



# “MAKE TREES MATTER!”

Organisational Strategy 2025 to 2030



“

He who  
plants a  
tree plants  
a hope.

”

Lucy Larcom, Poet

## CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	3
Why Urban Trees Matter.....	7
About Trees for Cities.....	9
Strategic Purpose, Vision and Mission .....	11
Strategic Goal and Targets 2025-30.....	13
Strategic Pillars and Big Shifts .....	16
Theory of Change.....	24
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion .....	25
People Strategy .....	27
Fundraising Strategy.....	30
Finance Strategy.....	34
Measuring Success .....	36

**Trees for Cities’ five-year strategy “Make Trees Matter!” (2025-30) sets out an ambitious and hopeful vision for tackling the environmental injustice of tree inequity in urban areas. In a decade that will define the planet’s future, we believe that cities can and must adapt to the climate and ecological crises by embracing the transformative power of trees.**

## Why Trees Matter

Urban populations face rising temperatures, more frequent and severe extreme weather events, and the ongoing loss of biodiversity. Without urgent action, cities will become hotter, more polluted and less resilient to climatic changes, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable communities. Trees offer a proven, cost-effective, and uplifting natural solution. They cool our streets, clean our air, reduce flood risk, foster biodiversity, and support human health and well-being.

Yet in the UK, trees are distributed unevenly: deprived neighbourhoods often have the fewest trees and the poorest access to green space, which means that vulnerable people in underserved communities do not feel their vital benefits and suffer most. Our mission is to correct this injustice by making “Urban Trees for All” a reality.



## Our Ambition

**By 2030, our strategic goal is to Grow a Movement for Urban Trees and Tree Equity, mobilising communities to plant, protect, and advocate for trees where they are needed most.**

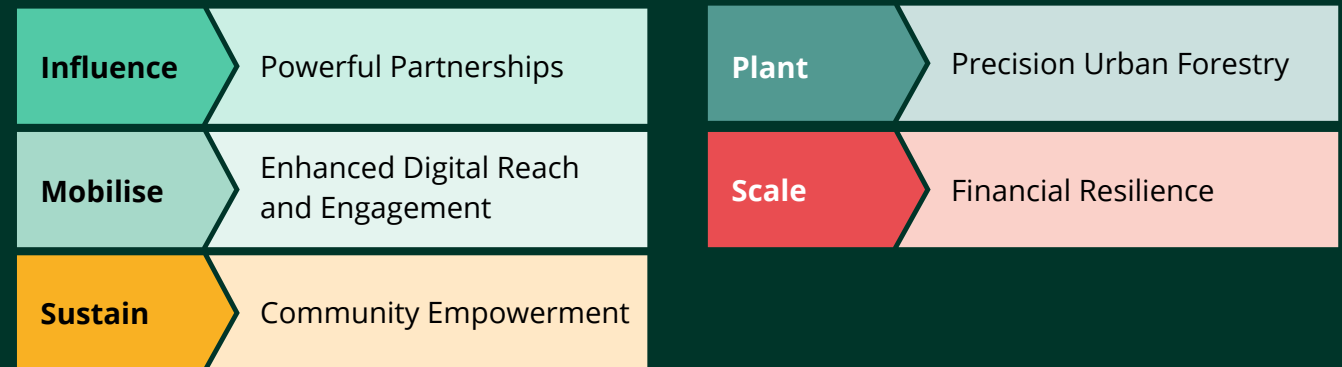
Movement-building is an essential step to harness the people power needed to tackle tree inequity and create leafy, liveable cities for current and future generations.

## Our Approach

Underpinned by our Theory of Change, we will achieve our goal to Grow a Movement through five interlinked strategic pillars, through which we will Influence and Mobilise people to **Plant** and care for trees, **Sustain** the impact and **Scale** the opportunities across the UK.

By inspiring action, showcasing delivery, strengthening communities, and building financial resilience, we will move from isolated interventions to systemic change.

**To achieve this, we are evolving from a project-led charity into a movement builder, focusing on five key strategic shifts under each pillar:**



Inclusion is a core principle which underpins all planning, action and engagement. By embedding equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) at every level - people, processes, partnerships and strategy - we aim to advance both social and environmental justice, ensuring equitable access to trees and their multiple benefits in urban spaces.

# CALL TO ACTION: JOIN OUR MOVEMENT!

**Trees are living infrastructure** - vital for healthy, resilient, and equitable cities.

Over the strategic period 2025-30, Trees for Cities will grow a movement that **makes trees matter** to everyone.

Our model of **social urban forestry** gives trees a voice, a value and some power.

By working together, we can ensure that every urban community, regardless of background or postcode, shares in the **life-changing benefits of urban forests**.



## Strategy framework

### Existential Problem

The environmental injustice of **tree inequity**: the disparity in access to trees and their benefits, which disproportionately affects vulnerable people from underserved urban communities.

### Vision

**Urban Trees for All**: cities where everybody can live healthy lives among thriving trees, woods and nature.

### Mission

To **Make Trees Matter**: inspire people to value and appreciate trees so that they are consistently cared for and appropriately resourced, particularly in areas of low tree equity.

### North Star

By 2050, everybody should be able to see at least 3 trees from their home, live in a neighbourhood with at least 30% tree canopy cover, and have high-quality, public green space within 300 metres from their home.

### Strategic Goal

To **Grow a Movement for Urban Trees and Tree Equity** by 2030

### Strategic Pillars

To **mobilise** and **influence** people to **plant**, establish and care for trees in socially underserved and environmentally deprived urban areas across the UK so that everyone can see trees, be among trees, and enjoy nature in their neighbourhood.

To **sustain** the impact and **scale** the opportunities by addressing key systemic challenges in getting people to care about trees, advocate for trees, and fully realise and appreciate their intrinsic values.



# WHY URBAN TREES MATTER...



**There has never been a more important decade for the environment. Radical and extensive action is needed to avert catastrophic and irreversible damage to nature and the climate. The potential impacts to people, communities and wildlife across the globe are existential if the right action is not taken now.**

Cities and their inhabitants stand to bear a significant proportion of the impact of climate change, with high summer temperatures and severe weather events occurring at greater frequency and intensity than ever before, which poses significant risk to people's health and well-being. Nature is a key part of the solution to these problems, but the catastrophic loss of biodiversity significantly impedes the role that nature can play without urgent intervention.

Failure to adapt our cities to the dual climate and ecological crises threatens life, particularly affecting those communities who are most vulnerable. In the UK, almost 85% of the population live in towns and cities, which also tend to have more areas of deprivation leading to lower life expectancy, lower wellbeing scores, and more loneliness.

Our towns and cities are already hotter than surrounding rural areas due to the urban heat island effect. Urban heat is exacerbated by climatic changes and poses a serious health hazard that can increase the risk of premature heat-related illnesses and deaths.

Trees and woodlands are one of the most effective nature-based solutions for mitigating climate change and urban heat. Not only are they stunningly beautiful, but trees also deliver a vast array of ecosystem services that enable cities to adapt to climatic shifts such as increased temperatures and rainfall and provide habitat to protect and enhance biodiversity. A healthy urban forest<sup>1</sup> provides numerous benefits to human society in vast quantities and is vital for our health and happiness. Without trees, our towns and cities will become increasingly unliveable and less resilient to extreme weather events.

In the UK, however, there are glaring disparities in the levels of tree cover and high-quality green space across and within urban areas, with trees often being particularly sparse in low-income urban neighbourhoods. The inequitable distribution of trees means that underserved communities do not benefit from the essential services that trees provide. These same communities are disproportionately impacted by city stresses such as air pollution, noise pollution, deficiency of access to nature, and urban heat, showing that the lack of trees in the places where they are needed most is an environmental injustice.

**The environmental injustice of tree inequity in urban areas is the fundamental problem that Trees for Cities exists to address.**

1. [www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/what-is-the-urban-forest](http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/what-is-the-urban-forest)



“

There is a magic machine that sucks carbon out of the air, costs very little, and builds itself. It's called a tree.

”

George Monbiot and Greta Thunberg

# ABOUT TREES FOR CITIES

**Trees for Cities is the only national UK charity that is solely dedicated to trees in towns and cities. As an urban environmental charity, we focus towards getting people to care about trees, so that they value them and want to look after them. We do this by engaging people to plant and care for trees in their neighbourhoods – a simple act that has deceptively powerful impact on both the people and the places.**

We operate at national scale to improve people's lives through planting and caring for trees in urban areas. We involve people of all ages and abilities through tree-related events, activities, volunteering and training, empowering them to plant and care for trees in their vicinity. Our projects transform local spaces, creating leafy housing estates, parks, school playgrounds and streets to inspire a love of trees and make urban spaces more resilient to climate change. We target our activities towards places where trees are needed most, working particularly in areas that are densely populated or devoid of trees.

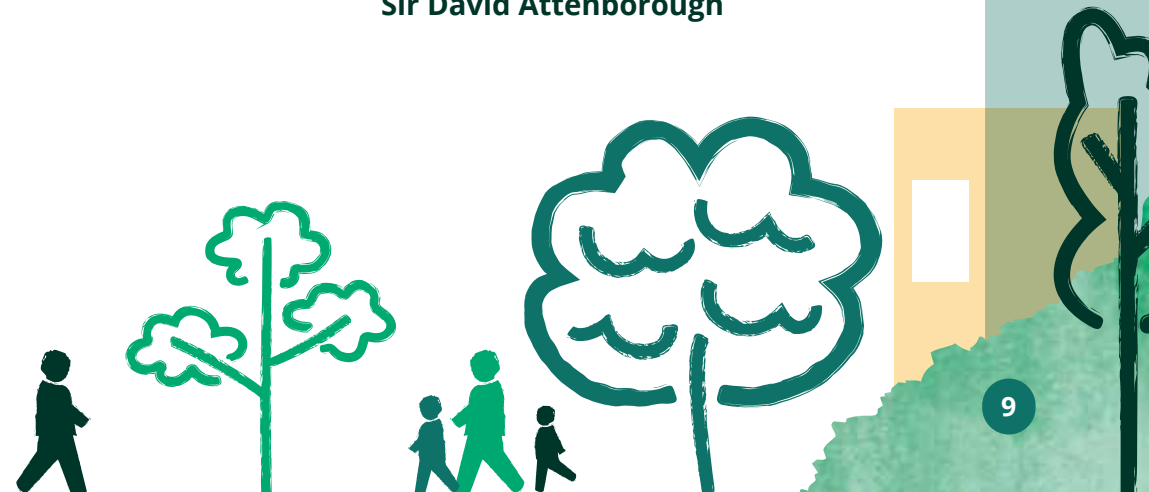
Since our inception in 1993, Trees for Cities has engaged over 260,000 people to plant and care for 2 million trees across 100 towns and cities in the UK and overseas, inspiring, enabling and empowering communities to transform the places where they live, work and play.

“

If children don't grow up knowing about nature and appreciating it, they will not understand it. And if they don't understand it, they won't protect it. And if they don't protect it, who will?

”

**Sir David Attenborough**



## Our History: 30 Years in a Nutshell

Trees for Cities has been transforming urban green spaces since 1993.

**Budding early days as Trees for London**, itself a pioneering grassroots movement inspired by infamous Tree Parties thrown by our founding trustees, and the launch of our Million Trees for London campaign.



**Blossoming into a national charity** with our flagship Tree-Athlon, launch of Edible Playgrounds, high-profile campaigns, London partnership projects Capital Woodlands and Londoners Love Trees, wider planting projects across the UK and overseas in cities such as Addis Ababa and La Paz, and our first multi-year strategy.

**Maturity through multi-city programmes** such as Forgotten Places in coastal towns, boosting local authority capacity through Tree Cities of the World and Urban Tree Challenge Fund, and innovative Trees for Streets programme. Through our increased emphasis on social impact, we became the first environmental organisation to be recognised with a social value management certificate by Social Value UK.



# STRATEGIC PURPOSE, VISION & MISSION

**“Make Trees Matter!” continues our journey to tackle the environmental injustice of tree inequity.** We strive to ensure that the wide benefits of trees are felt by all, not just the few. Achieving this will only happen if everyone has a role to play in planting, protecting and promoting their urban trees.



## Our Purpose

Trees for Cities empowers people to plant and care for trees in towns and cities, targeting places where they have the greatest impact for people and nature. Through trees, we **connect people to nature, enrich lives and create leafy, liveable places** for today and future generations.

## Vision and Mission

Our **vision** for the world is: **“Urban Trees for All: cities where everybody can live healthy lives among thriving trees, woods and nature”**

Our organisational vision is underpinned by our **mission** to **“Make Trees Matter”**.

To readers of our strategy, the likelihood is that trees already matter to you or to your organisation. The mission statement deliberately introduces narrative around how trees are under-valued and under-resourced, and that if trees really did matter to decision-makers as much as other infrastructure then the system would more consistently favour them.

Urban trees grow in a challenging environment with hard surfaces and degraded soils, competing for small pockets of land, water and nutrients. They are dependent on us for their survival and are within our care. People have a vital role to play in planting and caring for trees so that they thrive for future generations. Over the course of this strategic period, we will make trees matter to local communities and decision-makers so that they are consistently valued and appropriately resourced as an intrinsic fabric of our towns and cities.

## North Star

Our 'north star' is the 3-30-300<sup>2</sup> principle whereby everybody should be able to see at least 3 trees from their home, live in a neighbourhood with at least 30% tree canopy cover, and have high-quality, public green space within 300 metres from their home.

Developed by the Nature-Based Solutions Institute, 3-30-300 is a simple concept with big ambition that resonates with the global urban forest community and is easily relatable to the public.

Through 3-30-300 there are strong threads of climate, social and environmental justice woven throughout the strategy into our tree equity programmes, public-facing campaigns and community engagement.

“  
I think trees already matter but many people are not aware of how important it is to continue greening our cities and make them more biodiverse with intelligent design that is often difficult to achieve, partly because of lack of stakeholder awareness and support.  
”

Stakeholder consultation response

2. <https://www.330300rule.com>

# STRATEGIC GOAL & TARGETS 2025-30

## Strategic Goal

Our strategic goal to 2030 is to grow a **Movement for Urban Trees and Tree Equity**. This is a vital strategic step that we must take to achieve our vision and mission at scale and unlock community activism for trees.

People have an innate love of trees, which often turns into activism when local trees are threatened. We will build on this passion through a movement that harnesses “people power”, catalysing positive social action to plant and protect trees in their neighbourhood.

A tree movement supports global climate and environmental justice movements by empowering people to take responsibility for their own local environment through a tree lens.

Growing a movement for trees is a new challenge that speaks to our authentic impact as an urban environmental charity, builds on over 30 years of experience in social urban forestry, and fills gaps in the sector.

“

(We need) something that encourages people to feel like they have responsibility for those trees and green areas and that there are ways they can help.

”

**Stakeholder consultation response**



## Strategic Targets 2025-30

### Target 1

**Grow a movement of 30,000 people taking meaningful actions to plant, care and advocate for urban trees.**

We will motivate and organise people to take 100,000 meaningful actions to plant, care and advocate for trees in towns and cities where they are needed most through their voice, time and money.

We anticipate that 30,000 of these people will undertake regular actions for trees and thus become part of our movement.



## Target 2

**Transform 100 neighbourhood spaces in 10 priority places with low tree equity through planting and establishing urban trees.**

We will transform parks, estates, schools and streets, prioritising places with low tree equity, helping adapt urban areas to climate change and enhance nature, championing everyone's right to healthy, leafy places to live, work and play.

We anticipate widespread benefits for 6,000 people living locally to project sites such as cool and clean air, improved health and well-being, and enhanced connection to nature, particularly in underserved communities.

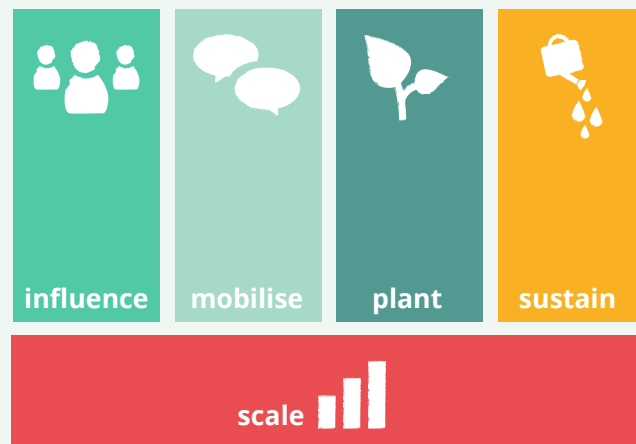
Through the first phase of this strategic period we will create two supporting strategies:

- 1. Urban Forest Strategy** to define our priority places, programmes, partnerships and communities.
- 2. Engagement & Marketing Strategy** to define our target audiences and plan how we will inspire, engage and empower them to act.



# STRATEGIC PILLARS AND BIG SHIFTS

The Plant, Protect, and Promote pillars are built into our charitable objectives and have guided our strategic plans since 2019. This strategy goes a major step further to emphasise and enhance the social impact of our work. We have developed our strategic pillars to capture how we inspire, engage, and empower **people** as well as planting, protecting and promoting **trees**.



We will strive towards our strategic goal and targets by **influencing** and **mobilising** people to **plant**, establish and care for trees in the most socially underserved and environmentally deprived urban areas so that everyone can see trees, be among trees, and enjoy nature in their neighbourhood.

We will **sustain** the impact of our work and **scale** the opportunities by addressing key systemic challenges in getting people to care about trees so that they fully understand and appreciate their intrinsic values and empower them to advocate for trees by giving their voice, time and money.

This evolution of our strategic pillars will help ensure that we put sufficient resource behind tree establishment, tree care and capacity building, whilst still staying true to our roots as an urban tree planting charity.

We will measure our progress towards our strategic goal through these five pillars, each

of which have anticipated outcomes set out in our Theory of Change, supported by measurable annual objectives and key results.

The pillars frame how we will address issues within the system that we operate, including the lack of awareness, understanding and appreciation of urban trees, lack of investment into urban tree planting and protection, and lack of diversity of knowledge, skills and talent in the urban forest sector. This systemic approach ensures an integrated approach to planning, delivery and monitoring.

Our multi-faceted approach will address the environmental injustice of tree inequity, demonstrate why trees are a vital component of our cities, and provide a pillar framework for urgent action to retain the unique and essential benefits of trees for people, places and planet.



We have identified five key areas of strategic shift where we plan to do more, or do things differently, to grow a movement for urban trees and tree equity by galvanising widespread action.



## Influence Pillar

### Powerful Partnerships

Trees for Cities has built a widespread network of partnerships with landowners that provide permission to plant and support delivery through tree planting and ongoing maintenance, businesses that provide funding, share skills and help plant and maintain trees through employee volunteering days, and environmental NGOs that bring different perspectives and add significant value to our projects.

Local authorities are our linchpin landowner partners, enabling access to land, funding, and local knowledge. We will co-create local authority partnership packages to support capacity-building, secure more resources for tree planting and maintenance, and engage local communities, and will look to build partnerships with new types of landowners including social housing landlords and property developers.

To grow an effective movement for urban trees and tree equity, we will build our network through new cross-sector partnerships with organisations in community empowerment, digital engagement, public health and movement building. We will also seek collaboration with academic researchers to support monitoring, evaluation, learning and promotion of evidence-based practice.



## Mobilise Pillar

# Enhanced Digital Reach and Engagement

Over the last strategic period, our online presence has increased and improved, prompting a 21% increase in social media followers between 2022–25 (from 59,704 to 72,242). We have continued to promote our work through sector campaigns such as National Tree Week and Big Give, national celebrations such as Clean Air Day, and creative social media campaigns.

We will build on this momentum by enhancing our reach to new and diverse audiences through digital engagement including **new urban tree campaigns, a new membership scheme, and a digital engagement platform**, inspiring widespread and purposeful tree-related community action.

We will continue to develop urban tree resources and content to support and empower communities and enhance our active social media presence through relatable stories to make it easier and more rewarding for everyone everywhere to get involved.





## Plant Pillar

### Precision Urban Forestry

Our strategic focus centres on addressing disparities in access to trees and nature in urban areas. We will go further and deeper in areas where tree inequity is extreme. The goal of our planting programmes is to create cooler, healthier, and more sustainable urban environments by integrating trees and nature into cities.

**We will design our programmes through three thematic impact areas:**

1. Urban heat and climate resilience
2. Public health and well-being
3. Urban nature and biodiversity

We have always targeted our projects towards areas with low tree canopy cover and socioeconomic inequality. Advances in digital mapping, shared data, artificial intelligence and new technology, alongside new research into climate resilient species, the cooling effects of trees, and the increasing urgency to increase tree canopy cover, all lend themselves to more refined project development and planning.

We will utilise these innovations to further enhance our impact and drive growth, with increasing attention to support young trees to establish and thrive in a rapidly changing climate.

- a) Place-based approach focused towards 10 priority places with low tree equity including core cities (e.g. London) and towns (e.g. Hartlepool)
- b) Deliver strategic multi-year projects to showcase and promote good practice in urban forestry
- c) Scale-up our agile, partner-led delivery model through nurturing our national network of local authorities, NGOs and community groups to support more tree planting and tree care, particularly in areas with low tree equity.



## Sustain Pillar

# Community Empowerment

The goal of our Sustain pillar is to empower people to care for the trees we plant and to become the tree custodians of the future.

**Our community empowerment focus will include three primary target audience groups:**

1. Empower communities who currently face significant barriers to access nature, targeting people from diverse ethnic groups, children and young people.
2. Empower communities in areas of low tree equity, particularly in our 10 priority places.
3. Support existing community tree activists by coordinating and connecting groups to share knowledge, skills and experiences.





## Scale Pillar

### Financial Resilience

To deliver our strategy we will build our financial resilience by diversifying our income, improving our operational efficiency and focusing on impact with brand-aligned funding partners.

By 2030, we aim to raise £25m to grow a movement for urban trees and tree equity, supported by diverse donors and strong partnerships. Over the first three years, during a period of uncertainty in fundraising and following a challenging financial year in 2024-25, we will take a conservative approach to focus on creating solid foundations for long-term, transformative income growth. By strengthening our financial foundations, we will secure the capacity to sustain and scale our impact well beyond 2030.

Our fundraising strategy is guided by key principles: delivering an excellent supporter experience, strategic funding partnerships based on ethical fundraising principles, and increasing unrestricted and flexible funding, investing in a professional fundraising team, and developing surge capacity to capitalise on major opportunities.

## Evolution of our Strategic Pillars

### Plant

**Plant** Precision urban forestry.

### Promote

**Influence** Tree Cities of the World, powerful partnerships.

**Mobilise** Digital campaigns, engagement platform.

### Protect

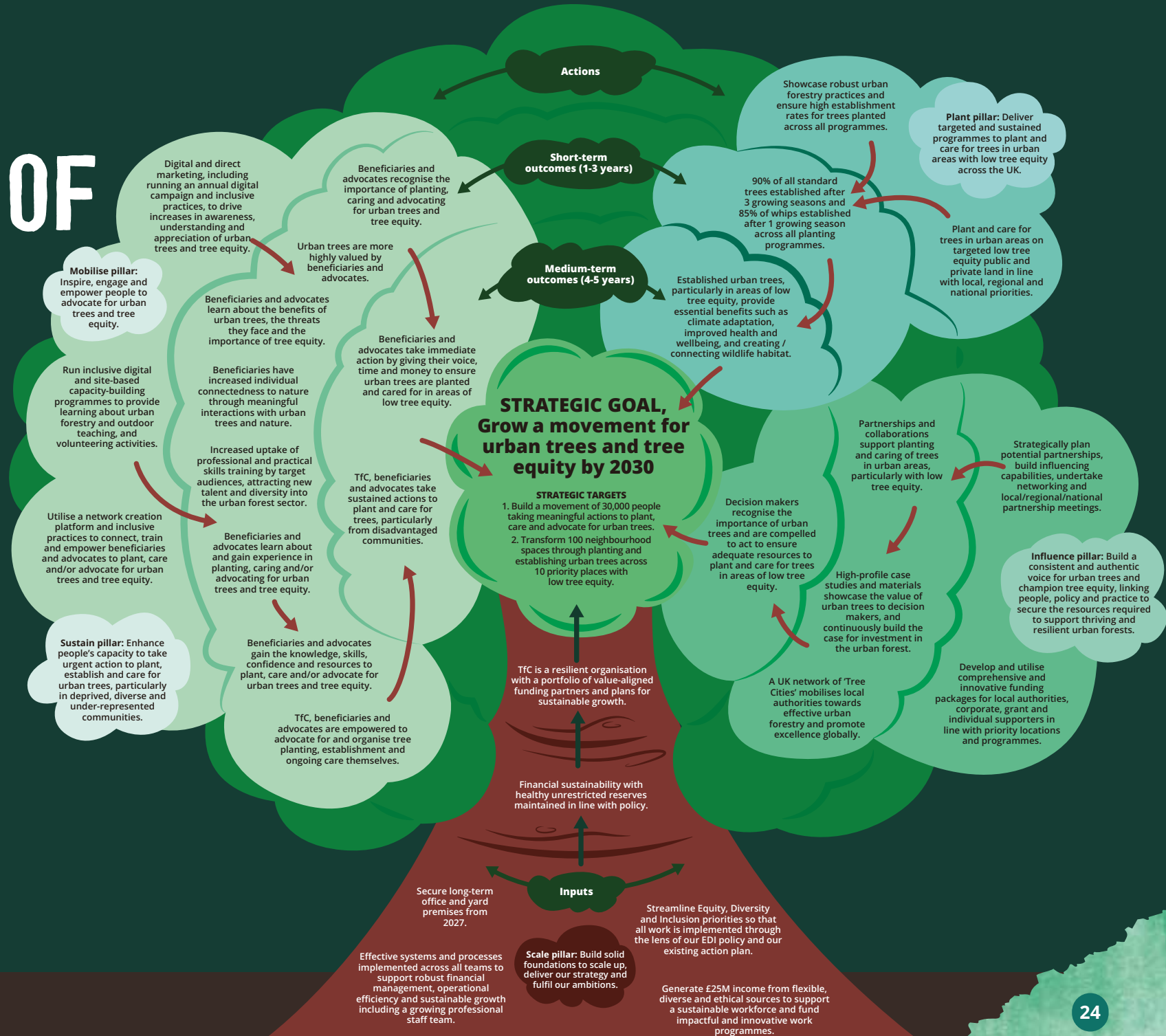
**Sustain** Tree-related training, community capacity building, volunteering.

**Scale** Income generation, operational efficiency and effectiveness.



# THEORY OF CHANGE

Our strategy is underpinned by our Theory of Change, which sets out the intended impact and outcomes from our strategic goals and targets and creates the framework for monitoring, evaluation, and learning to measure our progress and success.



# EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

## Inclusion is in our Roots

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) will remain central to how we plan and deliver our work with communities and volunteers. We are proud to have consistently prioritised underserved communities throughout our history, ensuring fairer access to the social and environmental benefits of trees in urban areas. Operating at the intersection of social and environmental justice and guided by a people-centred theory of change, we differ from many organisations that operate entirely in one space or the other.

## Our Vision for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Environmental and social justice are inextricably linked. We will integrate this understanding into decisions about who we work with and how, aiming to connect people and nature where this is needed the most. We aim to be recognised as a champion of EDI in the urban forestry sector, applying a values-based approach in what we do, how we do it, and who we do it with. In doing so, we will better reflect the communities we work with and listen carefully to their views.

Our priority groups are those facing entrenched barriers to experiencing equitable access to urban trees. Through the Sustain pillar we will prioritise activities with children and young people, people from diverse ethnic groups, and underserved communities in areas with low tree equity.

Collaboration is key, and we will focus on working with people from diverse backgrounds to foster trust and create platforms for meaningful dialogue. We want to get closer to the people who benefit from our urban forestry interventions and ensure they feel valued and included. By learning, sharing our insights, and supporting others who embrace similar values, we will continuously refine our decision-making, including where we target our efforts, to ensure greater equity in access to urban trees.



## Our Priorities

Through this strategic period, we will actively take steps to deepen our EDI outcomes, guided by our EDI statement and supported by an action plan.

**To deliver our vision for EDI we have identified the following priorities:**

- Collect, analyse and share high-quality EDI data relating to our work in areas of low tree equity
- Review and update workplace processes to ensure inclusivity and equitable decision-making about where we target our operations and who we engage
- Provide training and support for staff, trainees, interns, volunteers and trustees to engage confidently with our EDI goals and advocate for improved inclusion practices
- Embed EDI into all strategic development processes
- Actively engage in cross-sectoral EDI conversations to learn and share approaches and insights
- Strengthen our engagement and empowerment of people from different ethnic groups and with children and young people, recognising the extent of systemic and structural underinvestment and exclusion of these groups from decision-making about their local environment.

## Our Commitment to EDI

We commit to being open and transparent about progress, challenges, and future intentions. We will publish accessible data and insights, actively inviting feedback. We will prioritise continuous improvement, including removing barriers, and raising issues at senior level where necessary. All strategic thinking and behaviour will be underpinned by EDI values. Importantly, we acknowledge that mistakes may happen: if so, we will recognise them, seek change, and continue striving for improvement.



# PEOPLE STRATEGY

Our **People Strategy** plans how we will align people priorities with organisational goals, strengthen culture, and enable sustainable growth. It ensures that the charity's workforce - staff, volunteers, trainees, interns and trustees - are equipped to deliver its goal to grow a movement for urban trees and tree equity. The strategy emphasises adaptation, inclusion, and empowerment as key enablers of long-term success.



As Trees for Cities evolves, our organisational structure will adapt to remain resilient and fit for purpose. The strategy calls for investment in areas such as movement building, digital engagement and technology, alongside process improvements to boost efficiency and reduce complexity. Technology and process reform will work hand-in-hand to make the charity more effective, streamlined, and resilient to risks.

## People Mission Statement

We must begin our movement-building journey with our very own 'tree people': our People Strategy is the starting point for putting our organisational strategy into practice.

**Our People Mission is to support our staff, trainees, interns, volunteers and trustees to be the drivers of change in our strategic goal to grow a movement for urban trees and tree equity.**

We want to significantly increase the capacity of our people to increase their impact and be a fundamental component of Trees for Cities' success. We will do this by empowering our team to embody the citizenship approach: planting and caring for trees themselves, acknowledging their inherent people power, and taking responsibility to act as custodians for urban trees, both through their role with the charity and as citizens in their own right.

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at Work

Whilst Trees for Cities is proud of its inclusive culture, we acknowledge the environment sector's lack of diversity compared to the communities it serves. Through our EDI Committee, we will continue to embed EDI principles across recruitment, training, communications and policy, ensuring all voices are welcomed, respected, and empowered.

## People Pillars

The strategy identifies **three fundamental areas for improvement** that will support the team to deliver the strategy. These strategic, interlinked people pillars frame where we will focus our efforts, alongside continuing to do what we do well such as promoting a supportive and inclusive working environment.



### 1. Urban Tree Leadership

All Trees for Cities team members are leaders in the urban tree movement.

Our strategy seeks to nurture key leadership behaviours - problem solving, results orientation, diverse thinking, and support for others - across all levels and teams.

Leadership also includes promoting organisational health, an attractive employee value proposition, and supportive benefits such as healthcare.



### 2. Learning and Development in Urban Forestry

Recognising that sector-related Learning and Development is essential to staff satisfaction and effectiveness, Trees for Cities adopts the 70-20-10 learning model, which prioritises experiential and peer-based learning.

Line managers are central to this approach and are trained to support, guide, and coach their teams effectively.

### 3. Impactful Organisational Values

Our organisational values define the charity's identity and guide decision-making. These values are directly linked to the leadership behaviours that Trees for Cities embeds across all teams.

**Heart.** Acting with purpose, joy, and passion for trees and nature.

**Ownership.** Taking initiative, accountability, and pride in work.

**Empathy.** Fostering respect, trust, and belonging.

**Innovation.** Applying creativity and data-driven insight to make an impact.

**Collaboration.** Uniting people and communities for collective change.

A group of people wearing green safety vests are working on a large green lawn in a park. Some are using tools like shovels and wheelbarrows. In the background, there are many bare trees and several tall, modern skyscrapers under a cloudy sky.

“

When a man plants a tree he plants himself. Every root is an anchor, over which one rests with grateful interests, and becomes sufficiently calm to feel the joy of living.

”

**John Muir,**  
**Naturalist and Environmental Philosopher**



# FUNDRAISING STRATEGY

Our fundraising strategy sets out how we will maximise impact, strengthen operational effectiveness and ensure financial resilience. By 2030, we aim to raise £25 million to grow a movement for urban trees and tree equity with a diverse group of engaged supporters and strong, values-aligned partnerships across the urban forestry sector.

Over the strategic period, we will build purposeful, brand-aligned funding partnerships that support both immediate delivery and long-term organisational growth. In the early phase, we will focus on strengthening our fundraising foundations by investing in capacity, systems and stewardship. This will position us for accelerated and transformative growth by 2028 and beyond.

## Strategic Context and Focus

Trees for Cities' core purpose – empowering people to plant and establish trees in areas of low tree equity – remains central to our fundraising approach. Consequently, a significant proportion of income generation will continue to support the Plant and Sustain pillars, engaging people to plant and establish trees in 10 priority places where demand and impact are highest.

As we progress towards our ambition of growing a movement for urban trees, fundraising will increasingly support and integrate with the Influence and Mobilise pillars. Across all pillars, we will leverage supporter money, time and voice to expand reach, deepen engagement and amplify impact.

Our thematic impact focus towards urban heat and climate resilience, public health and wellbeing, and biodiversity and urban nature, provides a clear and compelling framework for developing strategic, long-term funding relationships.

## Funding Principles

All fundraising will be guided by the following principles:

### 1. Growth in unrestricted and flexible funding.

We will rebalance our income portfolio to increase unrestricted and thematic funding, supporting full cost recovery, organisational sustainability and to drive growth through innovation.

### 2. Strategic funding partnerships.

We will focus on proactive, high-value, multi-year, brand-aligned partnerships, delivering value through financial support, advocacy and time.

### 3. Excellent supporter experience.

We will prioritise high-quality stewardship and engagement to retain supporters, maximise lifetime value and clearly demonstrate the impact of their support.

### 4. Ethical fundraising.

All income generation will be delivered in an ethical, transparent and supporter centred way.

### 5. Investment in people and capability.

We will retain, support and develop a professional, motivated fundraising team, recognising that long-term income growth depends on skilled people and robust systems.



## Income Streams and Growth Priorities

### Corporate Partnerships

We will continue to evolve our corporate engagement from transactional relationships to multi-year, multi-layered partnerships. Our Theory of Change and impact framework will underpin compelling storytelling and robust reporting, supporting partners in meeting social value, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) requirements.

#### Core elements of our corporate offer will include:

- Thematic funding packages linked to our priority impact areas
- Highly engaging corporate volunteering opportunities
- Opportunities for year-round staff engagement, advocacy and learning.

### Grant Funding

We have established relationships with a large number of grant-making trusts, foundations and lotteries. We will continue to work collaboratively with these partners, aligning their priorities with our impact goals and supporting them to achieve best value and meaningful outcomes from their investment.

Through our influencing work, we will proactively develop joint funding proposals and explore opportunities for co-creation, particularly where partners share our ambition to drive systemic change in urban environments.

### Statutory Funding

Trees for Cities has a strong track record of delivering against multi-year statutory funding partnerships with central government, notably through Big Tree Plant and Urban Tree Challenge Fund from Defra. We also hold a network of partnerships with local authorities in towns and cities who contribute funds, expertise and delivery resources to collaborative urban forestry projects on public land.

We are ambitious to secure further statutory funds from central government and will also continue to build powerful partnerships with local authorities including through Local Nature Recovery Strategies.





## Individual Giving

We will strengthen and diversify our individual giving programme with a focus on long-term value and supporter loyalty. Key priorities include:

- Developing an 'always on' regular giving pipeline with clear user journeys
- Improving value exchange and impact communications for regular givers
- Building a stronger legacy giving proposition

Urban tree and tree equity campaigns delivered through the Mobilise pillar will enable us to grow volume, converting supporters who first engage through actions, volunteering or advocacy into donors.

## Major Giving and Emerging Income Sources

We will develop and test a major donor programme to diversify our income mix and support transformational projects. In parallel, we will explore and access emerging funding opportunities including payments for nature-based solutions and ecosystem services, as these markets mature.



# FINANCE STRATEGY

**To achieve our strategic ambition and goal, we will implement a finance strategy grounded in financial resilience, diversification of income, operational efficiency, and alignment with impact.**

This strategy will ensure that our financial model is as sustainable as the urban forests we create, enabling us to mobilise communities, influence policy, and deliver systemic change. Through this strategy, we will secure the financial capacity to sustain and scale our impact well beyond 2030.

We will extend our annual planning horizon to create a rolling 3-year finance plan to support longer-term planning. After difficult financial year in 2024-25 and with uncertainties around government funding, the first three years will focus on robust financial sustainability with modest growth planned in the first three years to rebuild and transition to our new strategy.



**Building and maintaining financial sustainability throughout the strategic period will be guided by the following principles:**

**Conservative, long-term approach to finance planning**, driven by a focus on increasing unrestricted reserves to above minimum level per our policy by March 2027 to increase flexibility, reduce risk and limit pressures on working capital management.

**Prioritisation and growth of unrestricted income** up to 50% of total income to provide flexibility for organisational investment in digital engagement, youth empowerment, and community mobilisation.

**Operation of financially resilient programmes**, supported by streamlined financial processes, to deliver social and environmental impacts in areas of low tree equity.

**Maximise economies of scale and boost operational efficiency across the organisation**, maintaining salaries at up to 50% of our total expenditure to retain flexibility in our operations. To achieve this, we will boost delivery capacity through funded internships and traineeships, which also supports our strategy to sustain the impact of our work through enhancing green knowledge and skills.

**Modest base case planning to manage risk and uncertainty**, enhanced by more ambitious surge scenario planning through which we can scale up with high levels of funding from large grants that aren't currently on the horizon.



# MEASURING SUCCESS

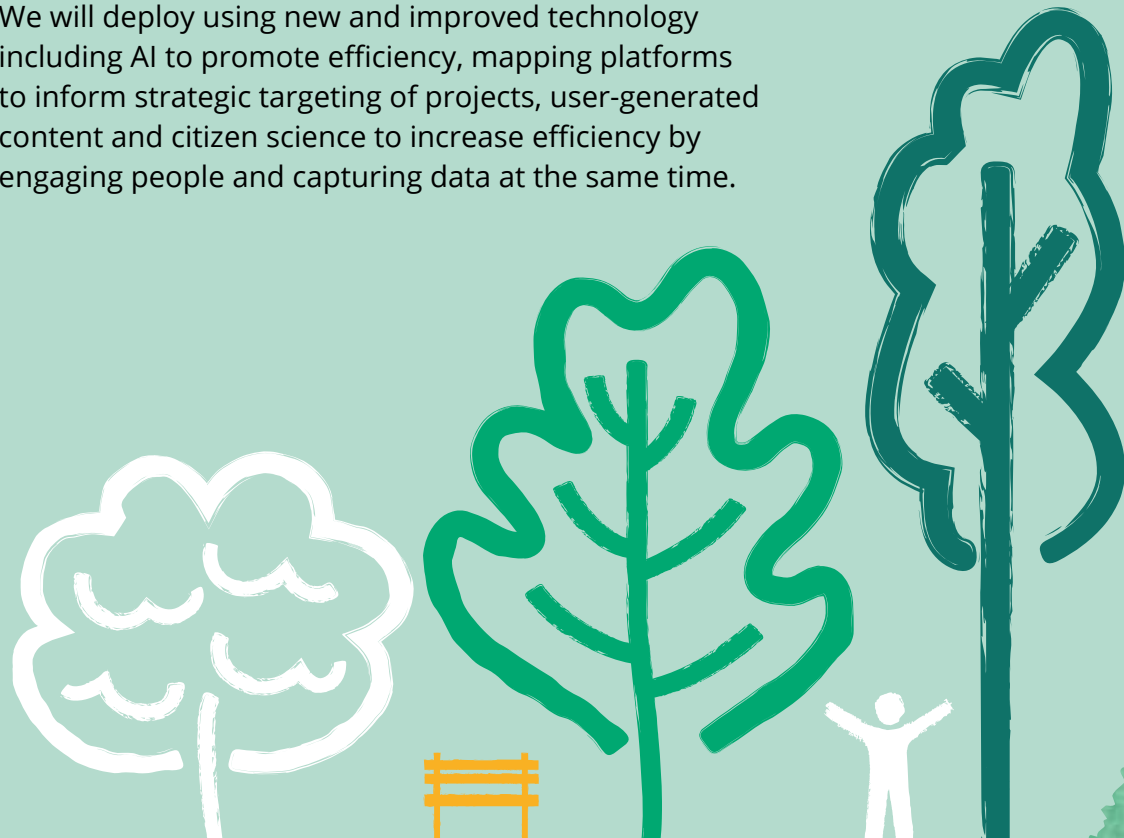
We will bridge the gap between strategic planning and operational implementation through **Objectives and Key Results (OKRs)**, which support an outcomes-oriented approach and empowers the team to work towards common goals.

Organisational health and performance will be monitored through **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** to spot trends and identify any emerging issues so that we can take mitigating action or adjust ways of working as required.

Our **monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)** efforts will be directed towards measuring medium term outcomes in our Theory of Change. We will use innovative approaches to monitor our social and environmental impact, with particular focus towards new areas where we do not already have compelling evidence of success.

It is important that our data gathering is diverse and representative of the people we are working with and for. For example, communities that take part on our projects do often not have English as their first language. It is vital to ensure that we do not skew our impact monitoring through inadvertently creating disparities linked to language or accessibility.

We will deploy using new and improved technology including AI to promote efficiency, mapping platforms to inform strategic targeting of projects, user-generated content and citizen science to increase efficiency by engaging people and capturing data at the same time.





Registered charity no: 1032154

## Get in touch

020 7587 1320

[treesforcities.org](https://treesforcities.org)

[info@treesforcities.org](mailto:info@treesforcities.org)

Follow [@treesforcities](https://twitter.com/treesforcities)

