tree cover in the county.

One of the greatest challenges is land availability. To deliver the ambitions of this Strategy, large scale woodland creation will be required however land in public ownership appropriate for this is limited and therefore we will need to look to private landowners to assist. There are many other competing demands for this available land – food security, development and infrastructure to name a few. Further, landowners must be willing to allow that land to be excluded from other uses, as any trees established must be secured for the long-term. It is therefore important that where landowners are willing to provide land for tree establishment, they are assured that there will be a financial return on this and there are currently many unknowns in respect of environmental payments.

The unknowns in relation to supply of land for tree establishment creates a challenge in respect of delivering on 1.5 million new trees and 19% canopy. It is only once opportunity mapping is completed, will we know whether these ambitions are actually feasible.

Whilst one of the benefits of tree planting is providing mitigation for climate change and its impact, trees themselves are susceptible to the effects of a changing climate. Changing weather patterns and climate, including drier conditions, may affect our native species and extreme weather events, such as storms and wildfire, may result in the direct loss of trees. A changing climate can also result in tree pests and diseases and our location to the continent increases these risks. Other natural threats, such as increasing deer and squirrel populations, can make the establishment of new trees difficult without costly protective measures.

A further challenge is security of supply and whether the UK's nurseries are able to produce new plants in the quantities required, as the whole of the country steps up efforts to increase tree coverage. And further, whether in Kent we can source sufficient supply given the biosecure standards we want to work to.

And with the current drive to plant more trees, there is a deficit on the sector in respect of the infrastructure and associated expertise and workforce needed to deliver. Not just forestry skills (there has been a year-on-year decline in forestry courses at UK institutions) but also across the board we require more researchers, silviculturists, ecologists, planting, maintenance and harvesting contractors. It will also require a huge retraining of land managers who lack knowledge and understanding of woodland management.

Many of these challenges need to be addressed at the national level but within our county work we need to be mindful of these and engage with, and support, efforts to solve them.

Kent County Council action to date

Since stating the ambitions in 2019 for 1.5 million new trees to be established in the county, Kent County Council has enabled or been directly responsible for the delivery of 111,921 trees and 6,032m^2 of natural regeneration up to the end of the 2021/22 planting season:

- 39,265 trees planted by the KCC hosted Old Chalk New Downs project, with KCC and Heritage Lottery Funding. All trees are a native species mix, with local stock sourced from Kent nurseries and the majority have been planted with biodegradable cardboard tree guards rather than plastic.
- 16,850 trees and hedges planted by the county's Countryside Management Partnerships[22].
- 13,615 trees planted by the Kent Downs AONB led Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme with KCC, EU and National Lottery Heritage Funding.
- 4,100 trees as part of a natural flood management project in a landscape partnership scheme with the Kent Downs AONB unit. Funded by DEFRAs Farming in Protected Landscapes grant and The National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- 2,027 trees planted by KCC's arboriculture team, including trees as part of the Urban Tree Challenge Fund round 1 and the Queens Green Canopy.
- 3,810 trees and 6,032m^2 of natural regeneration for the Trees Outside Woodland Project, enabled with £500,000 funding from the Shared Outcomes Fund.
- 250 saplings planted at Shaw Grange closed landfill site, with hedgerow to be established later in 2022.
- 32,000 trees in Ashford, delivered by the Borough Council with funding from the Local Authority Treescape Fund round 1.
- Initial planting of 4 trees for Jubilee Wood at Sandwich School.
- Appointment of a dedicated officer to oversee the delivery of the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy.

Over the next three years, the following is already planned, accounting for a further 76,493 new trees, and more tree establishment projects are still to be developed:

- 1,700 trees for remainder of planting for Sandwich School Jubilee Wood.
- 2,297 trees (mixed species) to be planted at the Allington Household Waste Recycling Centre.
- 250 trees in Swale, delivered by the Borough Council with funding from the Local Authority Treescape Fund round 1.
- 14,664 trees at a variety of school and NHS sites, delivered with funding from the Local Authority Treescape Fund round 2.
- 632 trees by KCC's arboriculture team, with funding from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund round 2.
- 28,350 via the Kent County Council Members Tree Schemed
- 28,600 tree establishment on Kent County Council owned land.

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[22] Home - Kent Countryside Partnerships

The Kent Tree Establishment Strategy builds on this action and provides a more robust framework for tree establishment in Kent and the collaborative action needed to deliver on the 1.5 million trees ambition.

Kent Tree Establishment Strategy – Kent County Council Action Plan

In order to deliver on the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy, Kent County Council will take forward a number of actions over the Strategy period. The actual delivery of these actions will be laid out in a more detailed implementation plan that will sit alongside the Strategy. In addition to detailing a delivery schedule for this action plan, the implementation plan will also more clearly define:

- Specific targets for extending canopy in rural, agroforestry and urban settings.
- Targets for delivery through assisted natural regeneration.
- Targets for improving the ecological condition of native and ancient woodland and associated priority species.
- A tree establishment plan, associated resources and a comprehensive monitoring and reporting process.

1. Deliver against the tree establishment target

- Develop a ten-year strategic Kent County Council tree planting plan, including a tree planting project pipeline. In association develop a three-year delivery plan, published to give visibility of schemes, with a funding/investment plan to underpin this work.

- Establish a detailed definition of the "right tree in the right place", identifying the specific constraints of tree, location, purpose, and management.

- Establish priorities for ecological condition recovery, responses to tree disease and woodland connectivity; and develop targeted action for important and/or threatened woodland species. Ensure development of the Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy enables the delivery of these, alongside specific tree establishment to be delivered by Plan Tree.

- Establish maintenance, management and monitoring plans for newly established trees and develop mechanisms that ensure the long-term security of this new tree cover, such as conservation covenants.

- Work with partners across the county to establish a resourced Kent Plan Tree Partnership, with the capacity and capability to support joined-up action in the delivery of tree establishment in the county.

- Working with district councils and other partners, respond to central government calls for bids for tree planting, and other government support that will help implement the Kent Tree Establishment Strategy, maximising funding investment for the county.

- Set annual expansion targets, with targets focussing on both quality and quantity. By measuring quality, we will ensure the expansion of trees in Kent also delivers recovery of nature, enriches people's lives, sequesters, and stores carbon and delivers other nature-based solution benefits.

- With partners, identify creation, extension, connection, restoration and protection opportunities for woods and trees on a broader county-wide scale and develop a county-wide opportunity map and tree establishment plan[23].

- Develop a transparent and accessible tree establishment monitoring and reporting approach against the county target.

- Work with individual farmers, landowners and managers to reinstate and expand the county's hedgerow network and extend tree cover, to benefit landscape and wildlife.

- Work with parish and town councils and other urban community groups to increase trees in urban areas.

2. Exemplar provision for trees on our own estate

- Identify creation, restoration and protection opportunities for woods and trees on the KCC estate.

- Review whether further tree establishment on our Highways is a feasible route to help increase the volume of trees outside woodlands and in our urban areas.

- Ensure our wooded estate provides exemplary public value by integrating climate action with other nature-based solutions, high quality access and wildlife recovery.

- Review, and revise if necessary and/or feasible, our tree establishment and replacement policies across the KCC estate and for land we manage/influence. Ensure the best standards are delivered through a renewed tree establishment (incl. protection and maintenance) and replacement policy.

3. Improve protection to trees in Kent

- Use our planning functions to ensure protection and regulated management of irreplaceable veteran trees and ancient woodland on or adjacent to development sites, with prevention of further loss or damage controlled through conditions and legal agreements as appropriate.   There shall be a general presumption in favour of retention and enhancement of existing tree, woodland and hedgerow cover on planning application sites determined by the planning authority.

- Work with district and borough colleagues to ensure that trees are well provided for, and offered appropriate protection by, Local Plans, so that loss as a result of development is minimised and that the inclusion of new trees is properly

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[23] The Strategy's establishment targets and timeframe may need to be revised once the tree planting plan and opportunity mapping work is completed; only then will we understand if the 1.5 million is feasible/deliverable within the timeframe and in respect of available land.

considered, with quality designed landscaping in new development. Consider the provision of additional planning guidance for development to support this.

- Develop sustainable and bio-secure supply-chains for local-provenance trees, seed, tree-guards, fencing and other materials, ensuring that Kent's nurseries and suppliers realise the opportunities presented by the development of this market.

4.   Improve our understanding of Kent's trees

- Ensure we have a clear picture of KCC's, and in turn Kent's, tree stock, both woodlands and trees outside woodland, with areas lacking in tree cover identified.

- Ensure our ancient woodland inventory is up to date and undertake a veteran tree inventory.

- Assess the impact of natural threats (for example deer, squirrels, climate change) on tree establishment across Kent to understand how such risks may impact the county's target and to ensure appropriate management/protection is put in place.

- Promote the importance of trees to landowners, businesses and the local community so that everyone understands the value of trees and woodlands, the important services they provide and the role they can play in helping to increase tree cover in Kent.

- Establish a hub of information that provides support to partners, landowners, businesses and the local community to identify, develop and deliver creation, restoration and protection opportunities.

5.   Develop Kent carbon offset market for unavoidable emissions

- Support work in the county to grow the nature-based carbon offset market for unavoidable emissions and identify opportunities on our estate to offset carbon and in turn deliver investment into our trees and the benefits they provide.

Partners and funding

Collaboration and partnership working will be key to delivering on the ambitions of the Plan Tree Strategy. It will be vital that work across the county is linked up and tree establishment is not delivered in a disparate manner – this will ensure that opportunities to connect new woodlands and trees are realised and that we have a network of tree cover in the county that supports the recovery of wildlife, provides natural climate solutions, and enriches people's lives.

Partnership working will be facilitated by establishing a resourced Kent Plan Tree Partnership, with the capacity and capability to support joined-up action in the delivery of tree establishment in the county.

Partners will include (but are not limited to):

- District and Borough councils
- Town and Parish councils
- Forestry Commission
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit
- High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit
- Kent's Countryside Management Partnerships
- Kent Wildlife Trust
- Woodland Trust
- National TrustRSPB
- Country Land and Business Association
- National Farmers Union
- Wood and forestry businesses
- Kent Tree Warden Network
- Kent Association of Local Councils
- Public sector landowners e.g. NHS
- Rewilding Britain
- Community and volunteer groups, such as The Kent Men of the Trees
- Developers
- Education settings

Kent's residents and businesses will also have an important role in helping to deliver on this target at the local level; whether that's planting trees on land they own or helping us identify opportunities in their local area.

The Strategy's three-year delivery plan will not only set out the tree establishment for that period but will also identify specific funding sources for the work. There are currently a number of tree grants financing options available which may be applicable and include (but are not limited to)[24]:

- Trees Call to Action Fund

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[24] Forestry Commission advice

- Woodland Creation Planning Grant
- HS2 Woodland Fund
- Urban Tree Challenge Fund
- Local Authority Treescapes Fund
- England Woodland Creation Offer
- Woodland Carbon Code
- Woodland Carbon Guarantee
- Woodland Management Planning (part of Countryside Stewardship)
- Woodland Creation and Maintenance (part of Countryside Stewardship)
- Woodland Tree Health (part of Countryside Stewardship)
- Woodland Improvement (part of Countryside Stewardship)
- Highways England Environment and Wellbeing Designated Fund Plan
- National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative
- NGO and charity tree funding schemes
- Corporate investment
- High net wealth individual investment interests
- Local nature-based carbon offset markets
- (in time) Environmental Land Management scheme
- (in time) Biodiversity Net Gain

Plan Tree

Kent County Council's Tree Establishment Strategy 2022 to 2032

Public Consultation Report
May 2022

Contents

1   Executive Summary

- The consultation, which ran between 8 March and 2 May 2022, had a **good response rate**, with a total of **569 responses**, 561 of which were received online, the others as direct emails or letters. During the consultation period, the draft Tree Establishment Strategy was downloaded 1,742 times. The consultation webpage was visited 5,018 times by 4,568 visitors.
- 90% found the Strategy **easy to understand**.
- The consultation showed **strong support for, and agreement with, the Strategy's ambition** of extending tree cover by 1.5 million and a target of achieving an average tree canopy cover of 19% by 2050.
- Respondents **want to see clearly defined targets, with a rigorous monitoring** process in place.
- The consultation illustrated that the **protection and restoration of existing trees and woodland**, and improving the condition of native and ancient woodland, are of **primary importance**.
- The **Strategy objectives were extremely popular and well supported**.
- There was **strong support for** all four of the Strategy's **tree establishment principles**.
- There were calls for the **principles to ensure that any new trees** delivered under the Strategy **have appropriate protection and maintenance**.
- A large majority of respondents considered the Strategy's **high-level actions appropriate and believed they would deliver** "to some extent" the Strategy's ambitions and targets.
- The consultation showed that 4**5% of respondents had limited confidence that the Strategy will deliver the ambitions for Kent**, with a number of **concerns relating to Kent County Council's long-term commitment** to, and resourcing of, this agenda.
- Feedback also demonstrated **concerns over the challenges** that face tree establishment.
- The consultation made very clear that the Strategy's high-level actions need to disseminate down to communities at a local level.

As a result of the consultation, the following will be addressed in the finalisation of the Tree Establishment Strategy:

- Development of a **standalone, executive summary** in an accessible language and format.
- Clarity over the **development of an associated implementation plan**, which will, amongst other things, more clearly define:
    - **specific targets** for extending canopy in rural, agroforestry and urban settings;
    - delivery through assisted **natural regeneration**;
    - the tree **planting plan** and comprehensive **monitoring** process.
- **Clarity over** how the Strategy's delivery will be **monitored and reported on** and how this will be **resourced**.
- Re-emphasise the role that assisted natural regeneration will play in meeting tree establishment targets.
- Ensure sufficient attention is given to the **protection of existing tree stock** and, in particular, considers the impact of development and growth.

- Reassurance of the **long-term security of new trees** delivered under the Strategy, including management, maintenance and monitoring.
- Further detail on how the Strategy might deliver **targeted action for biodiversity** and specific woodland species.
- Ensure the Strategy properly **reflects the challenges** of tree establishment and how action might help tackle these.
- Ensure the Strategy fully **reflects and demonstrates Kent County Council's commitment** to this agenda.

2   Background and Methodology

2.1   Background information

, Kent County Council (KCC) carried out a public consultation for feedback on our proposed Tree Establishment Strategy. The Strategy presents Kent County Council's ambitions for increasing trees and extending tree canopy cover in Kent and the principles that should underpin any tree establishment. The draft Strategy also outlines what objectives we want to deliver by extending tree cover in Kent and delivering Plan Tree and the action we will take over the next 10 years to realise these ambitions and objectives.

2.2   Purpose of the consultation

The consultation gave the public, partnership organisations and stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Strategy's targets, objectives, the principles for tree establishment and the KCC action plan before it is finalised and adopted.

The feedback received from the consultation questionnaire has helped us identify the level of public support for the ambitions and objectives of the Strategy and to consider any further possible impacts (both positive and negative) of the KCC action plan.

2.3   Purpose of this report

This report presents the analysis and findings of the responses to the public consultation. In addition, the report summarises the consultation process and the engagement and promotional activities that took place. The report also explains how the feedback will be used and identifies the next steps for the Strategy.

2.4   Decision making process

Opinions shared through the consultation will be used to help finalise the Strategy before it is formally presented to the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on 8 September 2022 for their endorsement for adoption by the Cabinet Member for Environment.

3   Consultation Process

3.1   Pre-consultation activity

Members of KCC's Natural Environment and Coast team have been engaging with delivery partners throughout the development of the Strategy. Presentations were made to the Kent Nature Partnership, Kent Carbon Reduction and Climate Change Network, Kent & Medway Environment Group, and the Joint Kent Chiefs.

3.2   Stakeholder identification

KCC's stakeholder identification and mapping work highlighted the following groups to be engaged with during the consultation:

- Residents / general public
- Kent County Council Members and staff
- District / Borough Councils
- Town / Parish Councils
- The Kent Downs and High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Units
- Kent's Countryside Management Partnerships
- Government agencies, including Forestry Commission, Natural England, and Environment Agency
- Environmental charities, including Woodland Trust, Kent Wildlife Trust, and RSPB
- Landowners, land managers and farmers, plus association bodies such as National Farmers Union and Country Land and Business Association.
- Kent Tree Warden Network
- Kent Association of Local Councils
- Community and volunteer groups, such as The Kent Men of the Trees
- Businesses
- Schools

3.3   Consultation activities

All consultation documents were made available via the Let's Talk Kent engagement website[1] and an online questionnaire captured feedback and collated comments. A copy of the consultation questionnaire is provided in Appendix 1. Hard copy responses and general comments outside of the questionnaire were welcomed. Alternative formats, including hard copies, were available on request. Links and banners to the consultation webpage were setup from service pages and the Kent.gov homepage.

There was a KCC press release and promotion through various channels to stakeholder organisations and partners, including district and borough councils and groups representing and/or working with protected characteristic groups. The consultation was promoted through posters at Kent libraries and country parks. The consultation was also featured in KCC's residents' e-newsletter on 29 April 2022. A promotional email footer was designed and added as a signature to all KCC Natural Environment and Coast team emails.

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[1] Plan Tree: Kent County Council's Tree Establishment Strategy 2022-2032 | Let's talk Kent

Social media included posts on KCC's corporate Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram; Kent Green Action Twitter and Facebook; and Kent's Plan Bee Facebook. A paid-for two-week Facebook advertisement campaign was commissioned, to promote the social media posts.

In addition, an email invite was sent to 6,500 individuals and organisations registered with Let's Talk Kent, who have expressed an interest in hearing about consultations to do with environment and countryside, public health and wellbeing and general interest. And the consultation was promoted within the council to KCC staff via the intranet, e-newsletters, and other staff communications channels.

During the consultation period, the draft Tree Establishment Strategy was downloaded 1,742 times. The consultation webpage was visited 5,018 times by 4,568 visitors.

3.4   How did you find out about this consultation? (question 3)

There were 571 responses to this question from 561 respondents (note: respondents were able to select multiple responses). The results are shown below.
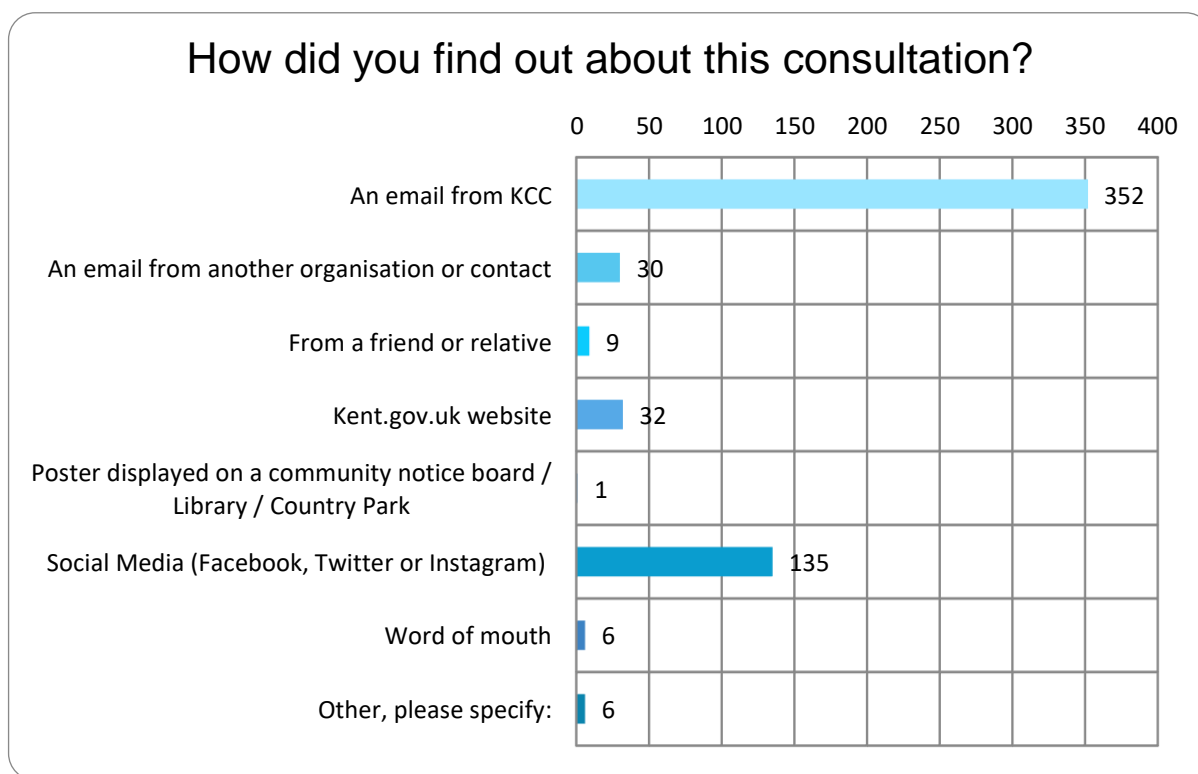
3.5   Feedback mechanism

This consultation report has been published on the consultation page and with a link to the final Strategy. The 'Due Regard' chapter of this report demonstrates how the consultation responses have influenced the final Strategy.

4   Response Profile

This chapter summarises the number of consultation responses received, respondent demographics and the capacity in which they responded. There was a total of 569 responses to the consultation, of which 561 were received online, the others as direct emails or letters.

4.1   Respondent demographics

Data was collected using the 'More about you' questions in Section 3 of the questionnaire (question 14 to question 21). These questions are optional and are not asked of people responding on behalf of an organisation. Respondents were asked their gender (398 responses) and age group (402 responses). The largest proportion of respondents were in the 65-74 age bracket.
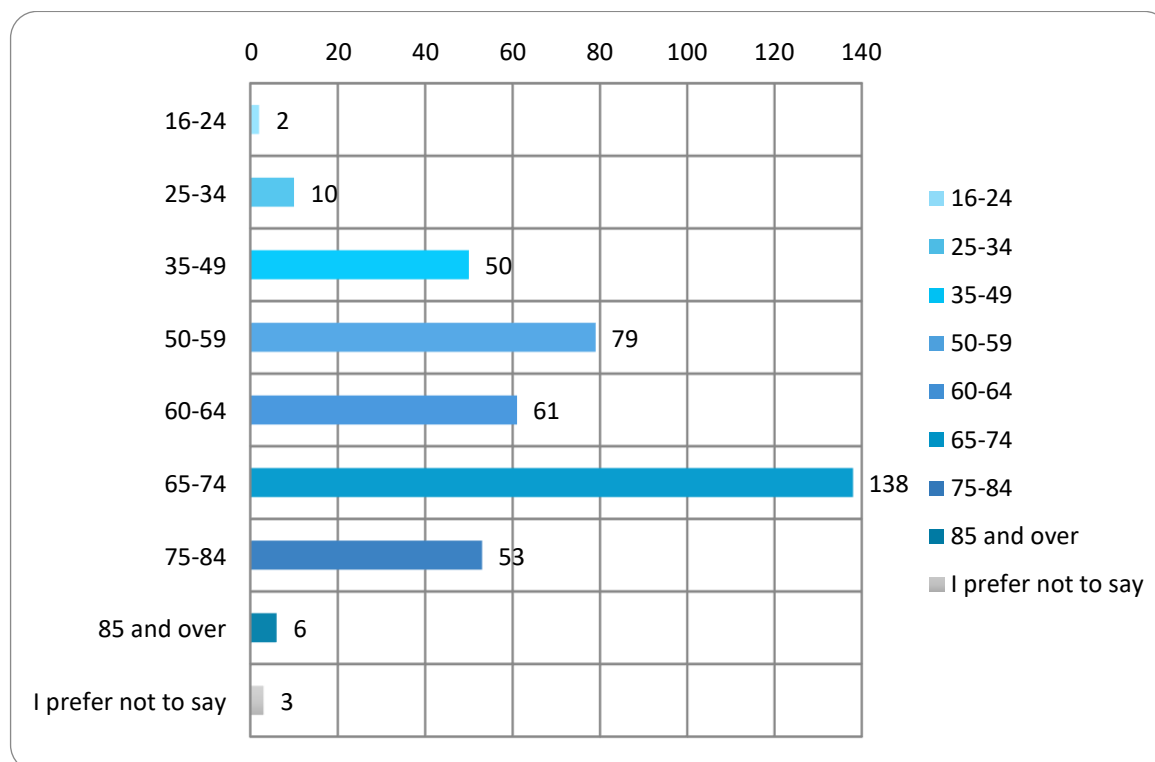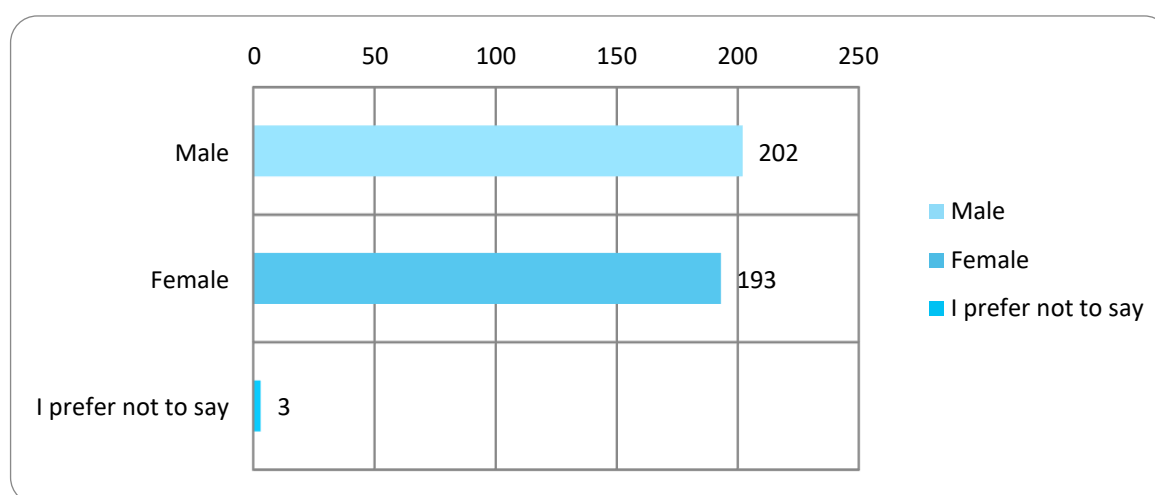
Respondents were asked if they considered themselves to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010. There were 403 responses to this question. A total of 51 considered themselves to be disabled, 339 did not, and 13 preferred not to say.
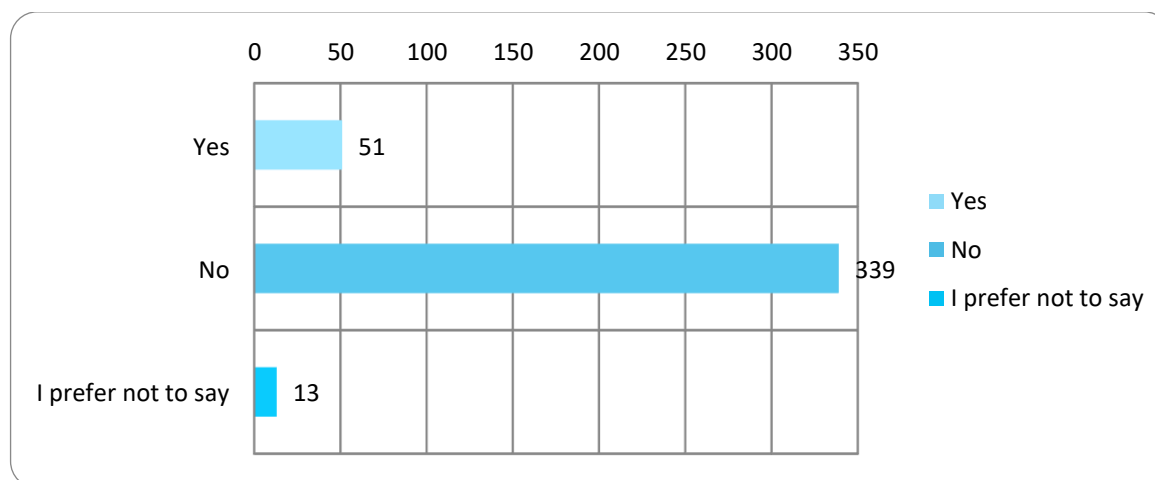
Of the 51 respondents who did consider themselves to be disabled (note: respondents could select as many disabilities as applicable):

- 28 have a physical impairment
- 12 has a sensory (hearing, sight) impairment
- 20 have a longstanding illness or health condition
- 11 have a mental health condition
- 5 have a learning disability
- 4 selected 'other'

Respondents were asked whether they are a Carer. There were 399 responses to this question. With 58 caring for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction could not cope without their support.
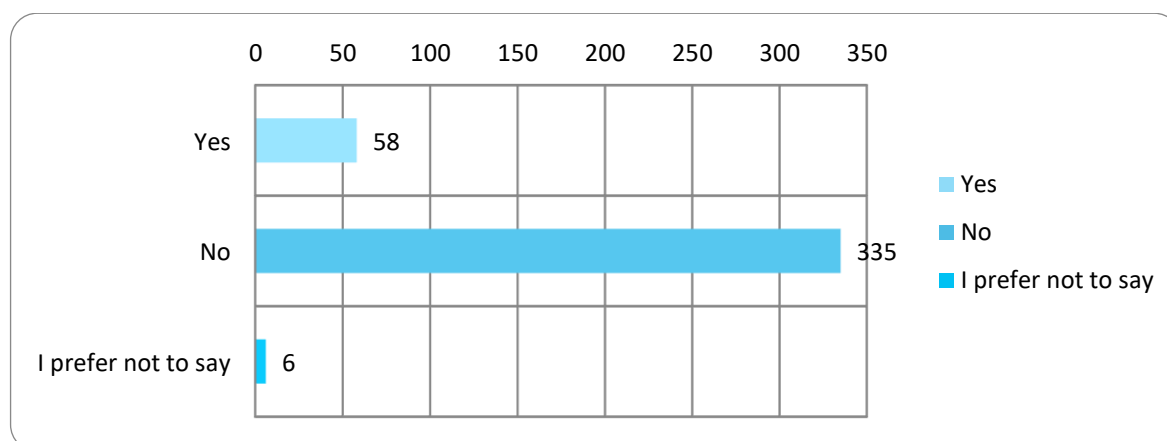
4.2   Respondent groups

Respondents were asked who they were responding on behalf of (question 1). Most responded as 'Yourself as an individual', with the second highest group responding as 'Yourself in a professional capacity'.
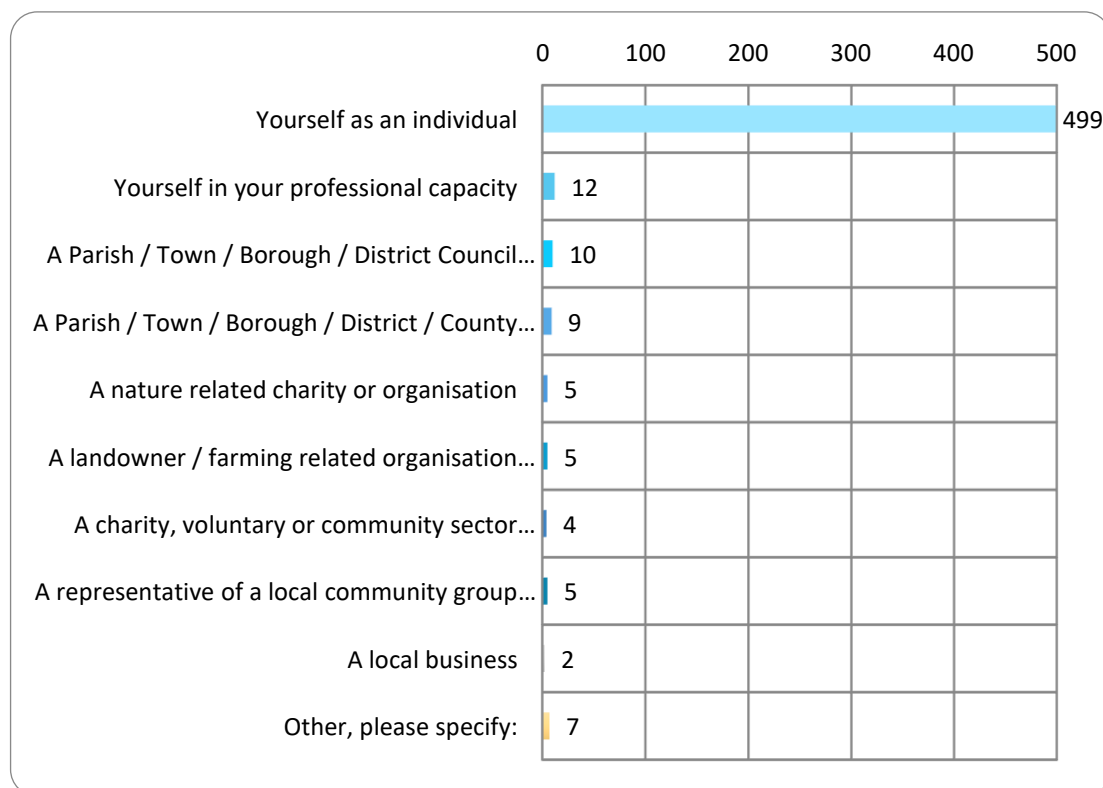
Responses were received from the following named authorities and organisations:

- 10th Deal Eastry Scout Group
- ACRA Alliance of Canterbury residents' associations
- Addington Parish Council
- Azets
- Bean Residents Association
- Bishopsbourne Parish Council
- British Horse Society
- Canterbury City Council
- Chartham Parish Council
- Dover District Council
- Eastry Parish Council
- Folkestone & Hythe District Council
- Friends of Dukes Meadow and Neals Place Meadow
- Friends of Duncan Down Whitstable (Gorrell Valley Nature Reserve)
- Friends of West Cliff Bank
- Hadlow Parish Council
- Horsmonden Parish Council
- Istead Rise Pétanque Club
- Kent County Council
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit (AONB)

- The Kent Men of the Trees
- Kent Nature Partnership
- Kent Tree and Pond Wardens
- Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership
- Kings Hill Parish Council
- Medway Valley Countryside Partnership
- Meopham Parish Council
- Minster Parish Council
- Poplar Close Management - Weavering, Maidstone
- Seal Parish Council
- Selling Bee Friendly Project
- Sevenoaks District Committee CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England)
- Sidcup and District Motorcycle Club Limited
- Southborough Town Council
- Southfleet Parish Council
- Swale Borough Council
- Teynham Parish Council
- Thanet Friends of the Earth
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- Trees for Farms
- Vigo Parish Council
- West Malling Parish Council

Free-form substantive responses were received from:

- Folkestone & Hythe District Council
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit (AONB)
- Kent Nature Partnership
- Seal Parish Council
- Sevenoaks District Committee CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England)
- The Kent Men of the Trees
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

5 Consultation Results

The consultation was carried out to determine the level of support for the proposed Strategy. Data was collected using the 'Your response to the Strategy' questions in Section 2 of the questionnaire.

5.1 Ease of understanding of the draft Plan Tree, KCC's Tree Establishment Strategy (question 4)

The majority of respondents, 90%, considered the draft Strategy easy to understand.

Yes	495
No	28
Don't know	29

Respondents were also asked if they had any suggestions on how to make the Strategy easier to understand. In response to the comments received, an executive summary will be included in the final Strategy that can be used as a standalone document that will be accessible to all audiences. In the finalisation of the designed document, opportunities to summarise elements of the Strategy with infographics will be considered along with a glossary at the end.

5.2 Level of agreement with ambition of extending tree cover by 1.5 million trees and the target of achieving an average tree canopy cover of 19% by 2050 (question 5)

86% either strongly agreed or tended to agree with the ambition of extending tree cover by 1.5 million.

Extending tree cover by 1.5 million trees

Strongly agree	394
Tend to agree	87
Neither agree nor disagree	42
Tend to disagree	25
Strongly disagree	9
Don't know	3
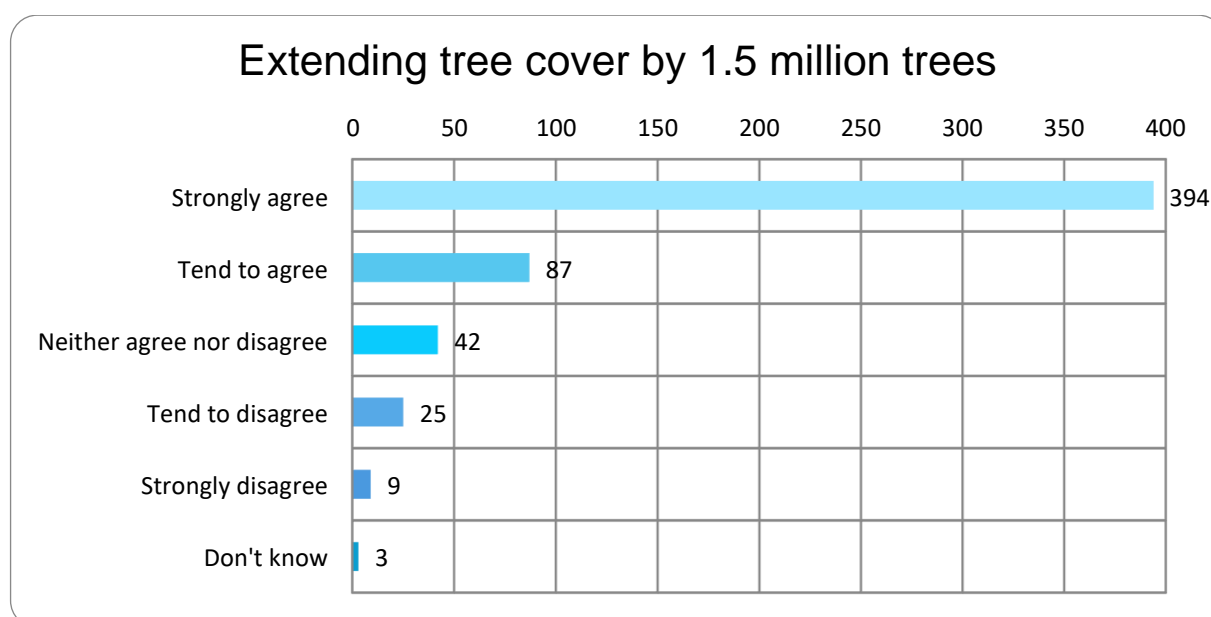
77% either strongly agreed or tended to agree with a target of achieving an average tree canopy cover of 19% by 2050.

Achieving an average tree canopy cover of 19% by 2050

Response	Value
Strongly agree	333
Tend to agree	94
Neither agree nor disagree	59
Tend to disagree	48
Strongly disagree	15
Don't know	5
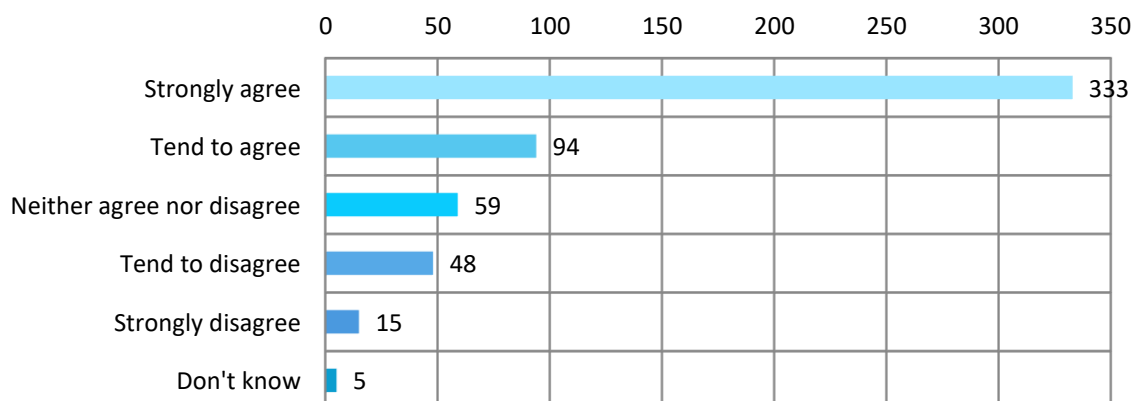
When respondents were not in agreement, they were asked to tell us the reason(s) from a list, with the option to provide their own reason.

There were a number of reasons selected for why respondents disagreed with the ambitions and/or targets of the Strategy (note: respondents could select as many reasons as applicable). Whilst important to consider these, it should be noted that these came from a minority of respondents – 6% disagreeing with the number of trees target and 11% disagreeing with the canopy cover target; and 8% and 12% respectively for the number of trees and canopy cover targets, who were undecided (answering neither agree/disagree or don't know).

The most common reason selected suggested that those that disagreed with the targets did so because they didn't consider them ambitious enough, wanting to see greater canopy cover and more trees in the target. Responses also suggested that they considered the targets inadequate to fight climate change.

Free-form comments provided further considerations for the Strategy's ambitions; these suggested the need for:

- Clear and defined tree establishment targets, accompanied by a tree planting plan, and rigorous monitoring process.
- Separate objectives for rural woodland (canopy cover) and local urban trees (green infrastructure).
- Opportunity mapping to determine the feasibility of the targets.
- More targeted assisted and natural regeneration, alongside manual tree planting.
- Long term security of establishment trees.
- Immediate and urgent action.
- Better protection and restoration of existing trees and woodland.
- Recovery of tree stock lost to disease, in particular ash trees.
- Consideration of quality and scale of woodland habitats created (not just number of trees).
- Providing specific habitat to support important or threatened Kent species, for example turtle dove and nightingale, and/or habitats that extend our species, such as beavers and pine martin.

More of the detailed feedback received in response to question 5 is provided in Appendix 2.

5.3   Level of agreement with the Strategy's objectives (question 6)

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the eight objectives the Strategy aims to deliver by extending tree cover in Kent.

The objectives have been ranked in order of popularity, based on the percentage of responses that 'Tend to agree' and 'Strongly agree'.

1	Reduce and reverse the decline of nature and loss of trees	95%
2	Address the decline of trees outside woodland and decline in urban trees	94%
3	Tackle the multiple threats to our trees	94%
4	Deliver nature-based solutions to some of the county's challenges	92%
5	Increase our knowledge and provide better protection	90%
6	Contribute to KCC's and the county's net zero targets	87%
7	Provide enhanced and improved recreation and amenity	86%
8	Realise the economic benefits	74%

The most popular objective was "Reduce and reverse the decline of nature and loss of trees".

Reduce and reverse the decline of nature and loss of trees

Strongly agree	451
Tend to agree	79
Neither agree nor disagree	15
Tend to disagree	10
Strongly disagree	3
Don't know	0
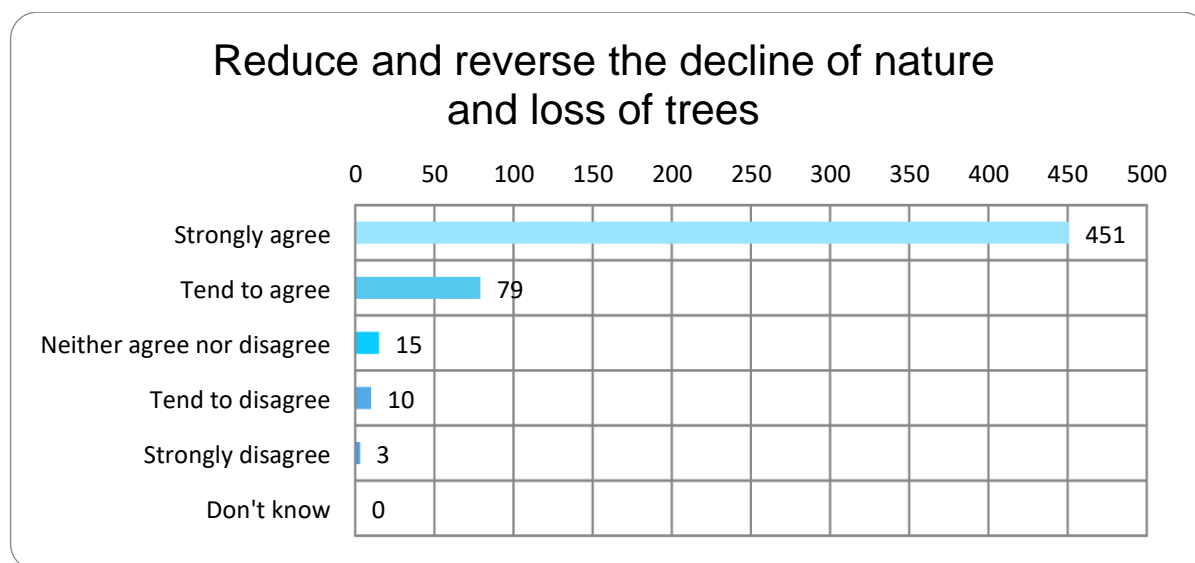
The least popular objective was "Realise the economic benefits" but this objective was still supported nonetheless, with only 5% of respondents selecting 'tend to disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with this least popular objective.

Realise the economic benefits

Response	Count
Strongly agree	245
Tend to agree	162
Neither agree nor disagree	109
Tend to disagree	19
Strongly disagree	10
Don't know	8
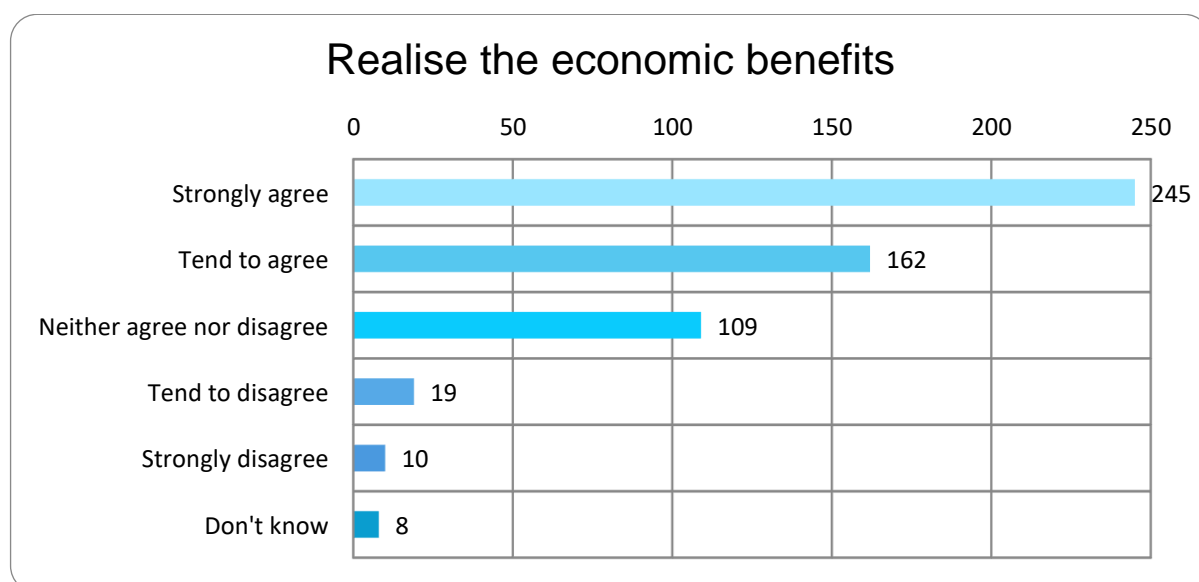
All the objectives of Plan Tree were well supported. The full breakdown of responses for all eight objectives is presented in Appendix 3.

Respondents were given the option to note whether or not there were other objectives that should be included in the Strategy. 37% of respondents thought there were, and these included:

- More protection for trees from housing development.
- Better provision for trees through new development.
- Delivery of urban trees for health and wellbeing benefits.
- Ensuring new woodland creation is accompanied by management, maintenance, and monitoring.
- Ensuring planting delivers diversity and enables engagement.
- Addressing land use conflicts, in particular in relation to food security.
- Delivering flood management through woodland creation.
- Securing long term funding.
- Economic benefits should also acknowledge the cultural aspects of trees, landscape character, and enhancing beauty.
- Conserve and enhance the beauty of the county's land and townscapes, including enhancing landscape character and quality.

More of the detailed feedback received in response to question 6 is provided in Appendix 2.

5.4   Level of agreement with the Strategy's four principles for tree establishment (question 7)

The Strategy outlines four principles for tree establishment in Kent that will ensure any tree establishment in the county will deliver benefits for Kent's wildlife, people, and the economy.

92% responded with 'tend to agree' or 'strongly agree' with the principle of better management and protection of existing stock:

Better management and protection of existing stock

Response	Value
Strongly agree	376
Tend to agree	138
Neither agree nor disagree	29
Tend to disagree	9
Strongly disagree	4
Don't know	2
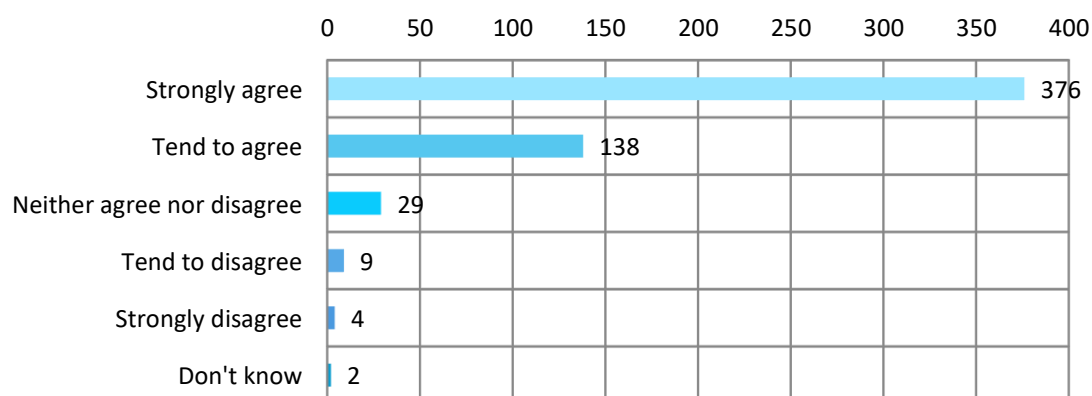
92% responded with 'tend to agree' or 'strongly agree' with the principle of the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason, with the right management:

The right tree, in the right place, for the right reason, with the righ management

Response	Value
Strongly agree	389
Tend to agree	126
Neither agree nor disagree	23
Tend to disagree	12
Strongly disagree	5
Don't know	2
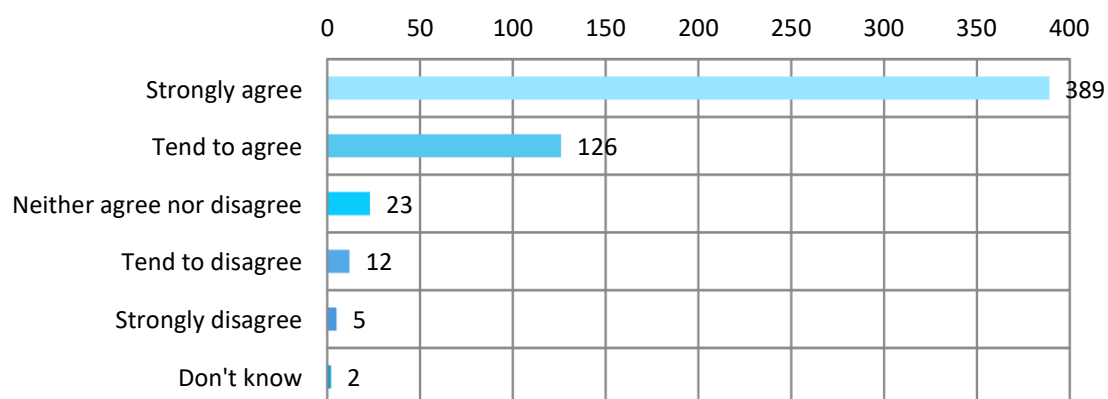
89% responded with 'tend to agree' or 'strongly agree' with the principle of deliver multiple benefits:

Deliver multiple benefits

Response	Count
Strongly agree	331
Tend to agree	158
Neither agree nor disagree	43
Tend to disagree	7
Strongly disagree	7
Don't know	5
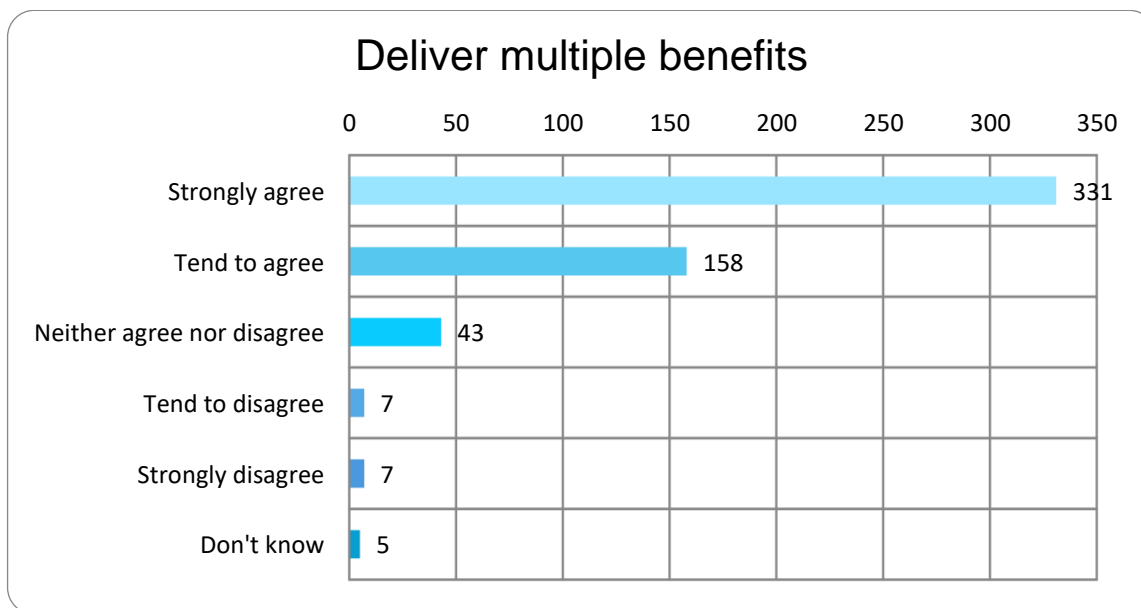
93% responded with 'tend to agree' or 'strongly agree' with the principle of ensure biosecurity of new tree stock through the application of strict standards:

Ensure biosecurity of new tree stock through the application of strict standards

Response	Count
Strongly agree	393
Tend to agree	120
Neither agree nor disagree	28
Tend to disagree	5
Strongly disagree	6
Don't know	2
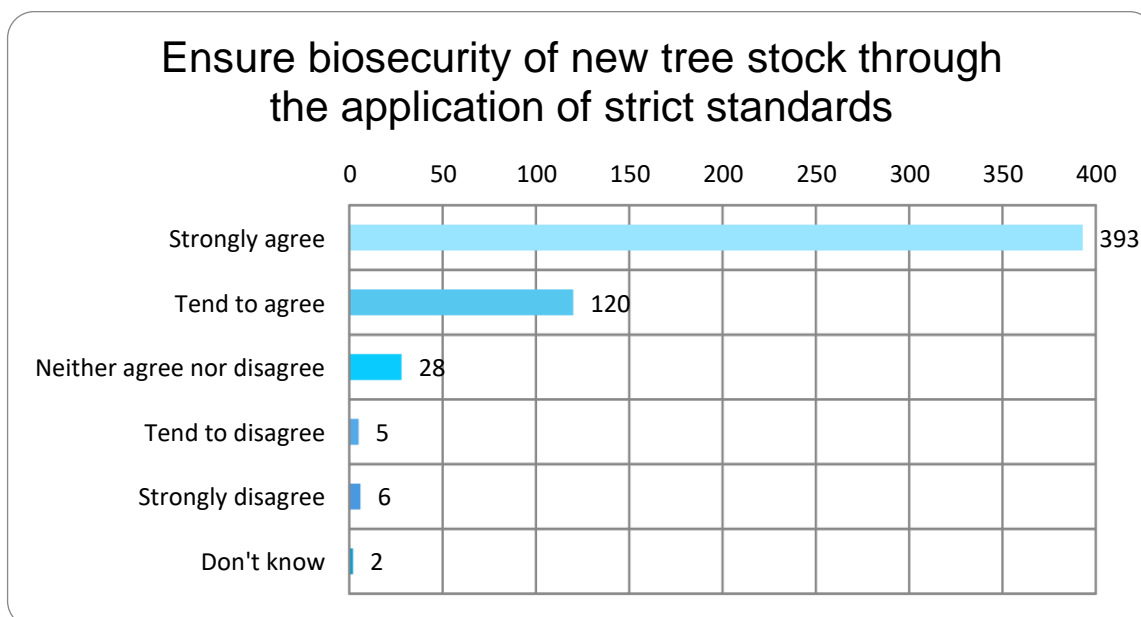
Respondents were given the option to note whether or not there were other principles for tree establishment that should be included in the Strategy. 26% of respondents thought there were, and comments on the principles included:

- Expanding the principle of better management and protection to specifically tackle the impact of development.
- Ensure protection and maintenance of new trees planting under the Strategy.
- How will the principle of right tree in right place, etc be applied?
- Delivery of habitat connectivity.
- Prioritising action in areas of Kent with less tree canopy cover.
- Consideration of potential negative impacts of more trees, for example in respect of allergies and infrastructure.

- Consideration of tree species, including ensuring they are resilient/adaptable to climate change and the Strategy's role in supporting/reintroducing endangered tree species.
- Involvement of local community and schools.
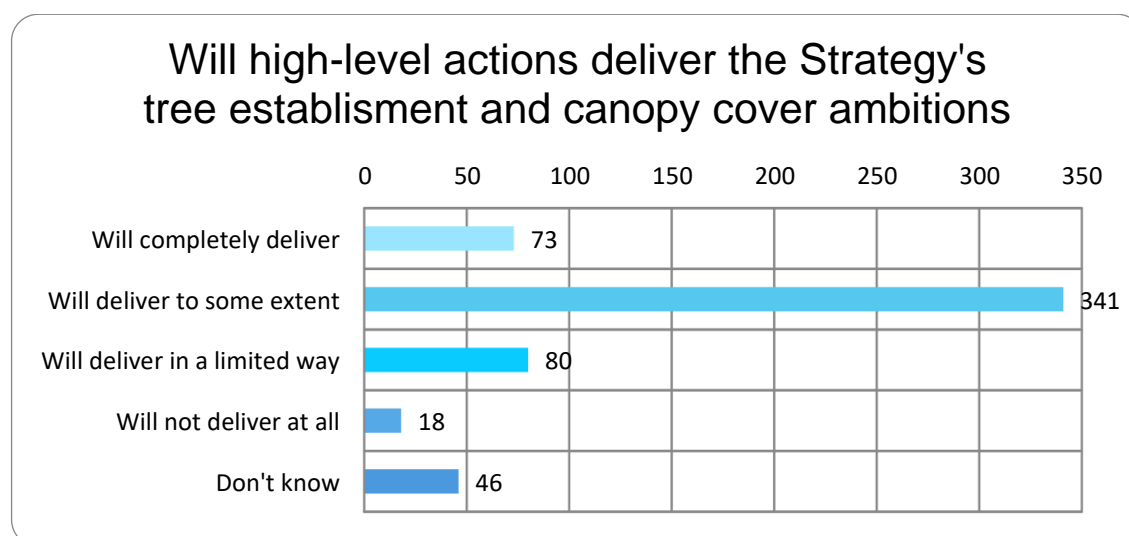- Delivering health and well-being benefits with accessible woodland near areas of deprivation.

More of the detailed feedback received in response to question 7 is provided in Appendix 2.

5.5 Will the Strategy's high-level actions deliver the tree establishment and tree canopy ambitions? (question 8)

The Strategy outlines the high-level actions we will take to deliver increased tree cover in Kent:

1. Deliver against the tree establishment target
2. Exemplar provision for trees on our own estate
3. Improve protection to trees in Kent
4. Improve our understanding of Kent's trees
5. Develop Kent carbon offset market for unavoidable emissions

74% of respondents thought these high-level actions were appropriate and 'will deliver to some extent' the ambition of 1.5 million new trees and a target of 19% average canopy cover by 2050?

Will high-level actions deliver the Strategy's tree establisment and canopy cover ambitions

Will completely deliver	73
Will deliver to some extent	341
Will deliver in a limited way	80
Will not deliver at all	18
Don't know	46

Respondents were given the option to note whether or not there were other actions that should be included in the Strategy. 34% of respondents thought there were, and focused on more detailed actions in relation to protection of trees and delivery and monitoring of tree establishment. Comments in respect of the high-level actions also highlighted the need for strengthening community engagement actions.

More of the detailed feedback received in response to question 7 is provided in Appendix 2.
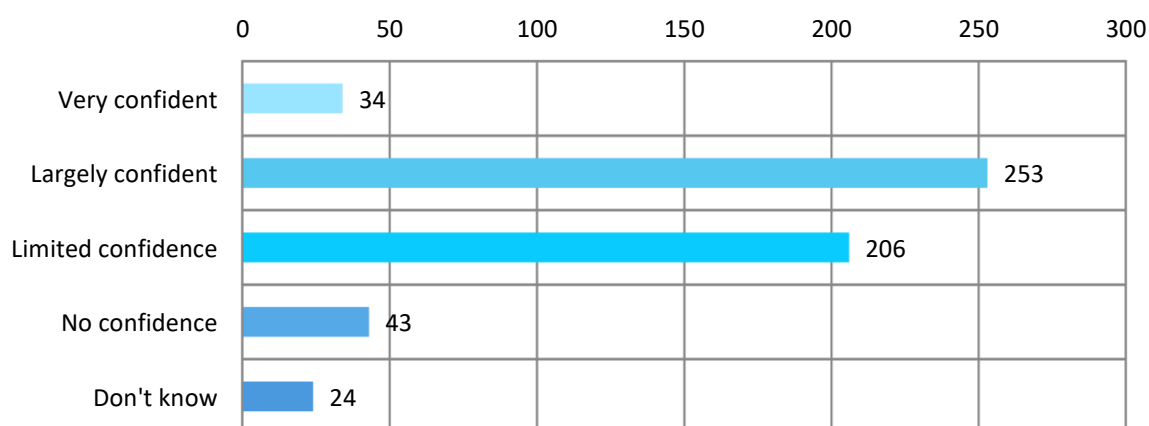
5.6 Delivery partners (question 9)

33% of respondents thought the suggested partner list on page 18 of the Strategy covered all potential delivery partners for tree establishment in Kent. The following additional delivery partners were suggested by respondents:

- Residents
- Parish Councils
- Schools, and Academy trusts
- Colleges and Universities
- Private Landowners
- Local planning
- Housing developers
- Construction/building companies
- Utilities companies (Water)
- Internal Drainage Board
- Local businesses
- Public sector landowners (NHS)
- Highways England (Kent Highways and Department of Transport)
- National Trust
- English Heritage
- Historic Houses Association
- Rural estate companies
- Commercial timber suppliers
- CPRE - The Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Wildwood Trust
- Urban Bees
- Plantlife
- Edible Culture in Faversham
- The Woodland Trust
- Trees for Farms
- Friends of the Earth
- Greenpeace

5.7 Confidence that the Strategy will deliver (question 10)

Respondents were asked, in consideration of the Strategy's principles for tree establishment and the action plan, to what extent were they confident that the Strategy will deliver on the ambition of 1.5 million trees and a target of 19% average canopy cover by 2050?

Confidence that the Strategy will deliver

Response	Count
Very confident	34
Largely confident	253
Limited confidence	206
No confidence	43
Don't know	24

51% of respondents were 'largely confident' or 'very confident' that the Strategy will deliver the ambitions for Kent. Explanations of any limits in confidence highlighted some of the delivery challenges and the need to demonstrate commitment to the Strategy:

- Contrasting principles with housing development prioritised ahead of tree preservation; more needs to be done to protect established trees.
- Levels of financial support and funding committed to the long-term goals of the Strategy; the need for continued resources for the lifetime of the Plan that won't be cut if budgets are stretched.
- Is the level of ambition enough to reverse the trees lost to development and Ash dieback?
- Land availability and competing priorities for this – will woodland creation be a priority?
- Urgency of the project and whether there is the drive to deliver the targets within the timescales.
- Feasibility work and an implementation project plan with annual metrics and milestones is required.

5.8   Tree establishment plans, targets and projects (question 11)

Respondents were asked to detail existing plans, targets, and projects for tree establishment. Responses to this question focussed more on new actions the respondent wished to see and/or partners that would like to be engaged. The detailed feedback received in response to question 11 is provided in Appendix 2.

6 Equality and Accessibility

The following steps were taken to help make the consultation accessible:

- Accessible PDFs of the draft Strategy and EqIA were provided to ensure accessibility for consultees using audio transcription software.
- Word version of questionnaire for anyone who could not or did not want to complete the online version.
- Large print versions of the draft strategy, EqIA and questionnaire were provided.
- All consultation documents and publicity material included an email address and telephone number for people to request hard copies of the documents or alternative formats.
- A mix of promotional activity took place both online (e.g., social media and emails) and in hard copy (e.g., posters).

6.1 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

The EqIA provides a process to help us understand how our proposals may affect people based on the protected characteristics (age, disability, sex, gender identity, race, religion / belief or none, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and carer's responsibilities).

A consultation stage EqIA was available on request and was included as one of the documents on the public consultation webpage: https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/plantree

The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was downloaded 22 times.

6.2 Feedback on the equality analysis (question 12)

Within the consultation questionnaire, respondents were given the opportunity to feedback on the EqIA. There were 25 responses to this question.

Several comments were received about ensuring access to woodland for low-income communities, vulnerable people, children, and the elderly. It was also noted that people of colour are twice as likely to live in areas with minimal access to green space; in the UK almost 40% of individuals from BAME backgrounds live in the most green-space deprived areas. Therefore, increased tree cover within the county is expected to deliver more positive equality impacts than negative.

Trees improve air quality and tackle other climate change effects, such as extreme heat and flooding. Children and young people, and the elderly and disabled people, who tend to suffer more from respiratory illnesses and the extremes of climate change therefore may benefit from increased tree cover. Studies have also shown poor air pollution levels are often found in areas of highest ethnic diversity and therefore improved air quality, as a result of increased trees, may also benefit this protected characteristic group.

Comments were made about Public Rights of Way when they pass through woodland, to ensure that wherever possible tracks are suitable for disabled people to use and enjoy. Inappropriate planting could restrict access or cause obstacles. Pathways should be wide enough, without obstructions that may impede blind/partially sighted, and capable of taking

the full weight of any disabled carriage, even on the wettest of days and they should be gated rather than using stiles. Safe access for walkers, bicycles, and pushchairs should also be considered.

This feedback has been used to review the EqIA.

The Strategy applies a clear principle of the right tree in the right place, and this will ensure that any tree planting does not have unintended consequences, including impacting access or causing obstacles. Likewise, it will be directed to where planting is needed, such as economically and greenspace deprived areas and urban areas; therefore the positive benefits of tree planting to protected groups can also be realised.

No amendments have been made as a result of the responses to question 12 but specific EqIAs will be undertaken as appropriate when elements of the Strategy are implemented.

7   Outcome of consultation

7.1   Key findings

The consultation had a good response rate and respondents have taken time to complete the questionnaire and detail their reasons for and against, with many well considered and valid comments received.

90% found the Strategy easy to understand, an executive summary will be included at the front of the final Strategy that can be used as a readily accessible standalone document.

Strategy ambitions

The consultation showed strong support for, and agreement with, the Strategy's ambition of extending tree cover by 1.5 million and a target of achieving an average tree canopy cover of 19% by 2050. The small minority that disagreed with the ambitions felt the targets were not ambitious enough and called for greater canopy cover and more trees in the target. This would suggest that even those that disagreed with the targets' figures, would still support the general aspiration of extending trees within the county.

Respondents want to see clearly defined targets, with a rigorous monitoring process in place. The consultation analysis also suggested that it would be valuable to define the targets in terms of delivery via rural woodland, agroforestry, and urban trees. And further, that assisted natural regeneration should be a clear mechanism for delivery, with associated targets.

The consultation illustrated that the protection and restoration of existing trees and woodland, and improving the condition of native and ancient woodland, are of primary importance to respondents.

It was also suggested in responses that targets should not necessarily focus on the number of trees planted, instead the quality of woodland habitats created and the scale of canopy cover.

Strategy objectives

The objectives of the Strategy were extremely popular. Reducing and reversing the decline of nature and loss of trees was the most popular objective with 95%, but over 85% of respondents agreed with seven of the eight objectives. Realising the economic benefits was the least popular, however over 74% still agreed with it as an objective.

Suggestions for further objectives indicated that respondents would like to see greater emphasis on protection of trees from development including restricting green space development. There was also the suggestion that the preferred policy should be for trees and hedges to be retained, rather than accepting the practice of replacement. And where trees are unavoidably lost, replacement trees should be mandated.

Plan Tree principles for tree establishment

There was again strong support for the Strategy's tree establishment principles, with over 89% agreed with all four.

As with feedback on the objectives, feedback on the principles again illustrated a desire for better protection for the trees we have within development management. Although we can look to strengthen this within the Strategy, we need to recognise the limitations of KCC's

influence over housing development that is determined by district and borough planning authorities.

Feedback also noted the need for the principles to ensure any new trees have appropriate protection and maintenance. The principle of "right management" was intended to cover this but it is agreed that we need to reinforce this message more clearly and address mechanisms needed to deliver this, such as conservation covenants.

Strategy action plan

The Strategy outlines the high-level actions we will take, some in partnership with others, to deliver increased tree cover in Kent. A large majority of respondents considered these actions appropriate and believed they would "deliver to some extent" the Strategy's ambitions and targets.

Many of the suggestions for additional actions were more appropriate for inclusion in the (to be developed) detailed Strategy implementation plan and these will be considered further in due course. Feedback also reinforced the strong message that more action was needed in respect of protecting existing trees and actions pertaining to this within the Strategy will be reviewed and built on.

Confidence in the Strategy's ability to deliver

The consultation showed that 45% of respondents had limited confidence that the Strategy will deliver the ambitions for Kent. Primary concerns that have contributed centred around a conflict of principles with targets for housing development, the level of funding and financial support, fears that environmental projects will be the first to be 'cut' and a lack of trust that climate concerns will be prioritised. It will therefore be important to report on, and promote, action taken under the Strategy to demonstrate a commitment from Kent County Council and its partners. It is hoped that the associated implementation plan for the Strategy will also go some way to allay delivery concerns.

Feedback also demonstrated concerns over the challenges that face tree establishment; these challenges need to be reflected within the Strategy to build confidence that they are understood and will be tackled alongside tree establishment.

Strategy delivery partners

The consultation received suggestions for specific delivery partners, many of which we are already engaged with.

The consultation made very clear that the high-level actions in the Strategy need to disseminate down to communities at a local level. Partnerships with Parish and Town Councils, and local community groups, will be key to the sustained mobilisation of the community.

7.2　Using the findings of the consultation

All the consultation responses will be considered during the finalisation of the Tree Establishment Strategy. Some key items to be addressed will include:

- Development of a standalone, executive summary in an accessible language and format.

- Clarity over the development of an associated implementation plan, which will, amongst other things, more clearly define:
  - specific targets for extending canopy in rural, agroforestry and urban settings
  - delivery through assisted natural regeneration
  - the tree planting plan and comprehensive monitoring process
- Clarity over how the Strategy's delivery will be monitored and reported on and how this will be resourced.
- Re-emphasise the role that assisted natural regeneration will play in meeting tree establishment targets.
- Ensure sufficient attention is given to the protection of existing tree stock and, in particular, considers the impact of development and growth.
- Reassurance of the long-term security of new trees delivered under the Strategy, including management, maintenance, and monitoring.
- Further detail on how the Strategy might deliver targeted action for biodiversity and specific woodland species.
- Ensure the Strategy properly reflects the challenges of tree establishment and how action might help tackle these.
- Ensure the Strategy fully reflects and demonstrates Kent County Council's commitment to this agenda.

In particular, in refining the Strategy and defining its delivery with the implementation plan, we will:

- Set specific goals and objectives for rural woodland canopy cover, agroforestry canopy cover, and local urban trees.
- Consider how much of the targets can be delivered through assisted natural regeneration.
- Consider how we monitor the ecological condition of native and ancient woodland.
- Ensure Plan Tree is linked up with the (Kent) Local Nature Recovery Strategy (development to commence late 2022), Plan Bee and other relevant strategies and targets.
- Develop an associated strategic implementation plan, with measurable actions. This will be developed following adoption of the Strategy.
- Identify schemes that enable and subsidise planting events for parishes and wards.
- Prioritise urban planting in areas identified with the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and Kent's Canopy Cover Assessment and in areas that deliver health and wellbeing and nature connectivity benefits, such as sites near healthcare and educational facilities.
- Opportunity map the land available for new green sites on Kent's local authority estate.
- Develop a list of potential sites where tree establishment is both suitable and desirable.
- Identify which sites are suitable for natural regeneration and those that will need advanced or supplementary planting.
- Evaluate the incentives available and develop strategies to encourage landowners to support the tree establishment ambitions by integrating more trees on their land.
- Assess at a high level the potential for sites to provide nature-based solutions, such as habitat connectivity, biodiversity net gain, carbon sequestration, nutrient neutrality mitigation, flood management, water quality and air quality benefits.

7.3   Where will the report go and next stages of the project

This consultation report will be uploaded to the consultation website www.kent.gov.uk/plantree and will be issued to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee. Respondents that registered to be kept informed will also be notified of its publication.

The revised Strategy will be presented to the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on 8th September 2022 for their endorsement for adoption by the Cabinet Member for Environment.

The final adopted Strategy will be published on kent.gov.uk. Following adoption, an associated strategic implementation plan, with measurable actions will be developed and this will also be published, in due course, on the KCC website.

APPENDIX 1 – Consultation questionnaire

Consultation Questionnaire

We would like to hear your views on Plan Tree, our draft Tree Establishment Strategy 2022 to 2032.

We have provided this feedback questionnaire for you to give your comments.

What information do you need before completing the questionnaire?
We recommend that you read the draft Strategy before filling in this questionnaire. All consultation material is available at www.kent.gov.uk/plantree or in hard copy on request.

If you have any questions regarding the Strategy, please email plantree@kent.gov.uk.

This questionnaire can be completed online at www.kent.gov.uk/plantree

Alternatively, fill in this paper form and return to:

Email: plantree@kent.gov.uk

Address: Natural Environment & Coast Team, Environment & Waste, Kent County Council, 1st Floor, Invicta House, Maidstone, ME14 1XX

Please ensure your response reaches us by midnight on 2 May 2022.

Privacy: Kent County Council (KCC) collects and processes personal information in order to provide a range of public services. KCC respects the privacy of individuals and endeavours to ensure personal information is collected fairly, lawfully, and in compliance with the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018. Read the full Privacy Notice at the end of this document.

Alternative formats: If you require any of the consultation material in an alternative format or language, please email: alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk or call: 03000 42 15 53 (text relay service number: 18001 03000 42 15 53). This number goes to an answering machine, which is monitored during office hours.

Section 1 – About you

Q1. Are you responding on behalf of …?

Please select the option from the list below that most closely represents how you will be responding to this consultation. *Please select **one** option.*

- ☐ Yourself as an individual
- ☐ Yourself in your professional capacity *(please specify below - Q1a)*
- ☐ A Parish / Town / Borough / District Council in an official capacity
- ☐ As a Parish / Town / Borough / District / County Councillor
- ☐ A government organisation or agency
- ☐ A nature related charity or organisation
- ☐ A landowner / farming related organisation or association
- ☐ An educational establishment, such as a school or college
- ☐ A charity, voluntary or community sector organisation (VCS)
- ☐ A representative of a local community group or residents' association
- ☐ A health organisation
- ☐ A local business
- ☐ Other, please specify:

Q1a. If you are responding in a professional capacity, please tell us what it is.
*Please write in **below**.*

Q1b. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation (business, community group, residents' association, council or any other organisation), please tell us the name of your organisation. *Please write in **below**.*

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Q2. Please tell us the first 5 characters of your postcode:

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Please do not reveal your whole postcode. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please use your organisation's postcode. We use this to help us to analyse our data. It will not be used to identify who you are.

Q3. How did you find out about this consultation? *Please select **all** that apply*

☐	An email from KCC
☐	An email from another organisation or contact
☐	From a friend or relative
☐	Kent.gov.uk website
☐	Poster displayed on a community notice board / Library / Country Park
☐	Social media (Facebook, Twitter or Instagram)
☐	Word of mouth
☐	Other, please specify:

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Section 2 – Your response to the Strategy

Q4. Was the draft Plan Tree KCC's Tree Establishment Strategy easy to understand? *Please select **one** option.*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

Q4a. If you have any suggestions on how to make the strategy easier to understand, please tell us in the box below. If your suggestion relates to a specific section/page please provide details.

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with …?
*Please select **one** option per row.*

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The **ambition** of extending tree cover by 1.5 million trees						
A **target** of achieving an average tree canopy cover of 19% by 2050						

Q5a. If you answered, 'Neither agree nor disagree', Tend to disagree', 'Strongly disagree' or 'Don't know' to Q5, please tell us why? *Please select **all** that apply*

☐ Net zero should be delivered by other means

☐	Not achievable
☐	Not ambitious enough, inadequate to fight climate change
☐	Not right or appropriate for Kent's landscape
☐	More trees are not needed
☐	Public money should not be invested in tree planting
☐	Targets are not focused on what is needed
☐	Targets need to be clearer and more enforceable
☐	Targets should not focus on the number of trees planted and rather the quality and scale of the woodland habitats created
☐	Targets should include the area of natural regeneration (wildwoods and wood pasture)
☐	Targets should separate out objectives for rural woodland (canopy cover) and local urban trees (green infrastructure)
☐	The managed natural regeneration (rewilding) approach in the Strategy is the most environmentally responsible
☐	Too ambitious
☐	We have enough trees and would prefer other types of habitat restoration and creation
☐	Would like to see greater canopy cover
☐	Would like to see more trees in the target
☐	Would prefer investment in other carbon rich habitats
☐	We should focus on protecting and restoring the woodland we already have
☐	Other, please specify:

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By extending tree cover in Kent (through both natural regeneration and planting), we aim to deliver a number of objectives. (See pages 8 to 11 in the Strategy.)

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following objectives:
*Please select **one** option per row/objective.*

Objectives	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know

			disagree			
Contribute to KCC's and the county's net zero targets						
Reduce and reverse the decline of nature and loss of trees						
Tackle the multiple threats to our trees						
Deliver nature-based solutions to some of the county's challenges						
Provide enhanced and improved recreation and amenity						
Address the decline of trees outside woodland and decline in urban trees						
Realise the economic benefits						
Increase our knowledge and provide better protection						

Q6a. Are there any other objectives not included in the Strategy that you think should be? *Please select **one** option.*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

Q6b. If 'Yes', please provide details briefly in the box below:

The Strategy outlines four principles for tree establishment in Kent that will ensure any tree establishment in the county will deliver benefits for Kent's wildlife, people and the economy. Any tree establishment will follow these principles. (See pages 12 to 14 in the Strategy)

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the four principles will deliver extended tree canopy cover that also provides for wildlife, people and economy? *Please select **one** option for each row/principle.*

Principles	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Better management and protection of existing stock						
The right tree, in the right place, for the right reason, with the right management						
Deliver multiple benefits						
Ensure biosecurity of new tree stock through application of strict standards						

Q7a. Are there any other principles for tree establishment not included in the Strategy that you think should be? *Please select **one** option.*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

Q7b. If 'Yes', please provide details briefly in the box below:

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The Strategy outlines the high-level actions we will take, some in partnership with others, to deliver increased tree cover in Kent:

1. Deliver against the tree establishment target
2. Exemplar provision for trees on our own estate
3. Improve protection to trees in Kent
4. Improve our understanding of Kent's trees
5. Develop Kent carbon offset market for unavoidable emissions

(See pages 16 to 17 in the Strategy)

Q8. To what extent are these high-level actions appropriate for the delivery of an ambition of 1.5 million new trees and a target of 19% average canopy cover by 2050? *Please select **one** option.*

☐	Will completely deliver
☐	Will deliver to some extent
☐	Will deliver in a limited way
☐	Will not deliver at all
☐	Don't know

Q8a. Are there any other actions that should be included in the Strategy? *Please select **one** option.*

	Yes
	No
	Don't know

Q8b. If 'Yes', please detail briefly in the box below:

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We believe collaboration and partnership working will be key to delivering on the ambition of 1.5 million trees established in Kent by 2050.

Q9. Does the suggested partner list on page 18 of the Strategy cover all potential delivery partners for tree establishment in Kent? *Please select **one** option.*

	Yes
	No
	Don't know

Q9a. If 'No', please tell us which delivery partners for tree establishment in Kent are missing in the box below:

Q10. Based on Plan Tree's principles for tree establishment and our action plan, to what extent are you confident that the Strategy will deliver on the ambition of 1.5 million trees and a target of 19% average canopy cover by 2050? *Please select **one** option.*

- ☐ Very confident
- ☐ Largely confident
- ☐ Limited confidence
- ☐ No confidence
- ☐ Don't know

Q10a. Please use the box below to explain any limits to your confidence:

Q11. If you have any tree establishment plans, targets or projects not covered in the draft Strategy, please use the box below to let us know of them:

To help ensure that we are meeting our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 we have prepared an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) on our draft Strategy.

An EqIA is a tool to assess the impact any proposals would have on the protected characteristics: age, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion, and carer's responsibilities. The EqIA is available online at www.kent.gov.uk/plantree or on request.

Q12. We welcome your views on our equality analysis and if you think there is anything we should consider relating to equality and diversity, please add any comments below:

Section 3 – More about you

We want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and equally, and that no one gets left out. That's why we are asking you these questions. We'll use it only to help us make decisions and improve our services.

If you would rather not answer any of these questions, you don't have to.

It is not necessary to answer these questions if you are responding on behalf of an organisation.

Q13. Are you…? *Please select **one** option.*

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ I prefer not to say

Q14. Is your gender the same as your birth? *Please select **one** option.*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I prefer not to say

Q15. Which of these age groups applies to you? *Please select **one** option.*

| 0-15 ☐ | 16-24 ☐ | 25-34 ☐ | 35-49 ☐ | 50-59 ☐ |
| 60-64 ☐ | 65-74 ☐ | 75-84 ☐ | 85+ over ☐ | I prefer not to say ☐ |

Q16. Do you regard yourself as belonging to a particular religion or holding a belief? *Please select **one** option.*

	Yes
	No
	I prefer not to say

Q16a. If you answered 'Yes' to Q16, which of the following applies to you? *Please select **one** option.*

	Christian
	Buddhist
	Hindu
	Jewish
	Muslim
	Sikh
	Other
	I prefer not to say

If you selected Other, please specify:

The Equality Act 2010 describes a person as disabled if they have a long standing physical or mental condition that has lasted, or is likely to last, at least 12 months; and this condition has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People with some conditions (cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS, for example) are considered to be disabled from the point that they are diagnosed.

Q17. Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?
*Please select **one** option.*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I prefer not to say

Q17a. If you answered 'Yes' to Q17, please tell us the type of impairment that applies to you.

You may have more than one type of impairment, so please select all that apply. If none of these applies to you, please select 'Other' and give brief details of the impairment you have.

☐ Physical impairment

☐ Sensory impairment (hearing, sight or both)

☐ Longstanding illness or health condition, such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, diabetes or epilepsy

☐ Mental health condition

☐ Learning disability

☐ I prefer not to say

☐ Other

Other, please specify:

A Carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support. Both children and adults can be carers.

Q18. Are you a Carer? *Please select **one** option.*

	Yes
	No
	I prefer not to say

Q19. **To which of these ethnic groups do you feel you belong?** *Please select **one** option.* (Source 2011 Census)

White English		Mixed White & Black Caribbean	
White Scottish		Mixed White & Black African	
White Welsh		Mixed White & Asian	
White Northern Irish		Mixed Other*	
White Irish		Black or Black British Caribbean	
White Gypsy/Roma		Black or Black British African	
White Irish Traveller		Black or Black British Other*	
White Other*		Arab	
Asian or Asian British Indian		Chinese	
Asian or Asian British Pakistani		I prefer not to say	
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British Other*			

*Other - If your ethnic group is not specified on the list, please describe it here:

Q20. Are you …? *Please select **one** option.*

	Heterosexual/Straight

	Bi/Bisexual
	Gay man
	Gay woman/Lesbian
	Other
	I prefer not to say

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire; your feedback is important to us. All feedback received will be reviewed and considered in the development of our Strategy.

We will report back on the feedback we receive, but details of individual responses will remain anonymous and we will keep your personal details confidential.

Closing date for responses: 2 May 2022

APPENDIX 2 – Detailed feedback

Question 5 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the ambition of extending tree cover by 1.5 million trees and the target of achieving an average tree canopy cover of 19% by 2050?

The results of the feedback to why respondents did not agree with the targets are presented in the table below (note: respondents could select as many reasons as applicable).

A small number of additional themes were prominent among the free-form substantive and individual email responses to the consultation. Responses stressed the importance of setting clear targets for tree establishment and having a rigorous monitoring process in place, so that the County Council's aspirations are achieved *in addition* to the tree planting plans of district councils and other organisations, to make sure that each organisation contributes all that it can and there is no double-counting of new trees and woodlands by different bodies.
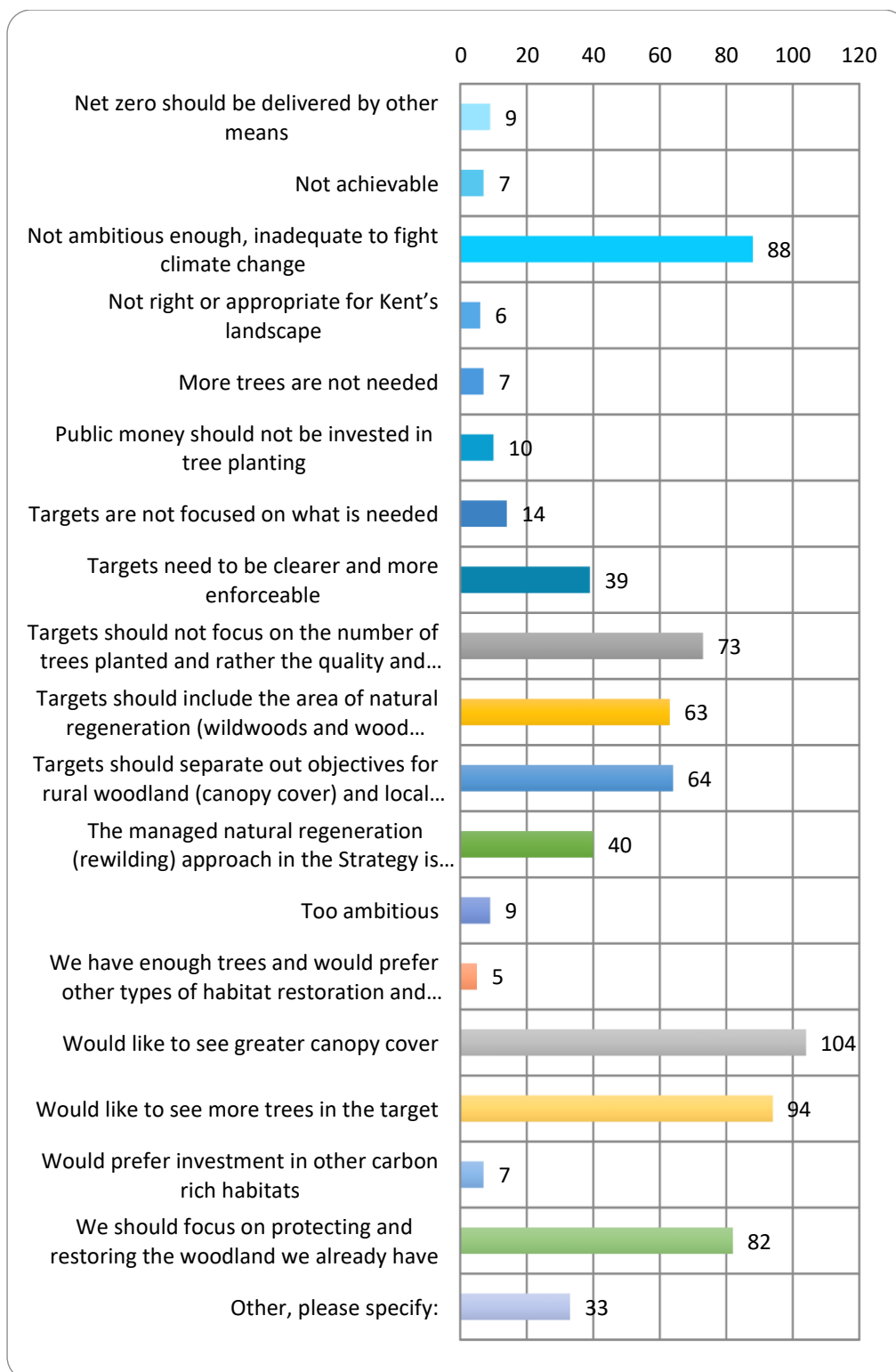
The feasibility of the targets needs to be assessed with opportunity mapping and a tree planting plan, to ensure the extent to which partners can contribute (e.g., available land, staffing resources, and funding).

Responses argued that assisted and natural regeneration (ANR) are more effective approaches to reforestation and are more environmentally responsible than manual tree planting (MTP). ANR should be targeted alongside MTP. Responses gave a series of reasons why this was preferable including the quality of habitats and clear benefits for nature recovery in Kent.

Definitions were discussed in depth, especially when (after how many years) a tree is defined as being *established* – this is not the same as when it is planted. We should ensure that our targets for tree establishment and canopy increase are for the long term, so we only invest where we are confident, and that the carbon (and other ecosystems services benefits) is secure.

Responses highlighted the urgency to establish trees imminently to realise the benefits before 2040. There is limited real carbon benefit of newly planted trees before Year 15, therefore it is only the management and protection of existing woodlands that will help carbon targets in the short term.

Targets for protecting and restoration of existing trees and woodland are of primary importance, especially given our special national position regarding ancient woodland. The recovery of Ash Woodland and replacement of ash trees outside woodland should have a higher emphasis and needs careful thought. We can illustrate the impact of Ash Dieback and explain the importance of the Strategy in replacing the services (especially carbon sequestration) that the loss of Ash has caused.

Net zero should be delivered by other means	9
Not achievable	7
Not ambitious enough, inadequate to fight climate change	88
Not right or appropriate for Kent's landscape	6
More trees are not needed	7
Public money should not be invested in tree planting	10
Targets are not focused on what is needed	14
Targets need to be clearer and more enforceable	39
Targets should not focus on the number of trees planted and rather the quality and…	73
Targets should include the area of natural regeneration (wildwoods and wood…	63
Targets should separate out objectives for rural woodland (canopy cover) and local…	64
The managed natural regeneration (rewilding) approach in the Strategy is…	40
Too ambitious	9
We have enough trees and would prefer other types of habitat restoration and…	5
Would like to see greater canopy cover	104
Would like to see more trees in the target	94
Would prefer investment in other carbon rich habitats	7
We should focus on protecting and restoring the woodland we already have	82
Other, please specify:	33

Respondents argue that targets should not necessarily focus on the number of trees planted; the quality of woodland habitats created, as well as the scale, is frequently mentioned in this context. Also, targets should separate out objectives for rural woodland (canopy cover) and local urban trees (green infrastructure).

Potential areas for targets to be set that are mentioned include (but are not limited to):

1. Rural woodland canopy cover (ANR, MTP)
2. Agroforestry canopy cover (integrating and the cultivation of trees)
3. Local urban trees - green infrastructure (MTP)
4. Ecological condition of native and ancient woodland (key species monitoring, proportion of trees: reaching maturity, lost to disease)

Targets could also be more focussed on delivery and outcomes, for example:

- Providing specific habitats for species such as the turtle dove and nightingale.
- Exploring the possibilities to expand unique habitats such as wet woodland and forests to create nature corridors for wildlife to further the range of species such as beavers and pine martins.
- Expanding Kent's heritage of wildlife rich old orchards by creating new village orchards.
- Working with residents to identify urban areas where they wish to see trees planted.

Question 6a – Are there other objectives that should be included in the Strategy?

Respondents were asked to tell us the reason(s) for answering 'Yes to Q6a. In analysing the 'free text' responses, they have been categorised into common themed groups.

The most common reason was that respondents wanted to see more protection for trees from housing development. (52 comments). Respondents want to reduce the amount of land being developed (mainly for housing) and protect and retain all types of trees, including, urban, garden, mature/veteran trees (not just ancient), heritage trees, and significant landscape trees. They want to protect what is already there, with a much stronger emphasis on restricting development of green space, with a preference for brownfield, and retaining existing trees and hedges, rather than accepting the practice of replacement.

It is important to note that Kent County Council does not have a statutory influence over planning and local plans from an ecological perspective. We can only advise on environmental and protective species policy and legislation.

The second theme covers a variety of concerns that will be addressed by mandatory biodiversity net gain (39 comments). Respondents wanted to ensure that when new housing developments happen, they should be planned around existing trees, and there should be greater power to impose and enforce environmental covenants on developers, so that they provide enough replacement trees and shrubs to enhance the environment.

The Government's response to the 2018 consultation on net gain set out that there would be a 2-year implementation for mandatory biodiversity net gain once the Environment Bill received Royal Assent and became the Act (which happened on 9 November 2021). Kent County Council will take a strategic lead as a statutory consultee and will be applying the principles of biodiversity net gain.

For understandable reasons there seems to be a lack of awareness about the introduction Biodiversity New Gain (biodiversity net gain), however respondents see the need and understand the concept that development projects need to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.

The other prominent additional themes argued that:

- There needs to be much more importance put on urban trees (particularly town and city centres) for health and well-being. The focus should be on scaling up street trees in the areas that most need it. Perhaps working with parish and town councils to retrofit street trees in areas where so many have been felled and not replaced. There are suggestions to encourage householders to plant wildlife strips in their gardens and select small native trees that provide good wildlife habitats.
- New woodland habitats must be created to a high standard and managed, maintained, and monitored for the long-term. All too often saplings are abandoned after planting, watering does not take place, tree supports are not looked after, and tree guards are not removed (and reused or recycled) at the specified time.
- Tree planting should be more random, avoiding straight lines, with a diverse mix of species to minimise the risk of pests and to provide (and connect) habitats for a diverse population of creatures. Shrubbery, low level woody plants should be considered for land not suitable for trees. Non-native ornamental trees should be avoided where possible. Although, non-native fruit and nut trees might be an exception, so people are encouraged to forage and engage with the natural world.
- The diversity can be increased by planting some specialist non-native species. This is especially important in the light of climate change. We need to plant trees which cope well in drought and to plant more evergreen trees which extract greater amounts of carbon from the atmosphere.
- The Strategy needs to recognise the implications of planting woodland on land that is currently farmed (Agroforestry). For example, considerations might avoid planting on the most productive farmland. There needs to be more engagement about the possibilities to integrate trees with either crops or livestock on the same land, to achieve additional benefits in comparison to keeping agriculture and trees separate.
- The Strategy should do more to inspire woodland creation as a flood prevention measure.

A small number of additional themes were prominent among the free-form substantive and individual email responses to the consultation

- Consider strengthening the section titled - Partners and funding. There is a need to secure and ring-fence long-term funding. The current funding plan is targeted at the short term specifically new planting plus three years. It will be difficult to support the ongoing care especially within the urban environment and the new planting will only be sustainable if the Strategy provides for the longer term.
- There needs to be clarification when discussing net zero targets, whereby planting on organisations land contributes to their own emission reduction targets. On a wider scale it all contributes to 2050 target, but clarification would ensure the local authorities and partner organisations can claim carbon savings for themselves for their own environmental reporting and targets.
- Realise the economic benefits should consider the cultural aspects of trees, landscape character and enhancing beauty.
- Realise the economic benefits should consider objectives around timber and wood innovation, especially longevity, so we only invest where we are confident, and that the carbon (and other ecosystems services benefits) is secure.
- Consider a new objective to conserve and enhance the beauty of the County's land and townscapes, including enhancing landscape character and quality.

Question 7a – Are there other principles for tree establishment that should be included in the Strategy?

Respondents were asked to tell us the reason(s) for answering 'Yes to Q7a. In analysing the 'free text' responses, they have been categorised into common themed groups.

The most common reason was the principle of protecting the trees we already have. Stricter policies for tree preservation to stop tree felling for housing development (28 comments). Comments reinforced support for the first principle and included examples of how the principle could be delivered:

- Housing building and development is excessive, green spaces need better protection.
- Ancient woodland sites are irreplaceable. Keep older trees and orchards as a priority.
- Every tree, hedge, or green space is an asset that cannot be easily replaced
- Local planning should take tree preservation more seriously
- Protect what we have with stronger enforcement
- Design housing estates around the existing trees and wildlife
- Leave trees alone if they are healthy, encourage more green planting
- Ensure enough trees are planted to offset the pollution associated with the development.

- There were an additional 12 comments addressing the need for enforceable Biodiversity Net Gain (**biodiversity net gain**).

The second reason was the principle of providing ongoing protection and maintenance for the trees we plant under this scheme (21 comments). Comments highlighted issues that will be addressed with appropriate conservation covenants:

- Funding the ongoing management of increased tree stock
- Provisions for regular watering, weeding, and pruning
- Financial support for coppice
- Protection into perpetuity
- Policies to replace trees that are lost or cut down
- Policies to manage tree pests such as deer and the grey squirrel
- Policies to report tree diseases
- Understanding tree communities (the fungal and root networks in the soil)
- Removing glyphosate herbicide from management.
- Publishing the achievements for each area.

The other prominent additional themes discussed:

- How decisions are made to ensure the right tree in the right place. Whether each principle carries equal weight, should tackling climate change be the number one priority, who will make these decisions, the benefits of involving the local community in decision making, lots of suggestions about where we should plant, and the need for more positivity behind the intent to plant trees.
- Planting at appropriate densities with emphasis on building connectivity.
- The difference between east and west Kent. East Kent sadly has much less tree cover than west Kent. The Strategy should prioritise areas with low canopy cover with an emphasis on east Kent.
- The specifics of the constraints behind the right tree in the right place principle should consider the cultural aspects of trees, landscape character and natural beauty.
- The pros and cons of planting trees near to housing. Careful guidance to avoid blocked drains, tree roots penetrating underground pipework, problems with building foundations, and safety issues with roads and pavements.
- The best and worse trees for people with asthma or allergies; pollen can trigger a reaction (Birch pollen is one of the most allergenic).
- The choice of tree species regarding climate change adaptation and resilience. The time it takes before the trees have any sort of impact. How our existing flora and fauna are adapting to global warming.
- The inclusion of endangered species, conifer plantation, and Maritime pines in coastal areas.
- The need to involve the local community and to educate children, and train staff.

- Accessible woodland near areas of deprivation has greater potential to deliver health and well-being benefits.

Question 8a – Are there other actions that should be included in the Strategy?

Respondents were asked to tell us the reason(s) for answering 'Yes to Q8a. In analysing the 'free text' responses, they have been categorised into common themed groups.

The most common reasons were to improve the protection of trees in Kent (79 comments). Prominent suggestions for protection included:

- more emphasis on enforcement to 'stop the destruction' of mature trees
- strengthen existing protection measures (TPOs and conservation areas).
- resource local planning and building control properly to stop housing development
- stop building on green sites (woodland, farm, and meadow land), use brownfield land
- protect existing orchards, hedges, and meadows
- promote wildflowers on road verges (less mowing and weed killer)
- rethink the use of mature trees for biomass, whether locally grown or imported
- focus on planting native trees in large numbers as a safety net
- encourage tree planting within or close to new developments
- ensure the replacement trees are sufficient to balance the loss of a mature tree
- ensure the trees and hedgerows planted by developers are looked after

The second reason were ideas to improve delivery and sharpen our focus on our tree establishment targets (39 comments). Prominent suggestions for implementation included:

- a long-term funding Strategy including crowdfunding
- the urgency to plant sooner rather than later and be more ambitious
- a delivery trajectory with annual milestones.
- ideas for monitoring and reporting against the delivery trajectory
- an engagement programme to encourage landowners to participate
- factoring in woodland loss and trees lost to development
- a focus on urban trees, especially for the deprived areas of east Kent
- a focus on habitat creation for healthy ecosystems and priority species
- subsidising tree planting in gardens and schools
- avoiding commercial carbon offsetting schemes
- funding to purchase land for woodland creation

In terms of additional high-level actions, engagement with the local community runs through many of the prominent themed groups. Respondents highlighted the need to

- provide accessible woodland for better health and well-being
- subsidise and inform to promote planting in gardens and 'greening' homes
- encourage residents to identify sites for urban trees (brownfield sites)
- involve residents with planting and maintaining the trees
- educate in terms of recognising and reporting tree pests and diseases
- explore crowd fundraising opportunities for accessible woodland
- educate the next generation at schools.

We are grateful for all the ideas: we will review them and consider a community engagement plan for the next revision of the Strategy.

Question 11 – If you have any tree establishment plans, targets or projects not covered in the draft Strategy, please use the box below to let us know of them

Suggestions:
- Alignment with wider strategies from lower tier Local Authorities
- Direct and sustained mobilisation of the community
- Thousands more street trees
- Allow trees to emerge from hedgerows.
- Private individuals could be encouraged to plant trees in their gardens
- Concentrate on Thanet.
- More trees on roadside verges.
- More focus on rural areas.
- Consult with woodland owners
- Encouraging small community orchards in each village
- A survey of potential sites carried out by borough councils.
- The plan must include species, including a focus on levels of endangered species, and how these subsequently support other animal and insect endangered species.
- There should be an evergreen species target (carbon extraction).
- Developers should work more with Parish Councils to ensure green spaces on new housing developments are properly managed.
- Ancient woodland should be protected at all costs.
- Natural Flood Management projects across the Medway catchment
- Consult with the local communities
- Consider the tree nurseries
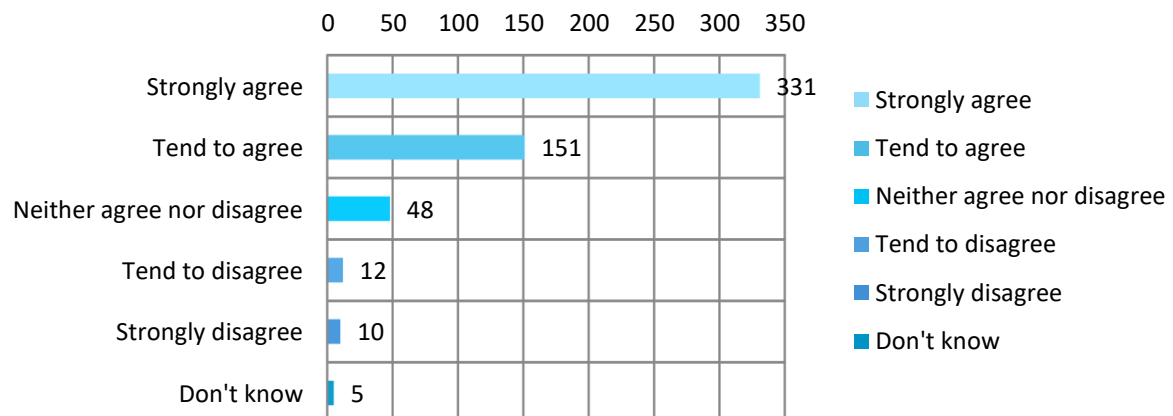- Give grants and advice to everybody wanting to plant trees in their gardens

Requests:
1. Contact the village of Speldhurst.
2. Contact the Hollingbourne Meadows Trust
3. Contact Trees for Cities to increase urban tree cover.
4. Trees needed along Herne Bay high street.
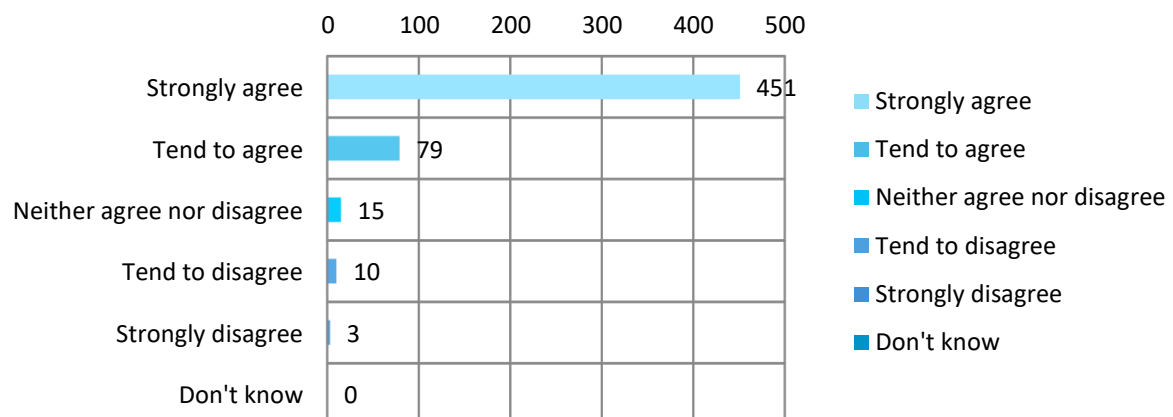5. Protect and plant more orchards around Faversham.

6. Contact the local parish council in Dunton Green.
7. Parish Councils need to be able to call on specific "on-site" advice.
8. Colleges and universities need space to plant trees.

APPENDIX 3 – Full responses to question 6: to what extent do you agree or disagree with strategy objectives

Contribute to KCC's and the county's net zero targets

Response	Value
Strongly agree	331
Tend to agree	151
Neither agree nor disagree	48
Tend to disagree	12
Strongly disagree	10
Don't know	5

Reduce and reverse the decline of nature and loss of trees

Response	Value
Strongly agree	451
Tend to agree	79
Neither agree nor disagree	15
Tend to disagree	10
Strongly disagree	3
Don't know	0

Tackle the multiple threats to our trees

Response	Count
Strongly agree	412
Tend to agree	107
Neither agree nor disagree	20
Tend to disagree	7
Strongly disagree	8
Don't know	0

Deliver nature-based solutions to some of the county's challenges

Response	Count
Strongly agree	379
Tend to agree	130
Neither agree nor disagree	28
Tend to disagree	8
Strongly disagree	8
Don't know	2

Provide enhanced and improved recreation and amenity

Response	Count
Strongly agree	321
Tend to agree	157
Neither agree nor disagree	56
Tend to disagree	12
Strongly disagree	7
Don't know	1

Address the decline of trees outside woodland and decline in urban trees

Strongly agree	437
Tend to agree	83
Neither agree nor disagree	14
Tend to disagree	13
Strongly disagree	7
Don't know	0

Realise the economic benefits

Strongly agree	245
Tend to agree	162
Neither agree nor disagree	109
Tend to disagree	19
Strongly disagree	10
Don't know	8

Increase our knowledge and provide better protection

Strongly agree	361
Tend to agree	136
Neither agree nor disagree	49
Tend to disagree	4
Strongly disagree	3
Don't know	2

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