

GENERATION TREE:

**PLANT
PROTECT
PROMOTE**

ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY

2019 to 2022

INTRODUCTION

This strategy aims to present a narrative – a logical progression – of why we exist, what we are endeavouring to achieve and how will we do this. Before diving into declarations of future goals and targets, the document will set the scene and outline the basis of our decisions. This is approached by providing synopses of the **Problems** and challenges that we exist to solve, what we have learned from our **Past** and where we have got to in the **Present**, the **Policy** environment that we work within, and the key **Players** that we will work with, through or around. Through reflecting on these driving factors and the wider landscape of our sector, only then can we plausibly articulate and justify what our forward-looking **Purpose** and **Proposition** are, the **Plan** for their delivery, and the **Parameters** within and around which we will need to operate.

This strategy provides a direction for Trees for Cities. It specifically considers the next three-year period under the umbrella of a longer-term organisational goal. Whilst planned strategic goals, targets and activities have been set over the described three-year period, these are not intended to be purely prescriptive and to be followed blindly. The strategy has been created around predicted scenarios in relation to the internal and external environments that the organisation will face, but the future is by nature uncertain and a process of regular reflection and reassessment will be built into the way we work over the coming years. New and unforeseen opportunities may arise that take us down unplanned routes; equally, unforeseen challenges may hinder the progress of some objectives. What will not alter, however, will be our ambition, energy and drive to have as big an impact as possible within our sector.

This strategy has been developed following a structured consultation process with staff, Trustees and external stakeholders. It is written for both internal and external audiences. Transparency will always be a core principle of our organisational ethos: we can achieve nothing without our supporters and partners and so this strategy is both theirs and ours.



1. THE PROBLEM

Our cities and towns – thanks largely to the foresight of the Edwardians and Victorians – have trees and green spaces ingrained into their architectural and cultural identity. But the original designs were drawn up at a time when urban areas were conceptually and practically worlds apart from our present day. Pressures on land availability, the dominance of the motor vehicle, and the sprawling of the suburbs are just some of many facets of rapid urban evolution. The UK is now amongst the most densely inhabited and urbanised of the industrially developed nations, with over 80% of the population living in towns and cities. Therefore, the landscape of urban green space needs, impacts and threats has drastically changed over a comparatively short epoch of our history.

The UK – once blanketed in ‘wildwood’ – has undergone intensive deforestation over recent centuries and today has one of the lowest canopy cover levels in Europe¹. In the past, our settlements would have grown from within woodlands, enjoying a boundary of nature and all the benefits that this would have proffered to these expanding societies. Nowadays, however, the fringes of many of our urban spaces have been denuded to make space for housing, agriculture and transport. As city dwellers, we have therefore become more distanced from nature both physically and metaphorically. We are hence faced with the challenge – and duty to our future generations – of bringing trees and green spaces back into our city boundaries and into our everyday experiences.

Unequivocal evidence is mounting on the multiple benefits of urban trees and green spaces in relation to a range of health and wellbeing outcomes. Alongside supporting biodiverse habitats and the incalculable aesthetic, cultural and historical value they bestow on society, trees clean our air, mask noise, absorb greenhouse gases, provide shade and protection against the ‘urban heat island effect’, and mitigate flood risk. High quality ‘green infrastructure’ creates places for city dwellers to escape to, to exercise in, to be with nature at – they are one of the most effective forms of prescription for a range of physical and mental health problems such as heart disease, obesity and depression. But until there is equity in the availability, distribution and quality of such spaces, these multiple positive impacts will be significantly under-realised in our cities and towns. To amplify the issue, it is usually the socially deprived parts of cities and towns – the communities that are in particular need of these multiple benefits – that are also most devoid of high quality green space.

¹ England 8%, UK 14%, Europe 38% - <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.FRST.ZS>

Whilst the 'natural capital' values of urban trees and green spaces are increasingly better understood, the threats are equally on the rise. Reductions in local authority budgets mean that there is less money for new tree planting and authorities are struggling to maintain their existing stocks and green spaces. Economic incentives are driving short-term decision-making and cost savings; such as has been seen to disastrous effect in Sheffield (but this is not a unique case). The ever-increasing demand on urban land is putting existing trees at risk and limits the space for new trees and open green spaces. Trees felled for insurance purposes remains a serious issue and can result in a tendency for local authorities to select smaller ornamental species which generally have lower ecological 'values'. International trade is introducing more pests and diseases to the UK and many of our common urban species (such as ash, sweet chestnut, plane, oak etc.) are under serious threat and in decline. Over-maintenance of tree stocks for health, safety and risk management purposes is also a significant threat. Economic uncertainty in the wake of Brexit, predicted population growth and climate change are all likely to heighten the threats to urban trees over the coming years. Overall, some analysts conclude that due to the range of pressures and threats, the UK has returned to a state of net deforestation² and that urban street trees are being lost at a rate of around 50 per day.

But perhaps what is most stark and concerning is the impact that a reduction in the experiences of and access to nature and green spaces is having on children and future generations. Statistics telling us that only 8% of school children in England have regular access to green spaces or that 33% of children in their last year of primary school are obese or overweight are becoming ever more common and normalised. Our cities are not serving our children; the fundamental right of a child to grow up in a healthy and enhancing environment must be a cornerstone of how we plan for our green spaces. Whilst the focus on urban trees and green spaces has undoubtedly grown over recent years, awareness of their essential benefits and the threats posed still appears to be low amongst the general public and many decision-makers. Without a wide-scale public voice, transformative policy changes are unlikely. In general, funding for environmental issues across most donors remains much lower than other charitable causes. However, as demonstrated on the streets of Sheffield and previously during the planned sell off of state-owned forests, as a nation we retain an enormous passion for trees and nature, a passion that we an organisation must amplify and turn into mass action and progress if we are to make a step change in how our trees and green spaces are serving our urban societies.

There is much work for us to do.

² <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/deforestation-england-forestry-commission-woodland-trust-environment-climate-change-a8399726.html>



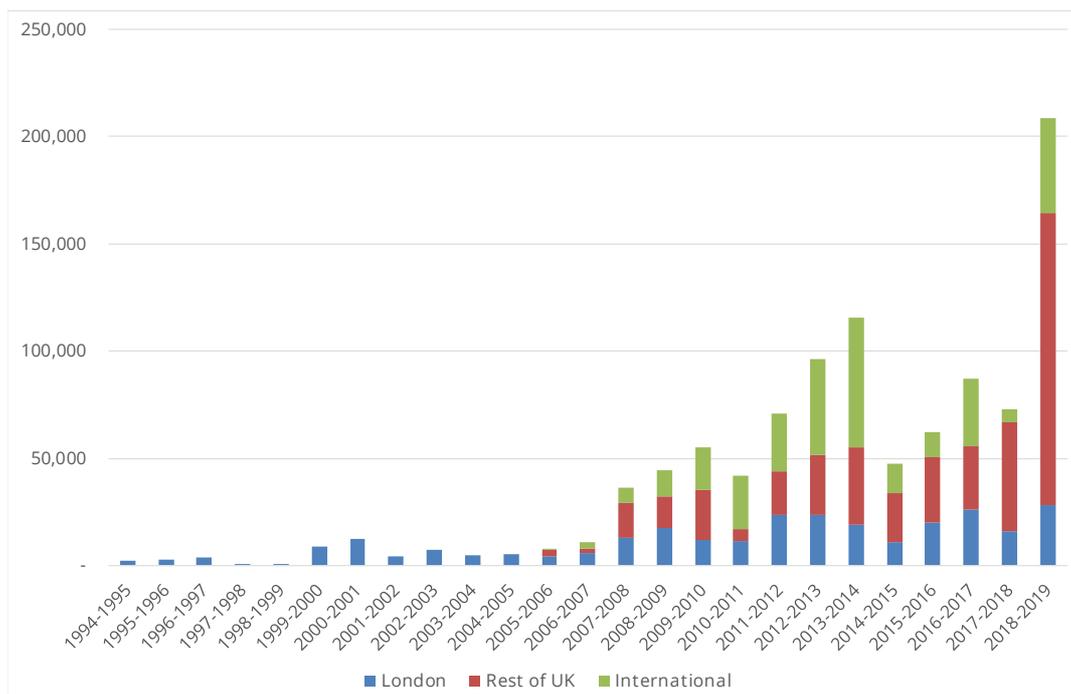
2. THE PAST

Trees for Cities was formed in 1993 out of a “pub conversation that got out of hand”. From the early days of fundraising parties, the organisation has grown and developed into the only UK-wide charity specialising in urban tree planting and green space regeneration. In 2003, the organisation rebranded from Trees for London to Trees for Cities as our activities spread across the UK and we started delivering projects overseas. In recent years, our highly successful Edible Playgrounds projects in primary schools have proliferated and become a core facet of our programme portfolio.

Throughout our 25-year history, the primary focus of the organisation has been on-the-ground delivery of projects: planting trees, regenerating green spaces, transforming school grounds. Quality of delivery and deep community engagement have been, and will continue to be, two of the fundamental foundations of the organisation’s reputation and success.

Our target areas have always been those where social and environmental deprivation overlap; where tree planting and greening projects are most needed and will have the greatest impact. Our projects have mostly been delivered in parks, housing estates, on the streets, and in woodlands. More and more of our work and focus has moved into the school realm, with the overarching aims of introducing, teaching and inspiring children about nature and all the lifelong benefits that it provides.

The following graph shows how tree planting numbers have progressed over our 25-year history:



Through the strategic planning process, we reflected on the key lessons that we have learned over a quarter of a decade of successes and failures, the most pertinent of which were identified as follows:

1. **Generational focus:** Deep and lasting change can only be made if tomorrow's generation is involved and inspired. Everything we do must be planned and delivered through the lens of our future generations and the future drivers of our cities as a whole. An ethos, understanding and appreciation of the environment must be gained during childhood and through outdoor education, yet since the 1950s, access and connection to nature is reducing each generation. The downward gradient of the 'shifting baseline syndrome' must be reversed for tomorrow's generation.
2. **Management and maintenance:** Urban trees, woodlands and green spaces cannot be planted and expected to thrive and provide maximum benefits to people and nature without suitable short, medium and long-term maintenance and management plans in place. Our focus to date has predominantly been on the shorter-term maintenance needs for newly planted trees to establish, after which we hand the reins back to the landowners. Experience has taught us, however, that we need to adopt longer-term horizons – particularly as local authority resources are being cut in many cities and towns.
3. **Protection:** Although urban trees elicit enormous public attention and support, their protection cannot be taken for granted given the wide range of growing threats and pressures. As well as planting and managing trees, there is an ever-growing need to use our expertise and reputation to ensure that existing policies and practices provide the required level of protection. After Brexit there may well be an increasing role for environmental decision-making within the UK.
4. **Impact:** Historically we have planned for and measured our impact at an output level – e.g. number of trees, projects, volunteers, schools etc. Whilst this is very valuable data and has allowed us to set plans and direction, this level of data only tells part of the story. There is a growing need to design for and measure the longer-term outcomes of our work and the impact on our target beneficiary groups and stakeholders, and to access a wider range of impact datasets.

- 5. Demand and supply:** The demand for our work is bottomless, whilst the supply will always be limited by resources, funding and organisational capacity. We need to therefore strive to ensure that our resources are targeted and directed in the most strategic manner through long-term partnerships and programme and landscape level design and delivery.



3. THE PRESENT

In 2018 – our 25th year – the organisation achieved its long-term target of planting one million urban trees (two years ahead of schedule). We are therefore at an opportunistic point to set our new vision and targets for the future.

During the course of the previous strategic plan (2015-18), the organisation underwent significant change. Through this three-year period, the organisation grew threefold in terms of both income and staff, and has hence been delivering an increasing number of projects across the country.

To support and enhance this growth a number of organisational development activities took place during this period in order to strengthen us for the future. One major (ongoing) shift has been to try to move away from an annual cycle of planning and budgeting, which has resulted in our first strategic partnerships with local authorities in London, and a number of new multi-year grants and corporate partnerships.

Other organisational development initiatives have included a re-launched website and growth of our digital platforms and presence, development of a new brand, an upgrading of our customer relationship management database and other business process systems. Our corporate volunteering and carbon offsetting services have also been significantly enhanced and grown. We have also constituted a new board of trustees.

Over this period the organisation created an Edible Playground ‘sub-strategy’, the headline of which was to create 250 Edible Playgrounds in 25 cities by 2025. By the end of 2018, 100 Edible Playgrounds had been created.

This strategy looks to build upon and exploit our strengths of today, whilst working on and being aware of our challenges and areas for improvement. Our core strengths, as identified through the strategic planning process, are seen as:

- i. Our dedicated and passionate people and ‘can do’ organisational culture.
- ii. Our strong reputation across the sector for quality of delivery.
- iii. Our expertise and reputation in engaging with and delivering through communities and volunteers.
- iv. Our ability to be nimble enough to respond to new opportunities and adapt to changing needs.
- v. Our ability to forge ahead and take positive action by delivering without introducing undue bureaucracy or barriers.

- vi. Our expertise and experience of delivering a wide range of project types across many locations.
- vii. Our cost-efficient model of working through partners outside of London and overseas.

Whilst we are an organisation with considerable strengths and robust foundations, we are – and will strive to remain – an organisation that is willing to identify and be open about areas where we could get better and be better. Key areas of improvement that have been identified are as follows:

- i. Our external face is somewhat enigmatic and under-recognised. Our focus over the years has been on high quality project delivery, but to ensure that we fully achieve our vision we must raise our profile and our voice.
- ii. Our breadth and scope are viewed as too London-centric; our UK-wide work is not yet well recognised. Linked to this point, our structures and processes are still closer to that of a grant-maker than a project partner for our UK and international Urban Forest projects.
- iii. We need to be seen within the sector as the ‘go to’ partner for larger programmes. To do this we need to be operating in the right places and at the right levels, and communicate this capacity more effectively.
- iv. Our international work is too ‘scatter-gun’ and dependent upon a single funder; it requires strategic direction in order to develop further and optimise its impact.
- v. Our enormous levels of experience and learning are lacking a comparative set of clearly documented standards and procedures that can be shared with and used by other industry experts and the wider public.
- vi. Our own organisational environmental performance is not as progressed as it should be for a leading environmental charity.
- vii. Our strength of being able to deliver such a range of project types can also be a weakness in that it can stretch us too thinly and risk a loss of focus on our primary beneficiaries and target impacts.
- viii. Our team has grown so rapidly that HR structures and processes require a fresh review and a strengthening in some areas.
- ix. Our facilities and aspects of our technology (hardware and software) require significant improvement to accommodate the changing landscape of our staffing needs and ways of working.

4. THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

Trees for Cities operates within and is guided by a complex policy environment that creates a host of guiding objectives and opportunities. The most relevant of these policies and ambitions at a national and London level are currently as follows:

25 Year Environment Plan (DEFRA)

- 'Green' our towns and cities by creating green infrastructure and planting one million urban trees.
- Encourage children to be close to nature, in and out of school, with particular focus on disadvantaged areas.
- Increase woodland in England in line with the aspiration of 12% cover by 2060: this would involve planting 180,000 hectares by end of 2042.
- Make sure there are high quality, accessible, natural spaces close to where people live and work, particularly in urban areas, and encouraging more people to spend time in them to benefit their health and wellbeing.
- Help people improve their health and wellbeing by using green spaces including through mental health services.
- Embed an 'environmental net gain' principle for development, including housing and infrastructure.
- Make 2019 a year of action for the environment, working with Step Up To Serve and other partners to help children and young people from all backgrounds to engage with nature and improve the environment.

London Environment Strategy (Mayor of London)

- Increase tree canopy cover by ten per cent by 2050 (from 20% to at least 22% of London's land area).
- Make London the first National Park City, increasing green cover to over 50%.
- Ensure all Londoners are able to enjoy the very best parks, trees and wildlife.
- Increase and improve green infrastructure in areas where Londoners, especially children, have the least amount of green space.
- London to have the best air quality of any major world city by 2050.
- London to be a zero carbon city by 2050.

Draft London Plan (Mayor of London)

- Boroughs should prepare green infrastructure strategies. In their Development Plans, boroughs should identify opportunities for tree planting in strategic locations.

- Major development proposals should contribute to the greening of London by including urban greening as a fundamental element of site and building design. The planting of additional trees should generally be included in new developments – particularly large-canopied species that provide a wider range of benefits because of the larger surface area of their canopy.
- In Development Plans, boroughs should encourage provision of space for community gardening, including for food growing, and incorporate spaces for food growing in community schemes such as in new schools.

National Planning and Policy Framework (MHCLG)

- Enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure.
- Local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the Green Belt's beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

Clean Growth Strategy (BEIS)

- (For carbon sequestration) plant up to 130,000 hectares of new woodland and implement plans for farmers to plant more trees across England.

There is also a raft of policies, statements and plans and a central, local and city level regarding many of the benefits of trees and green spaces in relation to public health, healthy play, sustainable drainage and flood mitigation, noise pollution, to name but some. Our opportunities to align with all these agendas are wide-reaching.

At the international level, our work intersects with a number of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Sustainable Cities and Communities (11) and Life on Land (15). Global businesses are progressively moving towards aligning their sustainability strategies with the SDGs, which presents us with further opportunity. Our international projects benefit vulnerable communities via linkages to food security and livelihood provision.

The global climate agenda, in particular the objectives of the Paris Agreement and the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), recognise forests and trees as critical elements both in regards to mitigating against runaway climate change through carbon sequestration, and in adapting to inevitable changes through flood reduction, heat absorption, shade provision etc.

5. THE PLAYERS

Trees for Cities' strategy will ensure that the organisation has a clear role and niche within the growing complexity of the urban environment and tree sectors. Our strategic objectives will aim to fill gaps, complement the work of our partners and other stakeholders, and develop new avenues of needs-based interventions within the sector.

Local authorities will continue to be core partners for many of our projects. In light of reduced budgets for trees and green spaces, our support and projects are as crucial as ever. We will need to work even more closely and deeply in order to ensure that our impact is optimised. As a 'critical friend' we will not be afraid to call out poor practice.

As the lines between the private and public spheres become ever less distinct so the landowners that we work with will evolve to include more **private landowners** such as developers. Creation of high quality green space in our cities can only be achieved through a dual approach of working closely with a range of public and private entities.

The need to drive generational change through engagement with children and young people dictates that we will work with an ever-widening range of **schools** and educational institutions. Our work with children and schools has reached a depth and breadth that necessitates a more joined up strategic approach.

Very large national **civil society** organisations such as the Woodland Trust, the National Trust and the RSPB are moving in strategic directions that are more urban focused and located than their historic areas of operation; rather than viewing this as a 'territorial' threat we see this as creating opportunity to further our vision and mission, and will continue to explore partnerships that best serve effectiveness and efficiency of delivery. Our philosophy is that the sector is best served through the component parts working together to achieve more than the sum of its parts, as opposed to operating in isolation or competition with others.

At a **central government level**, key departments such as DEFRA and the Forestry Commission have growing urban agendas and so we will continue to support and influence them to develop their programmes and approaches. The cross sector nature of our work and impact means that we also need to develop new links into education, health and transport departments at a central and local level, with organisations such as Public Health England and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

6. THE PURPOSE & PROPOSITION

Our Mission: *Trees for Cities is the only UK charity working at a national and international scale to improve lives by planting trees in cities. We get stuck in with local communities to cultivate lasting change in their neighbourhoods – whether it's revitalising forgotten spaces, creating healthier environments or getting people excited about growing, foraging and eating healthy food*

Our Organisational Goal: *Healthy, accessible, functional and resilient urban forests created for today and for future generations*

GENERATION TREE: PLANT, PROTECT, PROMOTE

Our Strategic Goal 1: *A new generation is enabled and inspired to plant and protect urban trees*

This is the underlying theme running through this strategy. Its significance is as follows:

Firstly, everything that we do through this strategic period will be **planned and delivered through a generational lens**. The things that we as adults do not like about cities, or that we find difficult or dangerous – polluted air, traffic, noise, safety etc. – are magnified for our children. By viewing these issues through a generational lens, we create accessible, high-quality green places to live, work and play. This lens also recognises the fundamental rights of children to grow up among trees, woods and forests with regular and frequent opportunity to connect with nature through their everyday movement³. This generation-focused strategy builds on our current and historic programmes and draws them together. It is fully inclusive for today's generations and those of the future. Our interventions will take a deeply functional approach to place-making and will ensure that there is freedom to undertake everyday

³ Unicef defines child-friendly as a city, town, community or any system of local governance committed to improving the lives of children within their jurisdiction by realising their rights as articulated in the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). In practice, it is a municipality in which the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions. The number municipalities are already working towards CFC recognition in the UK.

outdoor activities (e.g. walking to school, the shops or the park) in high-quality environments as well as opportunities to interact and learn about nature through activities and experiences that are inclusive and accessible.

To maximise our impact, we will aim to support a new generation of individuals and groups to pick up the mantle for urban trees. To complement the ‘top down’ approach of organisations like ourselves, we aim to **create a ‘bottom up’ movement** of people who are resourced and motivated to initiate and deliver their own urban tree projects. We will develop a ‘community hub’ that will provide information, support and forums to such groups.

Secondly, we will **broaden out our historic primary activity** (planting) into the **protection** and **promotion** of urban trees. In regards to ‘protection’ we will ensure that all our projects have short, medium and long term tree maintenance and management plans in place so that they remain fit for purpose for today’s and tomorrow’s generations. Through developing and expanding our strategic partnership model with landowners and through the growth of our corporate volunteer service, we will be able to provide a greater level of support to ensure that the required level of maintenance and management of trees can be delivered in light of shrinking local authority resources. We will also significantly enhance the level of good practice information available to the general public so that they are able and motivated to take local action to protect and look after their trees and green spaces.

In regards to ‘promotion’, we will develop an advocacy arm of the organisation to ensure that correct practices relating to urban tree management and education policy are adopted by key stakeholders within government, the private sector and civil society. Where there are weaknesses or gaps in the policy environment we will advocate for change and improvement. In unison with our advocacy, we will be louder with our calls for change to raise awareness about what we do and why to a wider audience than at present. In short, we will aim to create a generational movement for urban trees.

Our **Strategic Goal 2**: *To prove and improve how our work is creating a generational shift and impact*

The second strategic goal for this strategy is not aimed at achieving a number or target, but to ensure that our impact is most effectively understood, measured, communicated and used to inform best practice – to guarantee that we know what ‘excellence’ is so we can constantly and consistently strive towards it. The development of a new Theory of Change model will provide a framework for measuring and determining our impact.

Underpinning our impact over the next three years our headline objectives are to:

- Plant half a million trees across the UK and internationally.
- Create 150 Edible Playgrounds across the country, achieving our strategic aim of reaching 250 Edible Playgrounds three years earlier than the target date of 2025.
- Measurably improve the air quality of 12 of the most polluted schools in London.
- Develop a new 'Forgotten Places' programme across the UK.
- Achieve at least one major policy / advocacy transformation.
- Deliver an awareness-raising campaign that has national reach and impact.
- Achieve social value certification for our London and UK projects.



7A. THE PLAN: PLANT

We will continue to grow our 'core' work of planting trees and creating Edible Playgrounds in the parts of our towns and cities with the highest need. We will strive to make our projects as effective and efficient as possible. The underlying rationale for our tree planting projects will be to create high quality functional green spaces that maximise the multiple benefits that green infrastructure can provide to people and nature.

LONDON'S URBAN FOREST

For our **London urban forest projects**, we will strive to maintain our position as the leading tree planting organisation in the capital.

We will continue to work very closely with the Greater London Authority and the London Tree Partnership in order to move towards the longer-term goal within the London Environment Strategy of increasing the city's canopy cover by 10% by 2050, through planting around 100,000 trees across 50 community projects. We will continue to create new woodland habitat and plant larger, standard trees in open green spaces, on housing estates, in schools etc. We will progress our programme approaches to impact at a social and environmental landscape scale.

To maximise our focus and impact, we will continue to develop and expand our strategic partnership model with local authorities. We will aim to have five strategic partnerships in place by the end of the period, each one co-designed with the borough in question to achieve maximum impact. We will aim for a diversity and spread of partnerships across regions of the city, including within inner and outer boroughs.

We will further hone our cluster approach – multi-year interventions that target 'social landscapes' of high social and environmental deprivation – and, where appropriate, look to identity new cluster programmes within our strategic partnership model.

Having delivered a successful street tree programmes across most London boroughs since 2011, we will continue the momentum by engaging more closely with communities and resident groups to establish a London street tree fund. Through a mechanism of supporter engagement, we will identity and target London's greyest streets and initiate an innovative resident-led programme to 'green the grey'.

We will develop the commercial contracting capabilities and capacities of the organisation, working in partnership with developers and construction companies to provide design, delivery and maintenance services.

UK URBAN FORESTS

For our **UK urban forest projects**, we will develop and deliver strategic approaches that focus on multiannual, high impact programmes in target areas of most need. Going forwards, our UK urban forest programme will be developed around three main work-streams:

1. **Forgotten Places:** We will develop a programme to target the towns and cities across the country that currently are ‘not on the map’: where there is minimal investment and a lack of capacity, combined with low canopy cover high levels of social deprivation. A number of these conurbations are located in coastal regions. We will deliver planting projects that raise awareness, activism and motivation from individuals and communities to push for catalytic change. Where feasible we will support the initiation of new ‘Proto Community Forest’ entities that will adopt the principles, processes and aims of the existing community forest community through a ‘hub and spoke’ support mechanism.
2. **Strategic Partnerships:** We will develop strategic partnerships with at least two city authorities, to build on the successful strategic partnership model that we have developed with local authorities in London.
3. **Northern Forest:** As a steering group committee member, we will play a key role in helping to deliver the vision for the Northern Forest, by working closely with the Community Forest network and local authorities.

We will continue to deliver UK urban forest projects through a network of local partners, but we will develop our model to play a significantly more supportive and active role in project design, delivery, community engagement, maintenance, and promoting best practice.

Through the above work-streams and by aiming to plant 250,000 trees across the UK over the three-year period, we will grow our visibility in the UK so that we are rightly viewed as an organisation with national reach and impact.

INTERNATIONAL URBAN FORESTS

For our **international projects**, we will develop a ‘sub-strategy’ in order to provide more structure and direction to our future work. We have an ambition to give our international work a push forward both in scope and scale, but within a structured framework given the virtually limitless options of number of countries and conurbations where we could hypothetically work.

Although the details of our future approach relies upon the creation of this sub-strategy, it is highly probable that it will align with key international agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (e.g. goals relating to food security, livelihoods and air quality etc.) and the global climate movement.

Prior to development of the sub-strategy, we will explore the potential of forming partnerships with international development organisations working on urban issues such as food security, sustainable livelihoods and post-conflict recovery. We have a skill set to offer that could provide a new strand of activities to such organisations to deliver against their wider development objectives.

We will also assess the geographical scope of our future operations. The majority of our overseas planting projects over the years have been delivered in East Africa. We will answer the question of whether, looking forwards, we should have more or less geographical reach.

Our international target is to plant 150,000 trees in at least 10 countries.

SCHOOLS

For our **schools** projects, we will develop a new 'sub-strategy' that will bring our various interventions with schools under a single, more joined up programme and approach.

For our Edible Playgrounds projects we will work towards our high level ambition that every primary school child has the right and ability to have access to food growing space within their school grounds – in order that future generations have the tools to lead healthier lives and connect with nature. We believe that this is part of the vital shift that is needed to transform the current norm of indoor learning towards the outdoor classroom.



We will ensure that our partner schools have access to the best possible support and teaching materials so that all Edible Playground projects can mature and improve with age. We will motivate and inspire other organisations to join the school food growing movement, the ultimate aims of which can only be fully realised through collective action.

We will deliver a ‘Planting Healthy Air’ programme in London to transform the grounds of twelve primary schools most affected by toxic air⁴.

We will explore further opportunities to link and integrate our school projects with the national curriculum and OFSTED.

7B. THE PLAN: PROTECT

MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

We will ensure that **all projects we deliver have associated short, medium and long-term maintenance and management plans**, and through further expansion of our corporate volunteering programme take a more targeted and strategic approach towards the support of high need / high impact urban green spaces – helping to fill crucial gaps in local authorities’ maintenance capabilities.

We will ensure that partners and funders understand the importance of maintenance so that we avoid inadvertently creating short-termism in the delivery of tree planting and greening projects.

We will work more closely with tree officer associations and local authority teams to understand how our work can best align with and complement their needs and programmes.

COMMUNITY HUB

Through the creation of a community hub, we will significantly **expand the information we have available for the general public and organisations** which demonstrate good practices, answer frequently asked questions and provide signposting to other external sources of information. We should be the ‘go to’ organisation for questions and matters about urban trees. Currently we receive many enquiries through email and so the demand for information is very real – we must provide a more structured means of meeting this need.

As well as virtual knowledge provision, we will – through training volunteer supervisors, capacity building local residents at planting events and supporting community groups – enhance skills and capabilities with the aim of catalysing local action.

⁴ Based on analysis undertaken by the Greater London Authority: <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/pollution-and-air-quality/mayors-school-air-quality-audit-programme>

7C. THE PLAN: PROMOTE

ADVOCACY

We will become a **more prominent advocator and mediator** for issues that threaten the wellbeing of our urban trees. We will help to open doors and bring parties together to discuss and work through issues. We will be an informed voice and work with likeminded partners on such issues.

The range of risks and issues that trees and green spaces face are multiple – including declining local authority budgets, exaggerated insurance and subsidence claims, limitations in the tree protection order (TPO) process, inconsistency in interpretation of highways and other linear infrastructure specifications, to name but some – and hence we will need to carefully plan and prioritise for where and how we focus our efforts and resources.

The first step in this process will be to create a plan to identify our priority issues, where we may realistically achieve positive outcomes, how and with whom we would go about achieving these, the resources and activities we would need to undertake etc. Only then will we be in a position to determine and communicate further what our more specific targets will be.

By the end of the strategic period, we aim to achieve at least one major policy / advocacy transformation.

MOVEMENTS

We will aim to **create movements** around urban trees and green spaces. Through volunteer events, in schools and over social media, we connect with thousands of engaged people every year many of whom are eager to take a range of actions to help the cause. We must use this voice to create more momentum.

Our #GenerationTree campaign, the underpinning concept of which is to inspire this generation to plant more trees than we are losing, will be further developed and expanded.

There will be a clear synergy between our ‘movements’ and our advocacy objectives – the increase in the public’s awareness and voice will create ‘strategic noise’ to influence decision-makers to adequately protect, support, fund and enhance our urban environments for this and future generations.

By the end of the strategic period, we aim to deliver at least one awareness-raising movement that has demonstrable national reach and impact – the specific parameters of which will be defined early in this strategic period.



8. THE PARAMETERS

In order to successfully deliver against our goals and targets over the three-year period there are a number of internal limiting factors that we will need to overcome and opportunities that we will need to seize:

FUNDING

- We will maintain a diverse funding base and aim to grow all of our main income streams (grants, landowners, business, and individuals).
- As we develop more programme level work and partnerships we will aim to secure more multiannual grants to provide a solid foundation for further development.
- We will strive to develop deep partnerships with businesses that have robust environmental and social credentials and have shared visions to make our cities greener. We will support these businesses to demonstrate and communicate their positive actions.
- We will grow our carbon offsetting service, which will become a major component of our UK woodland planting objectives.
- We will continue to grow our corporate volunteering opportunities, with a particular focus on delivering more mass volunteering, multisite events.
- We will formalise our commercial offering to provide high quality, competitively costed services to developers, construction firms etc., and to further diversify our income streams.
- Through our expanding digital presence, we will significantly increase our supporter and follower base, and in parallel grow individual giving.
- We will develop improved propositions and a case for support for major donors.

PEOPLE

- We will develop our staff along the guiding principles of ‘autonomy’, ‘mastery’ and ‘purpose’⁵. We will ensure that all staff members have the scope and freedom in their roles to allow natural capacities and motivations to flourish; we will ensure that staff members have the skills and training to excel; we will aim to provide an environment whereby all staff feel that they are making a difference

⁵ See: Daniel Pink – Drive (Canongate Books Ltd, 2011)

every day. Our staff development processes will be re-crafted around these principles.

- We will strive to be an organisation that offers careers, not just stepping stones.
- We will augment the knowledge and understanding of trees, horticulture and soft and hard landscaping throughout the organisation so that all staff members have a sufficient understanding of our core work.
- We will improve communications and flow of information between teams.
- In light of an ever-growing portfolio of projects, we will assess our project management processes and systems and make improvements accordingly.
- We will strive to improve pay and benefits so that we retain and attract talent, and reward successes and dedication appropriately.
- We will ensure managers have the skills and confidence to develop and coach their team members to get the best out of them, to manage effectively, hold 'difficult conversations' and to take tough decisions.
- To underpin our new vision, we will establish a children / young people steering group within the charity including external stakeholders to hone our approaches and thinking.
- We will ensure that our board of trustees has the required information, structures and blend of skills to provide highly effective governance.
- We will assess and develop our future Patron structure and membership based on the revised strategic direction.

FACILITIES

- In light of a significant increase in staff numbers and our aims to continue to deliver more impact, combined with the limitation that our team is currently split across two offices, we will move into new premises with the aim of mitigating these constraining factors.
- We will ensure the design of our facilities are in line with our culture and supports a high performance workforce.

TECHNOLOGY

- We will ensure that all staff members have access to appropriate hardware and software so that technology is not hindering performance at an individual or organisational level.
- We will implement a new cloud-based finance system that will improve our financial budgeting, forecasting and analysis that will link to a new project management system that supports shared project funding and resource planning.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

- We will assess and improve our own organisational environmental performance with the ambition that our net environmental impact – particularly in regards to our carbon footprint, emissions from transportation, waste and materials – will be as close to zero as possible.





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