

W H I T E  
R O S E  
F O R E S T  
S T R A T E G Y  
L E E D S

2020



WHITE ROSE  
FOREST



# Foreword

“Last year, Leeds declared a climate and biodiversity emergency. When we asked residents how the city should rise to these challenges of our time, almost all residents agreed on proposals to increase and improve our woodlands and green spaces.

“This universal popularity of our wonderful woodlands is testament to the vital roles these spaces play. They are havens, both for local wildlife and for local people. They are healers, proven to benefit our physical and mental wellbeing. And by capturing carbon and mitigating flood risk, they help us prevent global warming and protect us from some of the climate emergency’s worst impacts. Many of us have valued these spaces more than ever this year. There’s never been a better time to grow more of them.

“The White Rose Forest Strategy for Leeds will transform Leeds by increasing tree cover from 17% to 33% by 2050. This report outlines our strategy for working in partnership with other local authorities, academic institutions, businesses, community and third sector organisations, and residents to make this forest a reality. By planting and protecting millions of trees and ensuring that no household in Leeds is further than 500 metres from green space over the next 30 years, this strategy seeks to improve the quality, quantity and access to our woodlands. We can’t plant our way out of a climate emergency—but delivering this strategy successfully will enable Leeds to become a carbon neutral city quicker than not delivering it. That time makes a difference.

“Like all of our most ambitious plans, the White Rose Forest strategy isn’t something that the council can realise on its own. Landowners, businesses and volunteers will all have an important part to play. Of course, the council is

leading by example: we have already committed to planting 5.8 million trees on council land to contribute towards the Forest. But we’ll need the continued support of and engagement with the city to make this a reality. Thankfully, we’ve had plenty of interest so far from residents and businesses and our tree planting volunteer days have been incredibly popular. Our recently launched Woodland Creation Scheme will continue to engage and involve the public going forwards.

“I truly believe that this strategy represents an unprecedented opportunity to create a city that is healthier, happier and greener for everyone in Leeds. I hope you enjoy reading it in full.”

**Councillor Lisa Mulherin**

**Executive Member for climate change,  
transport and sustainable development**

**Leeds City Council**

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## OUR VISION

'We want to create a genuinely sustainable, well wooded landscape which will benefit the people, economy and wildlife of Leeds - increasing canopy cover from 17% to 33% by 2050'

### BENEFITS:

Carbon capture

Supporting local wildlife

Reducing flooding

Encouraging business investment

Social

Health

# WHITE ROSE FOREST STRATEGY

2020

WRF in Leeds will contribute to the White Rose and Northern Forests

BY 2030:

Tree and woodland planting in the district to be increased by **1500 hectares**

Including the planting of **500 hectares** by the council

offsetting **26,000 tonnes** of carbon emissions



THE COUNCIL WILL WORK WITH:



### HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS:

1. Coordinate the planning, design and planting of trees in Leeds 🌳
2. Identify areas to plant trees 🌳 🚧 🏠 🏡 🏢
3. Promote the WRF and the importance of trees to all 🌳 🌳 🌳 🌳
4. Protect existing trees through planning, development and engagement 🌳 🏠 🏡
5. Secure and signpost to funding and donation opportunities 🌳 🌳 🌳 🌳
6. Research better methods of planning and planting 🌳 🌳
7. Collect data to monitor progress 🌳 🌳 🌳 🌳



WHITE ROSE FOREST

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The White Rose Forest is a community forest and part of the Northern Forest—an ambitious plan to plant 50 million trees by 2042 across the North.

The Northern Forest is focused on planting trees in and around the city regions of Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Hull; areas which currently have some of the lowest proportions of tree canopy cover in the country.

By expanding and creating new woodlands, the project aims to make people in the North happier and healthier, provide new habitats for wildlife, lock up an estimated 8 million tons of carbon, and bolster the economy by an estimated £2 billion through increased tourism, raised property values, job creation, and reduced flood risk to 190,000 homes.

The Northern Forest is being led by the, Community Forest Trust and four community forests.

Tasked with delivering the Leeds City Region and North Yorkshire's share of the Northern Forest, the White Rose Forest is an existing joint venture between more than thirty local authorities and partners. Around 9,434 (17%) of the 55,170 hectares that make up the Leeds District is currently covered by trees. The White Rose Forest aims to increase this to 33%.



**Figure 1: The Northern Forest**



Given the obvious benefits of increasing the quality, quantity and access to green space, Leeds City Council intends to play a key supporting role in the delivery of the forest, particularly here in Leeds. Ensuring the success of the White Rose Forest will support the three pillars of the Best Council Plan: improving the city's health and wellbeing, promoting inclusive economic growth, and tackling the climate emergency. It will also contribute to Leeds's aspiration to be the most child friendly city.

Outlining how our city's share of this goal will be achieved is the purpose of this White Rose Forest in Leeds strategy. This strategy outlines:

- How increased tree canopy cover will be achieved
- How this work will be funded
- Where trees are to be planted
- The important role of communities and organisations
- The role that volunteers will play
- Community engagement and communications

Ours is an ambitious strategy and making it a reality will require a truly citywide effort. Having declared a climate emergency, the council itself intends to lead by example. The council has pledged to plant 1250 hectares of trees on its own land by 2050—a fifth of which

has already been identified and will be planted by 2025—and has so far committed £1.5 million to support its own tree planting.

However, the council does not have the resource to deliver this strategy unilaterally. We will work in partnership with landholders, landowners, businesses, communities and volunteers who will all have an important part to play. Positively, we know from previous consultation that Leeds residents overwhelmingly support tree planting. We will seek to work jointly and collaboratively wherever possible.

We will approach the city's businesses and institutions for support and appeal to their corporate social responsibility and environmental objectives. Those wishing to contribute to the White Rose Forest will be able to provide land, sponsorship, or value-in-kind donations that help make the forest possible while improving the lives of neighbouring communities.

Third sector and community organisations interested in tree planting will also play a key role. We will work with these groups to plant and maintain trees as well as to deliver genuine community engagement. The council will work closely with groups and charities including the Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust, Groundwork, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, RSPB,

Aire Rivers Trust, Voluntary Action Leeds, and community climate hubs.

The council will also continue to collaborate with the University of Leeds on related research projects, such as those linked to improving the planning of tree planting.

Finally, when preparing this strategy we have been mindful to ensure that this document closely aligns with the principles of other relevant regional and national policy visions that are currently in development. These include the joint venture's own White Rose Forest Plan and the government's draft England Tree Strategy and Environment Bill. The council will refine our strategy as these policy documents are finalised. We will regularly engage and work closely with national authorities including the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and Natural England and other organisations such as the Woodland Trust.

## 2. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF TREES?



## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarises the many benefits of planting trees from carbon capture and storage to improving biodiversity as well as the positive impact they can have on health and wellbeing

## 2.2 CARBON CAPTURE AND STORAGE

In response to the climate emergency there has been an emerging effort to reduce carbon emissions in all parts of the economy. One of the key drivers of this strategy is to increase tree planting in the District due to the capacity of trees to capture and store carbon.

As trees and plants grow they take carbon dioxide from the air and store approximately half of it in their trunks, branches, roots and other biomass; the other half is released back again as the plant respire. The overall removal of carbon dioxide from the air is referred to as carbon sequestration and over a period of decades, carbon will accumulate in woodlands to provide a long-term carbon store. Commonly the amount of carbon taken up by a woodland is quantified in terms of area (typically one hectare) over a specified time horizon (for example 30 years) can vary between around 100 to 300 tonnes carbon dioxide per hectare after 30 years dependent upon site conditions. The recently published England Tree Strategy also emphasises the importance of trees and carbon capture.

*Figure 2: Carbon Capture and Storage.*

Local Authority	Carbon dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ) emissions <sup>8</sup> in 2018 (ktCO <sub>2</sub> )	Percentage of UK CO <sub>2</sub> emissions in 2018 (%)	Total area (hectares)	Tree canopy cover in 2018 (hectares)	Tree canopy cover in 2018 (%)
Bradford	2,036	0.6	36,642	4,647	12.7
Calderdale	1,039	0.3	36,392	4,336	11.9
Craven	349	0.1	117,881	6,327	5.4
Harrogate	1,081	0.3	130,913	13,797	10.5
Kirklees	1,910	0.6	40,860	6,199	15.2
Leeds	3,905	1.1	55,172	9,468	17.2
Selby	930	0.3	60,222	5,988	9.9
Wakefield	2,073	0.6	33,861	4,778	14.1
York	821	0.2	27,201	2,926	10.8
<b>Total WRF (West Yorks)</b>	<b>10,962</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>202,927</b>	<b>29,428</b>	<b>14.5</b>
<b>Total WRF (North Yorks)</b>	<b>3,181</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>336,217</b>	<b>29,039</b>	<b>8.6</b>
<b>Total WRF</b>	<b>14,143</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>539,145</b>	<b>58,466</b>	<b>10.8</b>

The Committee for Climate Change (CCC) have advised government that in order to help achieve [net zero greenhouse gas emissions](#), the UK should plant at least 30 000 hectares per year up to 2050 to lock up the remaining residual atmospheric carbon once we have achieved all possible reductions in emissions: To highlight the scale of this challenge, only 2,330 hectares were planted in England during 2019-2020 with a total of 13,460 hectares across the whole UK.

Scientists from the University of Leeds used the CCC's methodology to calculate the increase in Leeds's tree canopy cover that is required for Leeds to make a contribution to this national tree planting effort in proportion to its greenhouse gas emissions. As a District ideally we have to create between 338 and 564 ha of new woodland each year from 2020 to 2050. This represents an increase from the current 17% tree canopy cover to 33% tree canopy cover in 30 years.

It is anticipated that the regional White Rose Forest Plan will be completed and published in the autumn of 2021. Figure 2 compares the area and carbon emissions of Leeds with the other authorities in the White Rose Forest area.

## 2.3 BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity is the 'living' part of the environment. It is the wealth and variety of all living things, including animals, fungi, plants and micro-organisms, but also the communities and habitats they form together. It includes not only the variety that exists between different species but also the variation and differences between individuals of the same species.

The species and habitats that make up global biodiversity represent vital natural resources because of the foodstuffs, medicines and materials they provide and the genetic resources they offer. Even more fundamental is the role that living things play in regulating the atmosphere and climate and in breaking-down and recycling waste. The aesthetic and spiritual value of the living world is also important and there is wide acceptance of the obligation to pass on to future generations the natural wealth that we have inherited. In addition, there is a moral argument to conserve biodiversity for its own sake. As part of the climate emergency it is recognised that failure to address the recent decline in biodiversity at a global and local scale will lead to threats to food supply due to the lack of pollinating insects.

At a national level the dramatic loss of biodiversity throughout over recent years has been highlighted in the [2016 State of Nature report](#) compiled by scientists from 50 conservation organisations who stated that the UK has lost significantly more biodiversity over the long term than the world average. It is ranked 29<sup>th</sup> lowest out of 218 countries world-wide for depletion of biodiversity.

Tree planting is not the panacea for biodiversity loss as there are other habitats which can contribute more diversity however in most cases it is a driver for increased biodiversity.

## 2.4 HEALTH

It is generally accepted that trees in urban environments as individual specimens, in groups or as woodland can have an influence over people's mental and physical wellbeing which is well evidenced in documents such as Forest Research and at the University of Washington. A [recent study](#) commissioned by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) found that in 2015, it is estimated there were 5,800 fewer respiratory hospital admissions, 1,300

**Figure 3: Flood Alleviation through Natural Flood Management**

fewer cardiovascular hospital admissions, 27,000 fewer life years lost and 1,900 fewer premature deaths as a result of pollution removal by plants. This resulted in an estimated saving of over £1 billion of avoided health costs in 2015 alone. The benefits of open spaces in mental health is also highlighted in the publication [Thriving with Nature](#) published by the mental health foundation. Accessible woodland can be used by the community for all forms of recreation and exercise including walking, running, cycling, dog walking play and relaxation.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE**

### **2.5 FLOOD ALLEVIATION**

Natural flood management involves the slowing of floodwater and storage of water in the catchment area of rivers to reduce flows and flooding downstream. This is achieved by natural interventions such as building small scale leaky dams and planting trees. Planting trees has demonstrable benefits in reducing flooding risk which increases water infiltration, reducing and slowing runoff on farmland. The Council has partnered with the Environment Agency and other organisations to carry out natural flood management which includes tree planting in the upper River Aire catchment.



### **2.6 URBAN COOLING**

Climate change will result in increased temperatures especially in urban areas and trees, parklands, gardens and green spaces can lower temperatures significantly. Grassed surfaces in tree shade can be 15-20°C cooler than tarmac and the air temperature in tree shade can be 4-7°C lower than in the sun. Urban parks with dense vegetation are on average 1°C cooler than built up areas during the day.

### **2.7 ATTRACTING AND RETAINING BUSINESS INVESTMENT**

One of the main driving forces for the original creation of the WRF was to provide a “well wooded landscape” in West Yorkshire to support economic growth by attracting and retaining business investment. Trees therefore have a very important role in place making in urban settings and adding value to investment and development in recreating quality urban spaces as a setting and attractor to investment. The Aire Park development west of the city centre being a prime example with a central park being instrumental in drawing in housing and office investment. The large annual investment in the City which amounts to £100's

millions every year will be leveraged to achieve the outcomes envisaged in this strategy by raising the profile of a strategic approach to tree planting in which developers can play an important part. The Council will continue to advocate for extensive tree planting as part of development schemes. The WRF will be able to bring in extra funding to support non planning related tree planting schemes and enable community involvement and engagement in schemes as appropriate.

A report commissioned by Glasgow City Council showed that as well as attracting more talent, businesses located next to newly regenerated green space showed better staff retention and morale, specifically due to the ameliorated environment. If workers can see a natural environment from their workspace, studies show that they report fewer ailments and greater job satisfaction.

Woodland can also increase the value of property. In the report - Microeconomic Evidence for the Benefits of Investment in the

Environment 2 by [Natural England](#), a property close to a large public open space is on average about 3.5% (£8,664.0) more expensive than a similar property far from any publicly accessible green space. Having a view over a green or a blue space further increases property price by £5,369.7 (2.0%).

## 2.8 NATURAL CAPITAL

The Office for National Statistics (ONS), together with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), are developing [natural capital accounts](#) for the UK to offer a comprehensive and consistent framework to organise environmental information so that the benefits of nature are better recognised. Natural capital as a concept is “the elements of nature that directly or indirectly produce value to people, including ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, minerals, the air and oceans, as well as natural processes and functions” ([Natural Capital Committee, 2017](#)). The non-market benefits of

woodland exceed the market benefits of timber by approximately 12 times; timber represents £275.4 million out of £3.3 billion total annual value of [woodland](#) in 2017 according to the ONS.

### 3. WHERE ARE WE GOING TO PLANT TREES AND WOODLANDS?



### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the various factors which will define where tree planting will be carried out to increase benefits to the city. This ranges from a tool developed by the University of Leeds, the planning framework, constraints and other factors. The challenges and process behind planting trees on council land is also described.

At a broad level there will be several approaches to how areas of tree planting are defined:

#### **Approach 1 - reactive**

A landowner will identify an area of their own land to plant on which they will progress with little or minimal assistance from the Council or partners. This will proceed regardless of council ambitions but level of grant support may be affected by its location. An Expression of interest will be lodged with the WRF Funders Group with the application measured against WRF policies and themes.

#### **Approach 2 - reactive**

A community group or member of the public comes forward with a proposal for a council owned area on which they wish to plant. The request will go through an appraisal process as shown in the section 3.3 including services and

contribution to planning policy as below. Appropriate assistance will be given to help them achieve their ambitions.

The Systematic Conservation Planning Tool (see section 3.1) will be used in the following approaches:

#### **Approach 3 proactive**

Council carries out planning of tree planting as part of a road scheme, flood alleviation scheme or imposes a section 106 agreement or biodiversity net gain on a developer. The council will use the relevant planning policies related to tree planting to assist where the planting should be carried out and use Green Street and Landscapes for Water guidance as appropriate.

#### **Approach 4 proactive**

Council receives funding from a company, individual who do not specify where the funding is to be allocated. The Council will use it for tree planting which will satisfy existing priorities and planning policies combined with the Conservation Planning Tool.

#### **Approach 5 proactive**

Tree planting is planned by a neighbourhood planning group, a ward or a collection of wards. The planning is initially guided by the

Conservation Planning Tool and by this approach will be relevant to the council's proactive approach to tree planting in rural areas which will be adopted in key areas such as Natural Floodplain Management projects and other identified areas. There will be a communications campaign and local partners will be drawn together to identify and engage with landowners in a local area. The quality of agricultural land will be a key factor in the identification of areas to target for tree planting.

### 3.1 SYSTEMATIC CONSERVATION PLANNING TOOL

The Council and partners will assume an area based approach to planning tree planting which will use the Systematic Conservation Planning (SCP) tool developed by the University of Leeds in partnership with the WRF and the Council. The tool works by combining maps or layers showing different socio economic and physical features of the landscape and combining these through a mathematical algorithm to identify the optimal areas for planting. The layers represent the following:

- a) The opportunity cost, or difficulty, in terms of converting current land use to woodland.
- b) An index of social deprivation.
- c) Carbon sequestration potential.
- d) Existing natural areas and biodiversity.
- e) Existing urban form.

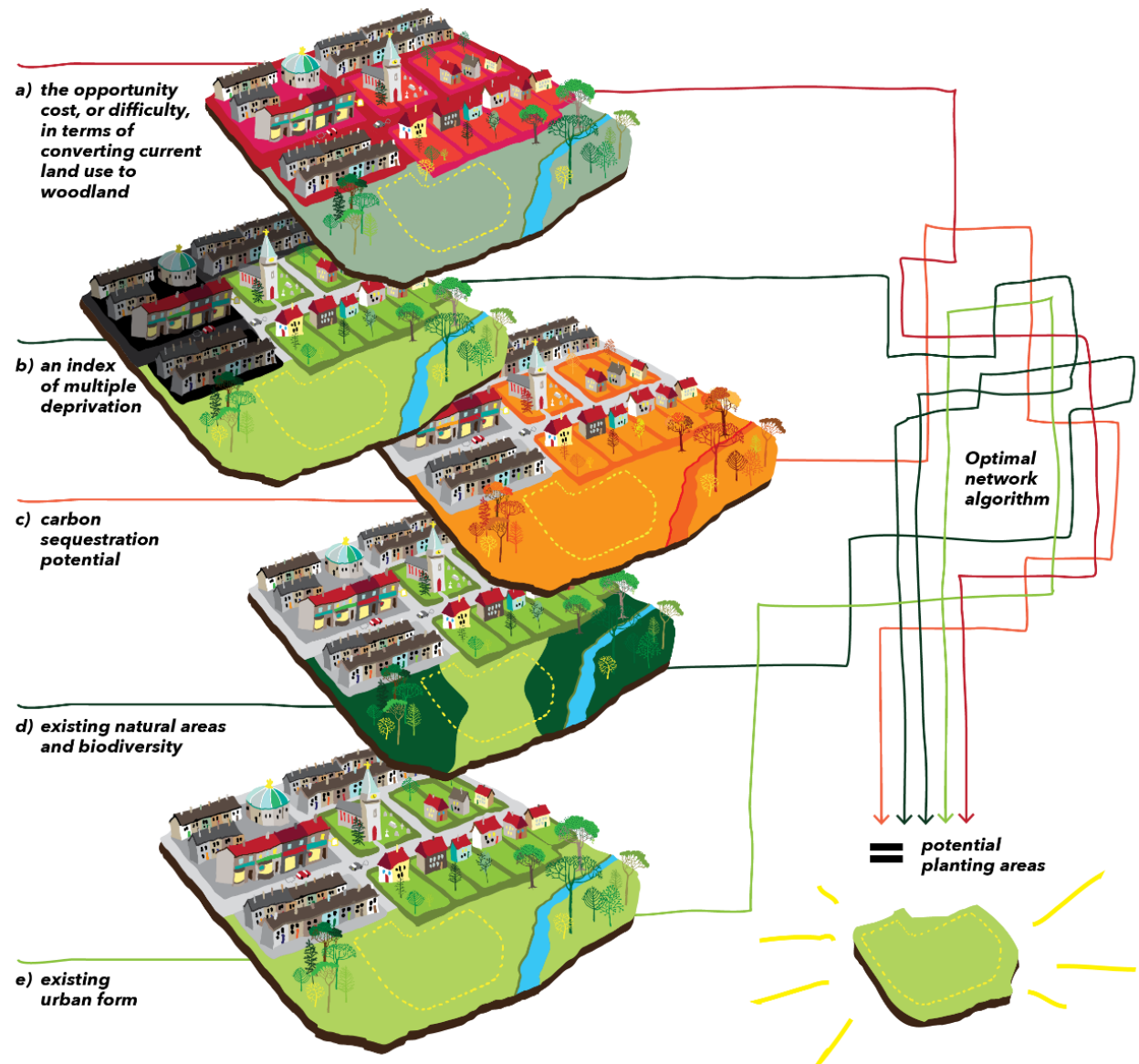


Figure 4: Systematic Conservation Planning Tool

The output will be used to guide the prioritisation of woodland creation in the short term but also for planning a long-term woodland creation strategy for Leeds. Areas will be identified for planting through a series of maps which will demonstrate the most beneficial areas to create woodland, and how these areas should be linked up to produce an optimal network of woodlands by 2050. The potential planting areas will require further feasibility work

This approach helps to identify a spatial network of woodland creation sites to achieve multiple benefits to:

- Meet 2050 carbon sequestration targets;
- Enhance and connect biodiversity;
- Increase woodland provision in low income areas; and
- Assist with flood protection.

### 3.2 PLANTING TREES ON PRIVATE LAND

Organisations, businesses, rural landowners who own land which they are willing to plant on can of course carry this out without any assistance. Constraints such as legal charges on land, planning, underground and overhead utilities will still apply and require due diligence. Subject to demands on the Council

resources and the demands placed on it by other landowners at the time the council is able to assist woodland planning and planting in a number of ways. Third sector organisations may also be able to assist:

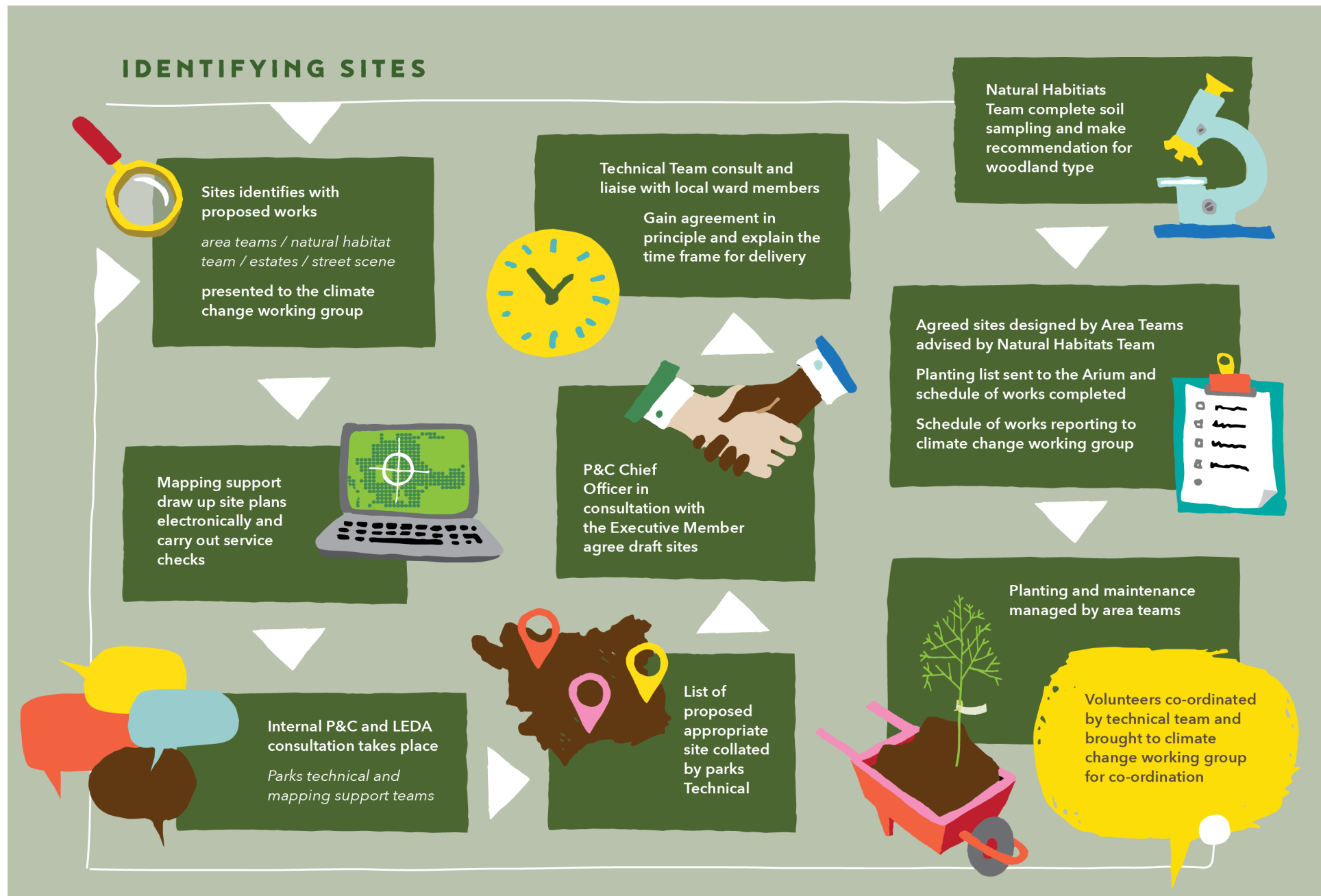
- Simple design advice and drawing up of plans dependent on the size of the area.
- Preparation of simple location plans for submission to the White Rose Forest Funding Group.
- Guidance as to whether areas fall within WRF themed areas such as Landscape for Water, Green Streets which will be beneficial for funding and assistance.
- Provide guidance only for any planning issues.
- Advise on how planting will fit in with the overall strategy and contribute to benefits.
- Bring other partners to the scheme which may provide additional benefits.
- Provide advice on community consultation.
- Organisation of community / employee planting days.
- Circulation of information on planting plans and activities through the council's social media channels.

### 3.3 PLANTING TREES ON COUNCIL OWNED LAND

The Council has examined its landholding with a view to tree planting and has identified over 100 sites which have been assessed. The decision making process to ensure a site is suitable for woodland takes at least two months. There are two designations of land owned by the Council which affect how the decision to plant takes place:

1. **Land managed by Parks and Countryside Service which has a greenspace planning policy protection:** Tree planting on these sites which comes from the Council itself or from the community will be considered using the established process for the ongoing Woodland Creation project shown on Figure 5.

Figure 5: Woodland Creation Scheme land approval process.



## 2. Land with the Council's wider estate and land without greenspace planning policy protection:

Sites for woodland planting will be put forward by the Council or by the community and will be considered for tree planting against the following criteria:

- Council operational needs
- Alternative development opportunities – e.g. housing, employment
- Alternative recreational use for well-being – e.g. sports pitches, open space
- Alternative renewable energy opportunities
- Beneficial agricultural use/food production
- Grazing or mowing land for agriculture or livestock
- Suitability for tree planting, ground conditions, planning allocation.

Once a site has been approved for tree planting it will be passed to Parks and Countryside where it will go through the process outlined above.

## 3.4 PURCHASING LAND

Given the relative lack of sites for large scale planting consideration will be given if grant or private funding streams allow for the purchase of suitable land for tree planting. At 2020 the approximate price of a hectare of agricultural land was £17,000. There are companies who actively sell woodlands. Scope may also be considered to approach land agents in rural areas to identify land which could be available to purchase.

## 3.5 REGENERATION AND MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

The Council will continue to collaborate and work with developers on the £100 million annual large scale development and regeneration investment in Leeds and seek ways to maximise woodland and tree planting potential from these schemes in a coordinated way.

## 3.6 PLANNING INFLUENCES

This section focuses on the policies of the Council's Local Plan, in particular those in the adopted Core Strategy (2019) which relate to the protection of current trees, the identification of areas with low tree cover and target areas for additional tree planting

(including areas of deprivation) which will help identify where planting should take place.

## LEEDS CORE STRATEGY

The Council's [Core Strategy](#) is the main strategic document within the Local Plan for Leeds and sets out the strategic policy framework for the district to 2028 and a housing requirement to 2033. It comprises a long-term spatial vision and strategic objectives for the District which includes the designation of land for specific land uses. The planting of trees in the district is guided by the core strategy (pages 108 – 116) which has specific policies relating to green infrastructure and woodland planting. The Strategy was adopted in November 2016 and contains the following relevant policies:

### ***Policy G1: Enhancing and extending green infrastructure***

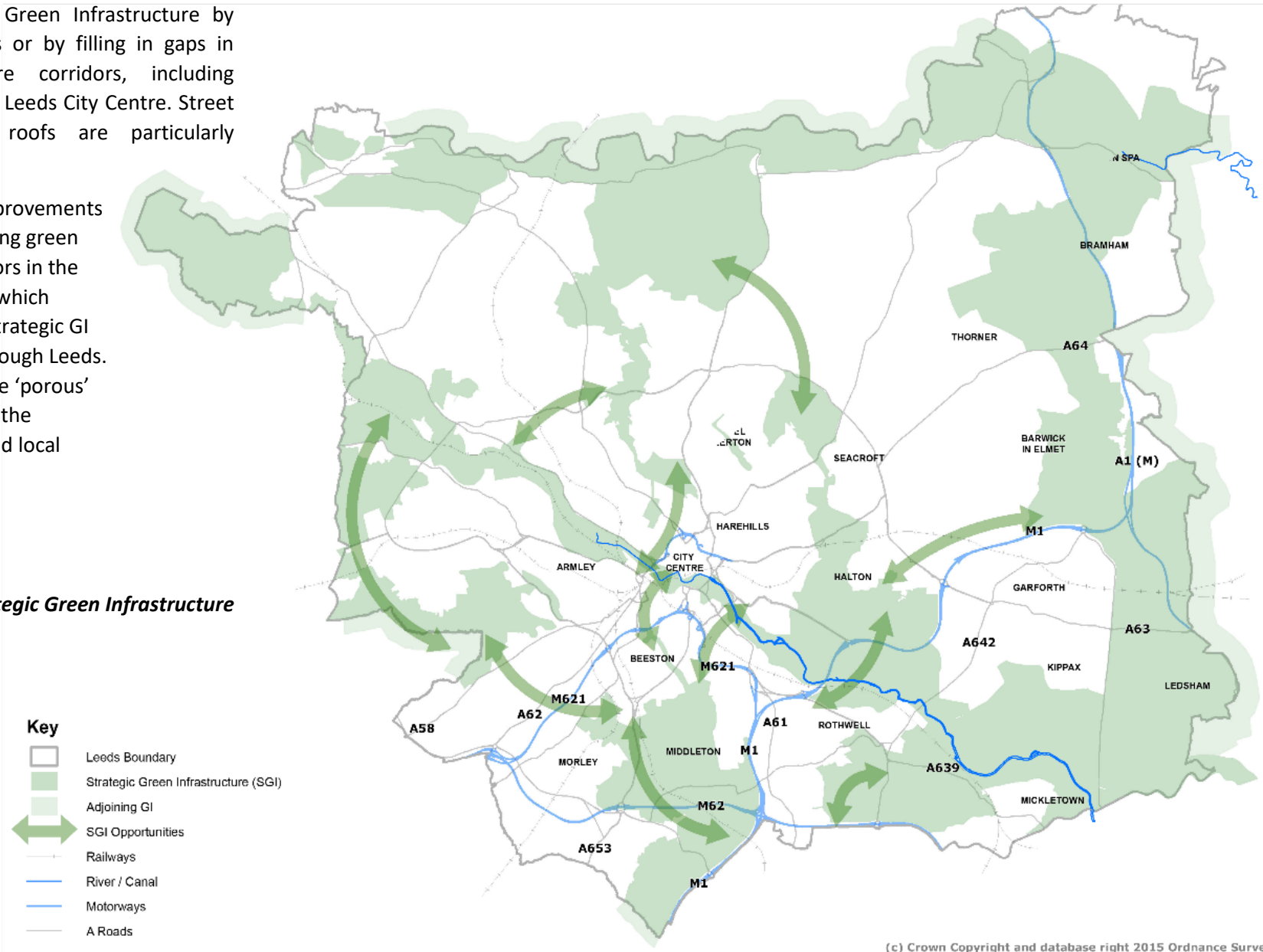
This policy highlights the importance of green infrastructure which describes the network of natural and semi-natural features in towns and cities. These features range in scale, from street trees, amenity open space through to parks, rivers and woodlands. It states: Green Infrastructure/corridor function of the land is retained and improved, particularly in areas of growth, (ii) where appropriate, the opportunity



is taken to extend Green Infrastructure by linking green spaces or by filling in gaps in Green Infrastructure corridors, including extending these into Leeds City Centre. Street trees and green roofs are particularly encouraged

Figure 6 presents improvements required to the existing green infrastructure corridors in the city as green arrows which shows the 'flow' of strategic GI corridors running through Leeds. The arrows reflect the 'porous' boundaries between the strategic corridors and local opportunities.

**Figure 6: Strategic Green Infrastructure**



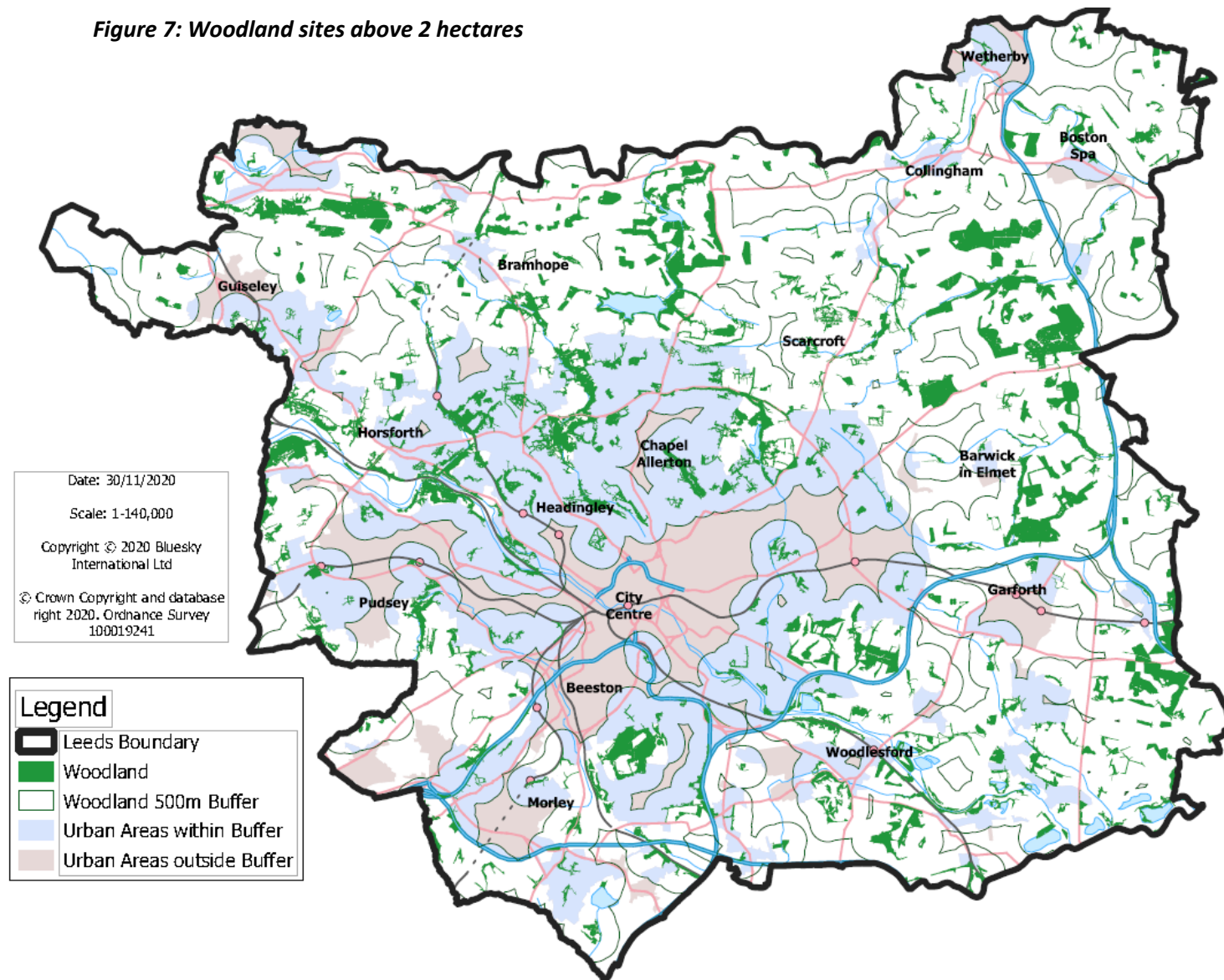
### **Policy G2: Creation of new tree cover**

In supporting the need and desire to increase native and appropriate tree cover, the Council will, on its own initiative and through the development process, including developer contributions, work towards increasing appropriate species of woodland cover in the District. Delivery will involve planting in both urban and rural areas, and partnerships. Development in the urban area of the City, including the City Centre will include the planting of street trees in appropriately designed pits to increase the area of tree canopy cover.

The Woodland Trust's Space for People report has taken the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards model developed by Natural England (which has been adopted as Policy G3) and adapted it for its Woodland Access Standard for access, size and distance thresholds to the following standards:

- That no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size. Figure 7 shows publicly and privately owned woodland over 2 hectares in size

**Figure 7: Woodland sites above 2 hectares**



and the 500 metre “catchment or buffer” for these. The areas in pink show those areas which do not benefit from being within 500 metres of an area of woodland and would be considered for tree planting.

- That there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km (8km round trip) of people’s homes.

### Neighbourhood Planning

[Neighbourhood Planning](#) is community-led planning which helps Parish and Town Councils and Neighbourhood Forums to shape the development of their areas. They allow local communities to direct where new homes, shops and offices are built and what they should look like, identify and protect areas of local green space and set out management strategies for green infrastructure and wildlife corridors. Once made (adopted), neighbourhood plans become part of the statutory development plan for Leeds and must be taken into consideration in determining planning applications within the area that the plan covers.

Neighbourhood planning in Leeds presents a unique opportunity to work collaboratively with local communities to identify sites for

planting trees at a neighbourhood scale in line with the WRF Strategy. It is also an opportunity to connect and inspire local opportunities to help combat climate change more generally, through involvement in an initiative in which local people can positively engage. This can also include involvement in Tree Wardens which is a scheme shortly to be relaunched and is similar to the tree council’s scheme [here](#) . This method will also build on the consultation which the Council has already carried out as part of its Woodland Creation project.

### Locality Working Programme

The Council’s Locality programme work in Priority Areas of multiple deprivation and the focus on tree planting can provide multiple benefits including improving the environment, contributing to health improvement and strengthening community ties through involvement in projects. The Communities team will support the delivery of the WRF strategy in priority neighbourhoods by helping to identify partnerships and organisations keen to get involved and work with them to identify areas suitable for tree planting. This work will help improve health outcomes in the most disadvantaged areas of the city.

The Council has identified twelve priority wards as the focus for targeted neighbourhood

improvement to address poverty and inequality. The twelve wards include:

Armley	Bramley and Stanningley	Kirkstall
Burmantofts and Richmond Hill	Gipton and Harehills	Killingbeck and Seacroft
Temple Newsam	Chapel Allerton	Hunslet and Riverside
Little London and Woodhouse		

Initially the WRF Project Team will work with the Communities Team to identify areas where there are existing partnerships and organisations who are keen to be involved and work with them to identify areas suitable for tree planting.

### Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain is “an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before.” The Environment Bill includes a requirement for all future schemes including the development of land to deliver a mandatory 10 % biodiversity net gain. This net gain will be required to be maintained for a period of at least 30 years. Where there is insufficient space on a development the funds will be used at targeted sites elsewhere which will include tree planting.

## Local Nature Recovery Strategies

The Environment Bill is creating a new system of spatial strategies for nature called Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). These could be an important new tool for identifying suitable locations for tree planting. LNRS will create a compulsory requirement for responsible authorities to map the most valuable existing habitat for nature, set out proposals for creating or improving habitat and agree priorities for nature's recovery. This is an ongoing process and will provide opportunities for planting trees once complete.

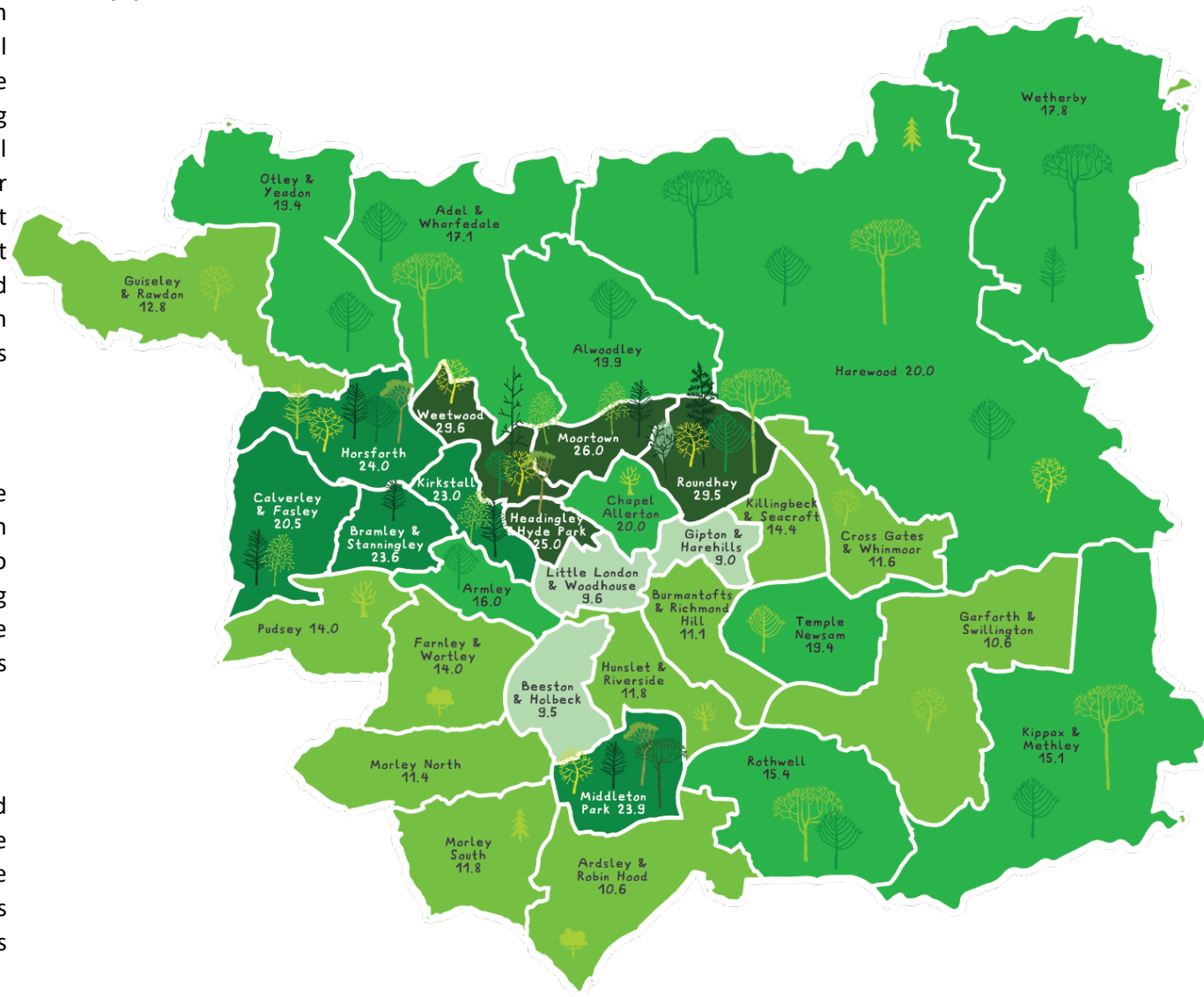
### Planting Trees in verges on new estates

Developers are currently compelled to place trees on larger estate roads but not within estates themselves. The WRF team will look to seek ways of encouraging more tree planting on new housing areas. Residents will be encouraged to plant appropriately sized trees in front gardens.

### 3.7 DEFICIT OF EXISTING TREE CANOPY

A further way to define areas of tree and woodland planting across the district is to see where there is a deficiency as shown in Figure 8 and address this through targeted campaigns and allocation of resources. Tree cover varies across the city

**Figure 8: Tree Canopy Cover percentage by ward**



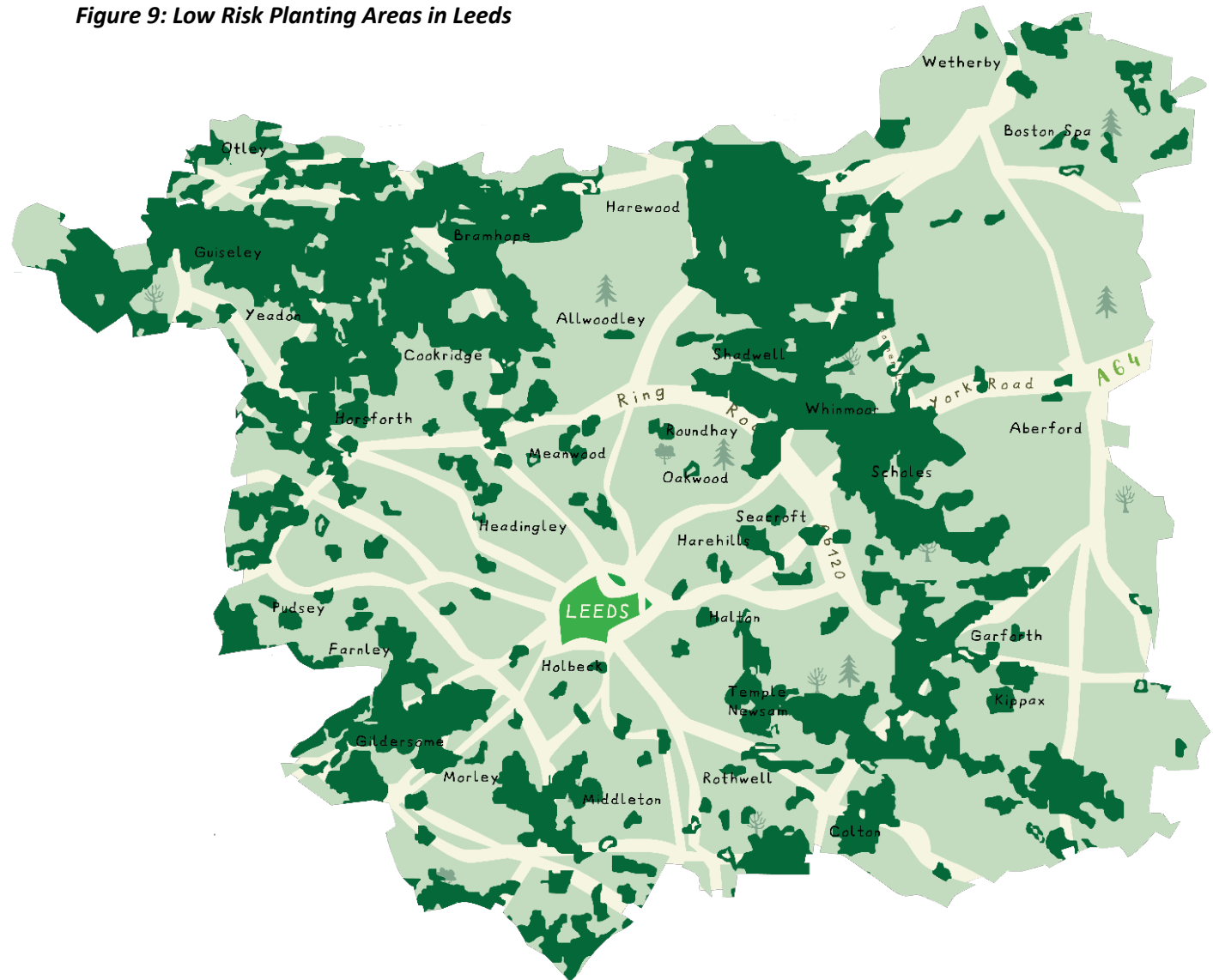


ranging from <10% in three inner city wards, areas to the south and east which range from 10-15%, to wards immediately to the north of the built up area including Roundhay and Weetwood which reach 25 – 30% tree canopy coverage. The wards to the north of the city show a relatively low tree cover but this is skewed by the presence of a large amount of open farmland

### 3.8 RURAL SITE IDENTIFICATION

It is anticipated that in rural areas landowners and farmers will come forward with areas to plant, however subject to resources the Council will target specific areas and engage with community groups etc. The identification of these areas will use the Forestry Commission's "low-risk areas for potential woodland creation" map (Figure 9). Which identifies areas which are less sensitive to change and require different environmental Impact Assessment processes and are more likely to be accepted for woodland planting. These areas have been termed Low Risk and a map for woodland creation in England is available on the Forestry Commission's map browser. Due to their less challenging environmental constraints the council and partners will focus their activities in these areas.

**Figure 9: Low Risk Planting Areas in Leeds**





### *Landscapes for water*

This is one of the two central themes of the WRF Plan which will drive planting in rural areas and specific parts of urban areas as shown in figure 10.

The main drivers are to:

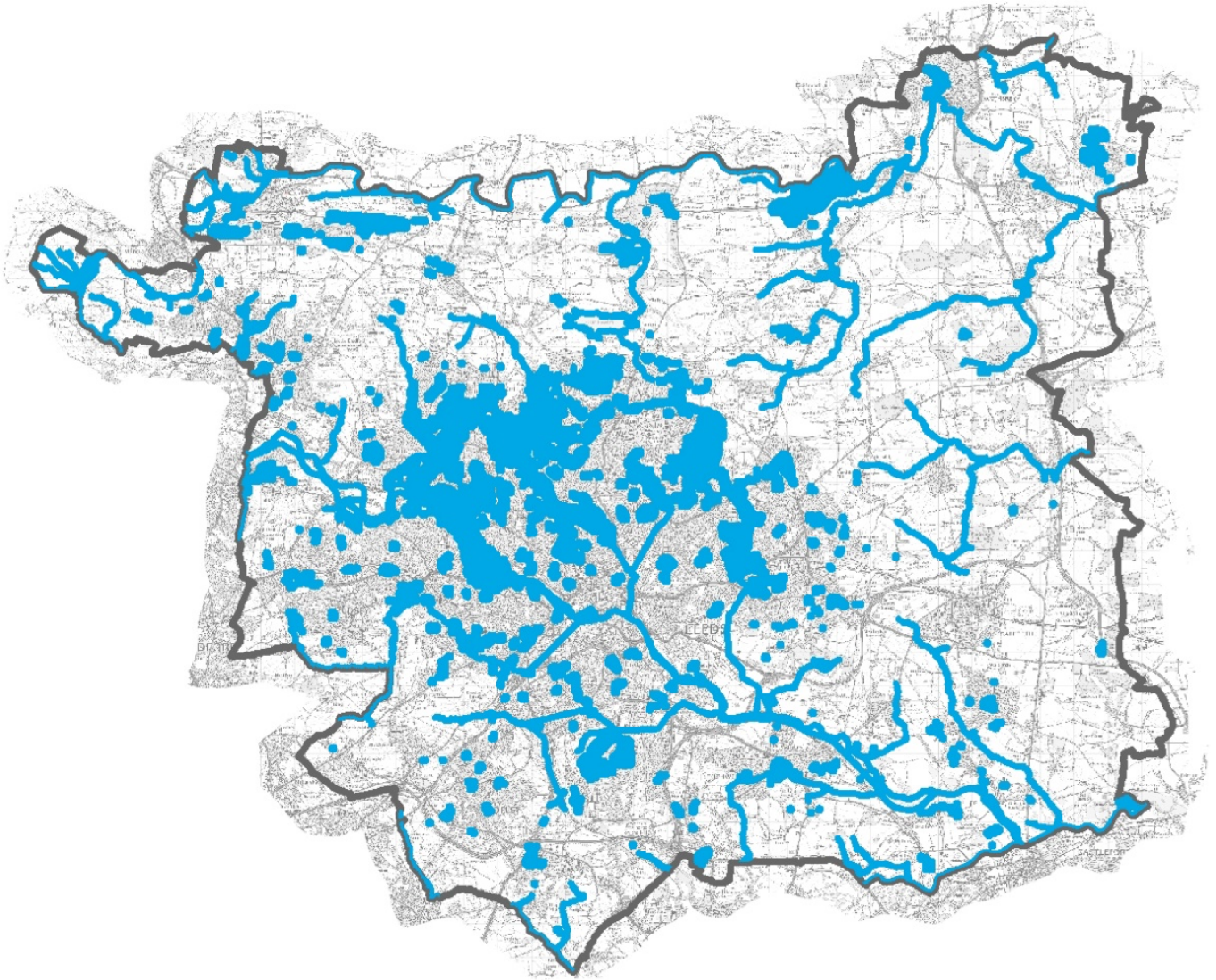
- Plant along and near to water ways (riparian woodland) to reduce flood risk/improve water quality and includes natural flood management principles
- Promote recreation and access at a landscape scale

The Guiding Principles for Creation of Clough Woodlands provides details of planting requirements in these areas.

To assist in defining areas to plant in rural areas the Landscape for Water programme is divided into three areas:

- Woodland for Water – figure 11 below shows areas of land identified by the Environment Agency which if planted would reduce water flow into rivers
- Rivers
- Buffer area of 100 metres from rivers / existing woodland.

**Figure 10: Landscape for Water Corridors**



The Council will work with partners such as the Environment Agency and seek support from National Farmers Union, Farmers Tenants Association to assist in engagement.

The Natural Flood Management element of this programme has already commenced and includes the Council working in partnership with the Environment Agency, landowners, tenants and the River Aire Trust are carrying out the Flood Alleviation Scheme Phase 2 which follows these principles.

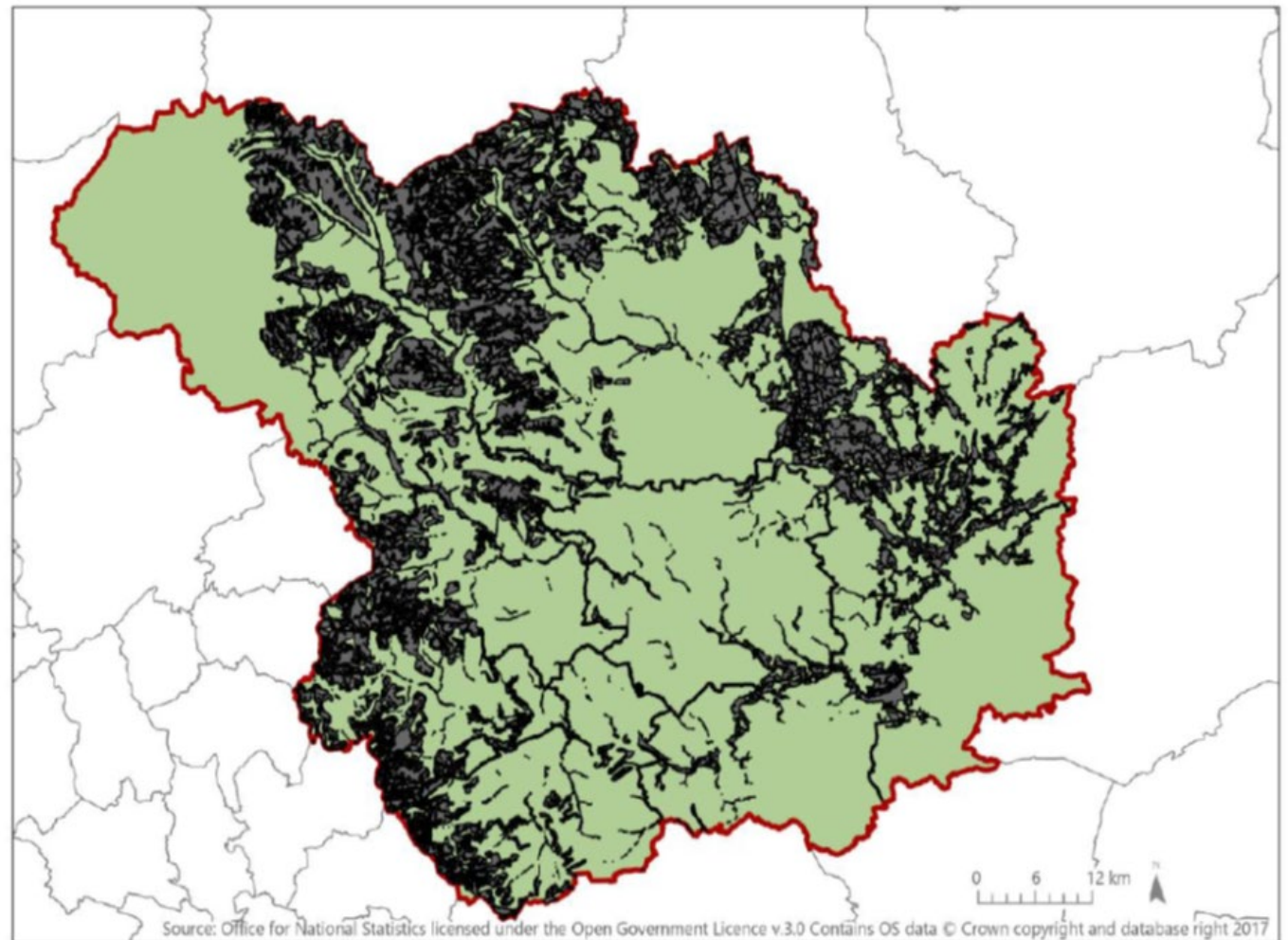
As part of the programme the WRF, via the Community Forest Trust, will be contracted by the Environment Agency to employ a project manager to manage and develop this co-ordinated approach.

### 3.9 CONSTRAINTS

#### Land Ownership

When the Council adopts a proactive approach and targets an area for woodland creation a determinant of where trees can be planted is land ownership and the engagement of the land owner.

**Figure 11: Woodlands for Water**





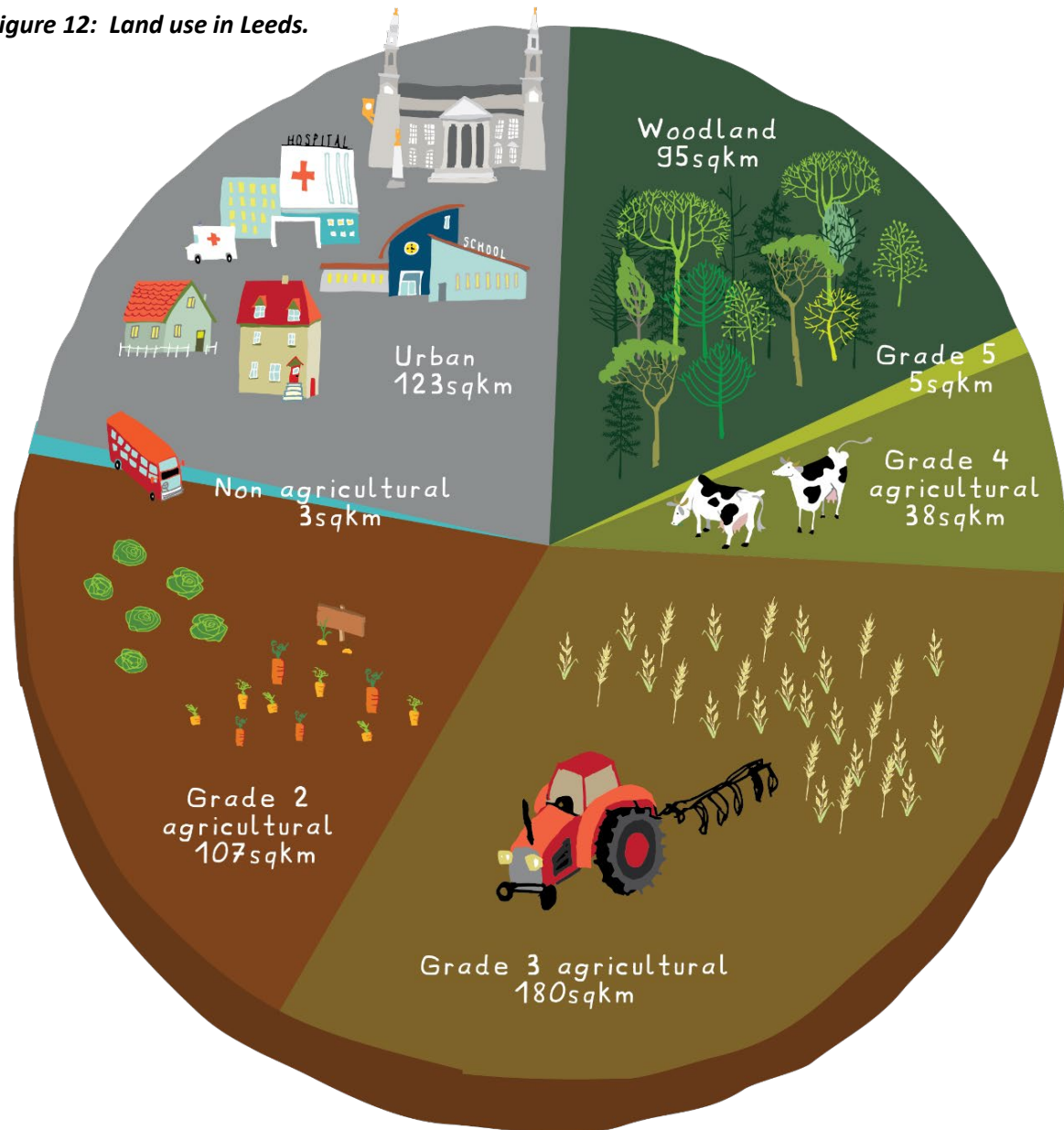
### Availability and Quality of Land

The availability of suitable land for tree planting will determine the areas of the district which can be planted. Figure 12 provided by the Environment Agency shows the distribution of land types which includes agricultural, non-agricultural and urban classifications.

Agricultural land is divided into five classifications using a grading system to assess and compare the quality of land at national and local levels. It assesses the potential for land to support different agricultural uses, such as growing crops for food and the range of crops that can be grown. The location of the different grades in Leeds is shown on [agricultural land classification maps](#). Non-agricultural land includes water bodies and nature reserves. There will be areas of land which will be available for planting in urban areas but these will be limited to smaller sites.

Generally the profitability of farming increases with the grade of the land therefore, there is currently less incentive for privately owned agricultural land with higher grades to be released for woodland planting.

**Figure 12: Land use in Leeds.**



## Land use

The documents of the Local Plan (including the Site Allocations Plan) determine the use of some land though not all land is formally allocated/designated. Large scale planting is not limited to designated public open space e.g. planting could be on farms. It is likely to be focused on public open space in urban areas as they are some of the few places which are open and capable of accommodating larger scale planting. Clearly smaller scale planting can be done on more urban land such as streets and small pockets of undeveloped land which are too small to be designated as green space (>0.2ha) or don't function as green space.

## Legal

Any planting on publicly owned land must be mindful of liability issues though appropriate species identification and careful positioning of trees to avoid services and creation of a nuisance. Legal constraints and charges on publicly owned land for tree planting will be researched as part of the design process for each site.

On private land the Council or funding body may advise on areas of law related to a planting site which the applicant needs to be aware of.

## National Grid upgrade

Plans to upgrade the National Grid network in the eastern side of the District will affect tree planting

## HS2

The HS2 route will pass through the south eastern corner of the district as shown in Figure 13 and there is an area of "safeguarding" which is protected land on which any form of activity or development is prohibited during the 20 year construction period. Safeguarded land is subject to change and an update in spring / summer 2021 is expected.

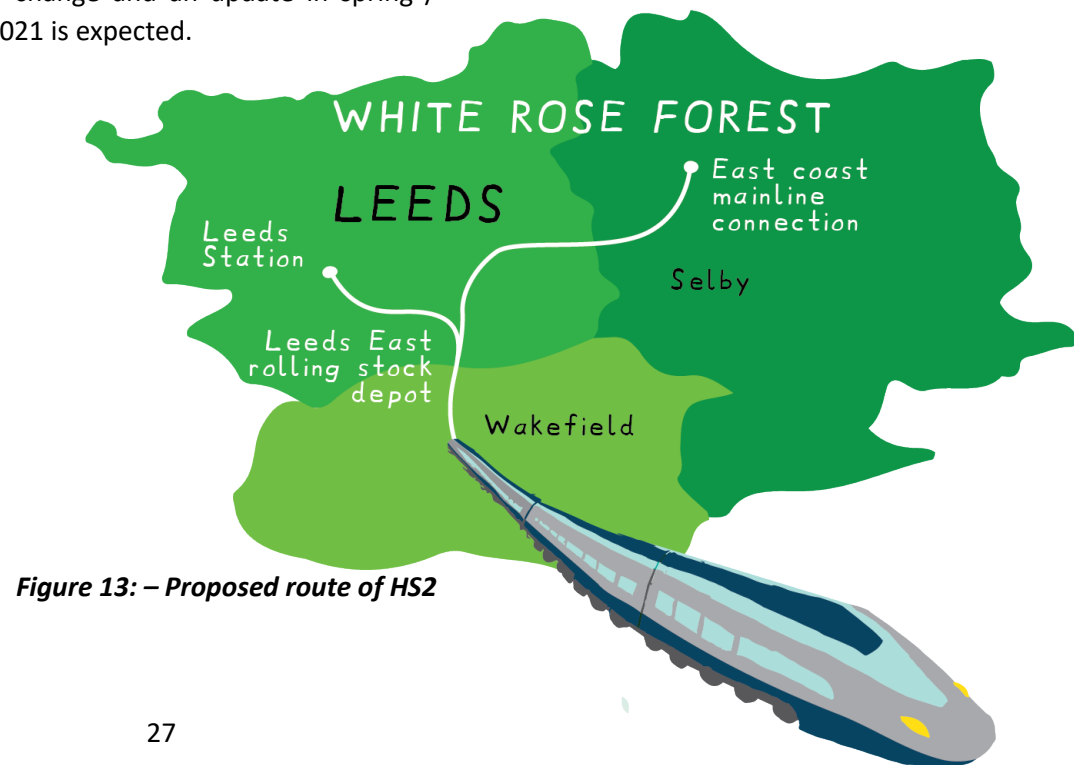


Figure 13: – Proposed route of HS2

## 4. HOW DO WE PROTECT TREES?



## 4.0 INTRODUCTION

It takes a long time for a tree to reach maturity and for its amenity value and carbon capture and storage capabilities to be optimised. In recognition of the value of larger trees there is legislation and local planning policies to help minimise felling of trees which are described in this chapter. However there are circumstances when trees require felling which are also defined along with the legislation which controls this process.

### 4.1 TREE PROTECTION IN LEGISLATION

#### National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF requires that any development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and only if a suitable compensation strategy exists.

#### Tree Preservation Orders

Trees enjoy a level of statutory protection by the use of [Tree Preservation Orders](#) (TPO) which are made by a local planning authority to protect specific trees or a particular area, group or woodland from deliberate damage and destruction if those trees are important for the amenity of the area. TPOs make the felling,

lopping, topping, uprooting or otherwise wilful damaging of trees without the permission of the local planning authority an offence.

#### Agriculture Bill

The Environment Land Management Scheme is being introduced through the Bill to replace the Common Agricultural Policy for income support to farmers. It will also support tree health schemes which will include treatment/felling and restocking tree health grants which is planned to be launched in 2024.

#### Environment Bill

The ‘Duty to Consult’ will be introduced which will give the public the opportunity to understand why a street tree is being felled and express any concerns regarding this. The Bill also introduces Forestry Enforcement Measures which strengthens the Forestry Commission’s power to deter illegal tree felling across England, ensuring the Commission has the powers to continue to protect and maintain our forests.

#### Protection of Trees on Construction sites

Trees on development sites and guidance is provided through British Standard 5837: Trees in Relation to design, demolition and construction with guidance [on the Council’s](#)

[website here](#). In essence this includes the tree survey of a development site, recording the condition of all trees as a schedule and the measures required to protect the retained trees in the form of a constraints map during development and construction of a site.

### 4.2 COUNCIL PROTECTION

#### Leeds City Council Core Strategy – Policy G2

This policy states that: Development which would result in harm to, or the loss of, Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees will be resisted

#### Tree replacement strategy

The Council’s tree replacement strategy for when trees are removed as part of developments is currently being reviewed in partnership with the University of Leeds. Tree replacement criteria will now focus on the carbon capture and storage qualities of a tree and how this can be best replaced. The following factors are being considered in the strategy:

- a. Size of tree removed: Trees with a diameter greater than 50 cm (small trees, e.g. Holly), 60 cm (medium trees, e.g. Birch), and 100 cm (large trees, e.g. Sycamore) are particularly valuable and should have an assumption of retention applied. Alternatively, the

Council may specify a bespoke number of trees on a case by case basis.

- b. Condition of tree removed (Category A = Trees of high quality, expected life expectancy – more than 40 years; Category B = Trees of moderate quality, at least 20 years life expectancy; Category C = Trees of low quality, life expectancy less than 10 years)
- c. Eventual size of replacement tree (all replacements to be extra-heavy standards – 14-16 centimetres girth) – e.g. Large (e.g. sycamore); Medium (e.g. silver birch); Small (e.g. hawthorn).

### **4.3 MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

#### **Tree and woodland maintenance**

A key and vital element of tree protection in a wider sense is that the establishment and maintenance of new trees is critical to their ongoing success. This breaks down into the maintenance of individual larger trees and woodland planting of smaller saplings in significant numbers.

Individual trees – these are larger trees with a 14 – 16cm girth and around 3 -4 metres high. These require weed control of the area around

their bases and where possible watering. Ideally the Council should not adopt trees in the public realm until a 3 year establishment period has elapsed. Funding should be included in large tree planting for three years of aftercare.

Woodland planting – most government grants allow for three years of establishment which includes keeping the area around newly planted saplings free of weed growth. This is critical and planting should not be undertaken if this commitment is not included in costs. All trees planted by the Council on its own land allows provision for this. The removal of tree shelters and rabbit protection will also take place.

Maintenance of trees in the urban areas of Leeds is carried out by the Forestry Team which sits within Parks and Countryside Service.

#### **Tree and woodland management**

As with maintenance, management of trees falls into two types – individual trees and woodland.

Individual trees – in urban situations this will include monitoring and carrying out duties such as removing tree ties and grilles at the base of the tree. In many instances this can be carried out by tree wardens. The Council's Forestry team carry out risk assessment of

larger trees on council owned land as stated in section 4.6.

Woodland – management includes the thinning of trees when they reach 10 years old to allow other trees to have sufficient space to grow. . Whilst the main thrust of this strategy is woodland creation, we must refer to the importance of sustainable proactive woodland management – it is this which will maximise ecosystem services plus feed sustainable products into the construction market which will ensure longer term locking up of carbon.

### **4.4 COMMUNICATIONS**

Through the Strategy's communications and engagement plan the protection of existing trees will be a key message alongside the planting of new trees.

### **4.5 DISEASES**

The avoidance of tree diseases and pests is a national issue and Guidance against [tree diseases](#) and pests is provided by government.

The damage to trees, woods and forests from insect pests and organisms such as bacteria and fungi can be significant. The rapid increase in movements of goods and people between countries has increased the risk of spreading pests and diseases which can travel hidden in

plants, plant products, packaging, wood, vehicles and luggage.

In 2020 the issues regarding diseases in trees in the UK centred on:

- Hymenoschyphus fraxineus also known as Ash dieback widespread across the UK in Ash trees
- Phytophthora ramorum - affecting chestnut, beech and oak
- Oak Processionary Moth – affecting oak trees and affects human health
- Dothistroma septosporum – red band needle blight affects pines, including Scot's pine.

Avoidance of disease and pests measures will include:

- Source planting stock through nurseries or suppliers that adhere to national standards such as the [Plant Health Management Standard](#), or that have their own biosecurity policy in place that can be trusted.
- Adherence to the 10-20-30 guideline to reduce the risk of catastrophic tree loss which suggests an urban tree planting scheme should include no more than 10% of any one species, 20%

of any one genus, or 30% of any family of trees.

#### 4.6 TREE FELLING

##### Reasons

It is important to note that there will always be a need to fell trees in urban and rural environments and on public and private land for a number of reasons:

- Trees which are dead and therefore unstable and likely to drop branches.
- Dying due to evidence of disease or old age.
- Dangerous – damaged due to a storm or loss of a limb and could potentially cause harm to a person or property.
- Trees causing obstruction, interference or a nuisance under common law
- Trees relating to building and construction after planning permission has been granted.

##### Council approach

The Council's Forestry Services conducts safety inspections on council owned land in areas as below to determine whether trees require felling or other treatment:

- High usage (each year and after severe storms)
- Medium usage (every two years)
- Low usage (every five years)

Further information on tree felling carried out by the Council is found [here](#).

##### Felling licences

To protect and sustain trees in woodlands, a felling licence from the Forestry Commission is normally required before growing trees can be felled. There is a presumption against permanent loss of woodland cover, in particular ancient woodland. Most felling licences that are issued will contain conditions that require felled trees or areas of woodland to be replaced by replanting or allowed to regenerate. Further information on tree felling licences is found [here](#).

## 5. HOW ARE WE GOING TO DELIVER?

## 5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes:

- Existing and planned resources
- Funding sources
- Design factors.

## 5.1 EXISTING RESOURCES

The Council has three roles in the strategy which are to:

- Fulfil its own commitments to the Forest
- Enable communities and businesses to plant trees on their own land and signpost to funding.

- Engage with stakeholders to encourage tree planting and communicate the advantages and benefits of tree planting to attract donations and participation.

Tree planting already forms a part of the Council's service provision which is outlined on Figure 14. The resourcing of this capability will be closely monitored as the demand for planting increases.

Service / function	Delivery
Parks and Countryside	Ranger support for community planting, tools , logistics; education regarding trees – seed collection scheme
	Community engagement with community groups, companies
	Maintenance staff , knowledge and management of open space
	Forestry team – management of 1400 hectares of woodland in parks, schools, highways, felling and pruning.
	Woodland creation team with GIS capability, nature conservation skills.
	Two woodlands officers. Two joint Council / YWT officers
	Arium plant nursery – over 100,000 saplings planted for WRF woodland planting schemes
Planning Services	Engagement with business for sponsorship and volunteer days
	Management of Tree Preservation Orders
	Planning GIS team hold relevant files (e.g. Bluesky) and are working on refining GIS intelligence to properly understand the Council tree assets.
	Planning Policy as it relates to tree planting, Development control and need to protect trees
Housing Services	Influencing design of planting in developments
SEAQ	Major landholding service with large areas of land around properties which could be opened up for tree planting
	Project management, Communications and engagement through social media and other channels



Service / function	Delivery
Highways	Maintenance of 61,000 trees on highways land. Green Streets initiative Road schemes including trees
Flood control	Natural Flood Management - tree planting in the River Aire Catchment
Asset Management and Regeneration	Agricultural landholdings, property and land portfolio which could be used for tree planting. in place shaping and working with developers to create GBI and tree planting opportunities e.g. Aire Park, ELE, Brownfield Land Programme
Corporate finance	Management of income and expenditure. Grants, donations
Legal Services	Legal advice regarding contracts or land issues; Land searches and advice relating to Council and in some cases private land.

**Figure 14: Council Services Related to Tree Planting.**

## 5.2 PROPOSED RESOURCES

### White Rose Forest Joint Venture

The Council will liaise closely with the WRF Joint Venture team at Kirklees Council to ensure consistency of approach and will call upon resources provided by the team which will currently include:

- Project Manager – coordinates overall planting programme across the WRF
- Communications Manager – manage website, co-ordinate good news stories from across Partnership, promote Trees for Yorkshire, Donations and volunteering interest.
- Geographical Information Systems officer – recording planted areas and support
- Landscapes for Water Landowner Engagement Manager – to support

Natural Flood management programme.

The Joint Venture will also lead the following regional groups which will support the work of the Council and other authorities:

- GIS Group – to provide spatial data for Trees for Yorkshire reporting.
- Funders' Group – Assess schemes for funding and allocate appropriate grants.
- Carbon Group – Develop methodology for setting targets for expanding tree cover and developing Carbon offer to Landowners.
- Landscapes for Water in the Aire Catchment
- Green Streets group.

### Council White Rose Forest team

The Council will use all of the resources outlined above to both protect trees, plant trees and create/ maintain new woodland

Existing business and community engagement will be built on by dedicated resources. External funding will be sought for extra resources to strengthen the team.

## 5.3 FUNDING

### White Rose Forest Funders Group

All applications for funding tree planting schemes of whatever size will be directed to the WRF Funders Group, which comprises representatives from all the funding organisations involved with tree planting. All partners involved with the WRF will direct interested parties to this group. The process for application and consideration is shown below on figure 15:

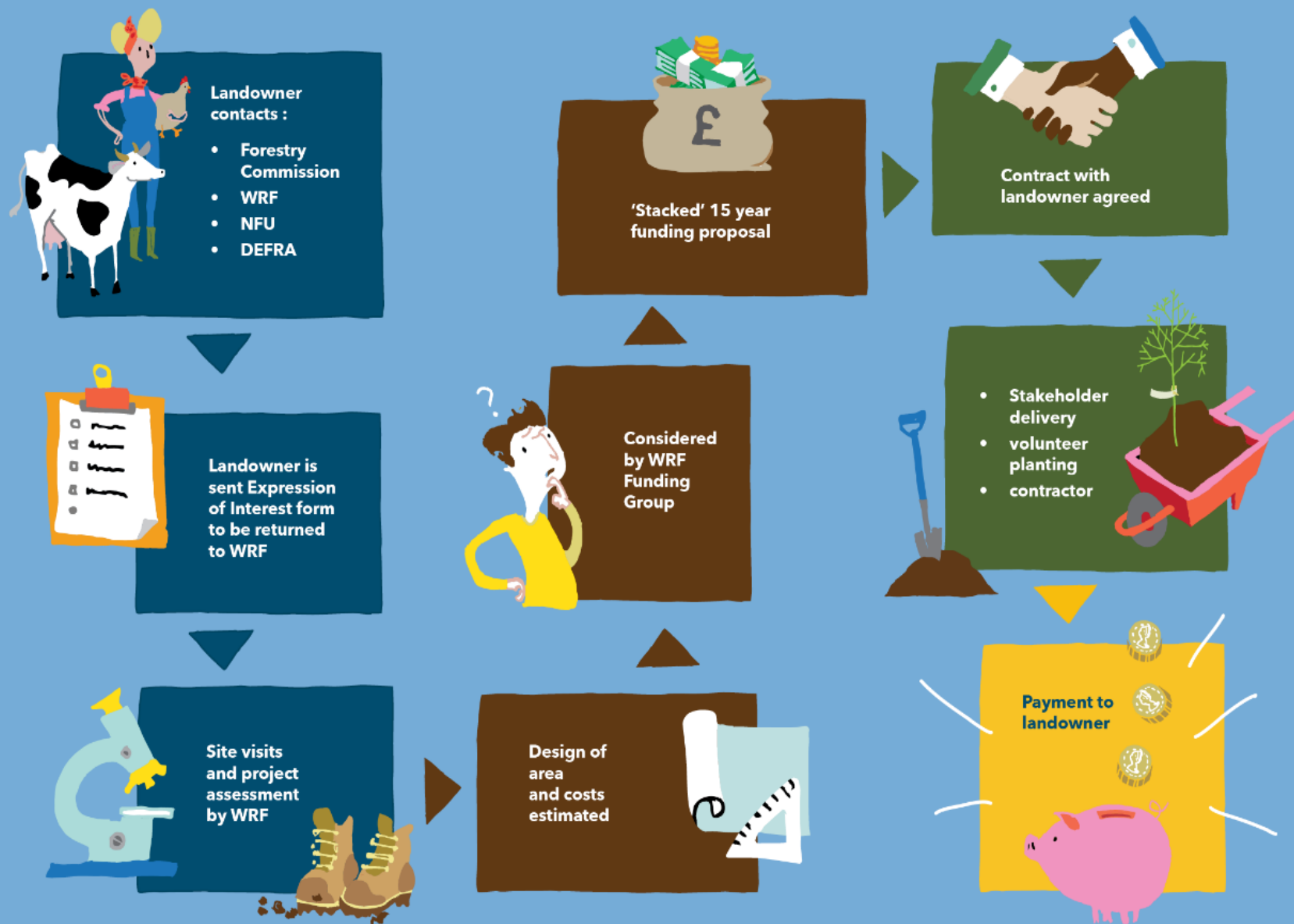


Figure 15: WRF Funders Group Application process

### **Trees4Climate**

The WRF Joint Venture has successfully bid for funds from the £640 million tree planting funding that was announced by central government in early 2020. Details are still emerging and it is likely to provide generous support for tree planting and associated works.

### **Trees for Yorkshire**

The WRF Joint Venture is planning to launch a funding campaign known as Trees for Yorkshire which will seek funding for the WRF and the HEYwoods Community Forest (Hull and East Riding of Yorkshire). Funds from this campaign will flow to the WRF Joint Venture as appropriate. The funds raised will be dispensed through the WRF Funders Group. The name and branding for the campaign is currently being developed.



### **Environmental Land Management Scheme – From 2025**

Following the UK's departure from the EU the replacement funding for the Common Agricultural Policy was enacted by the Agriculture Bill introduced on 16 January 2020. This provided the legal framework for the establishment of a new system of agricultural assistance for farmers and land managers who will be expected to deliver on a variety of environmental matters including enhanced landscapes and measures to minimise the effects of climate change.

The Bill established a new system called the Environmental Land Management System (ELMS) based on paying public money for "public goods" which are defined as environmental benefits. With respect to farming practices affecting the land the ELMS will be paid for work that enhances the environment. The introduction of the ELMS will be phased as the existing direct payment from the Common Agricultural Policy are phased out over a seven year transition period.

The scheme will be piloted and then introduced in 2025 to assist in three tiers:

- Tier 1: Encouraging environmentally sustainable farming

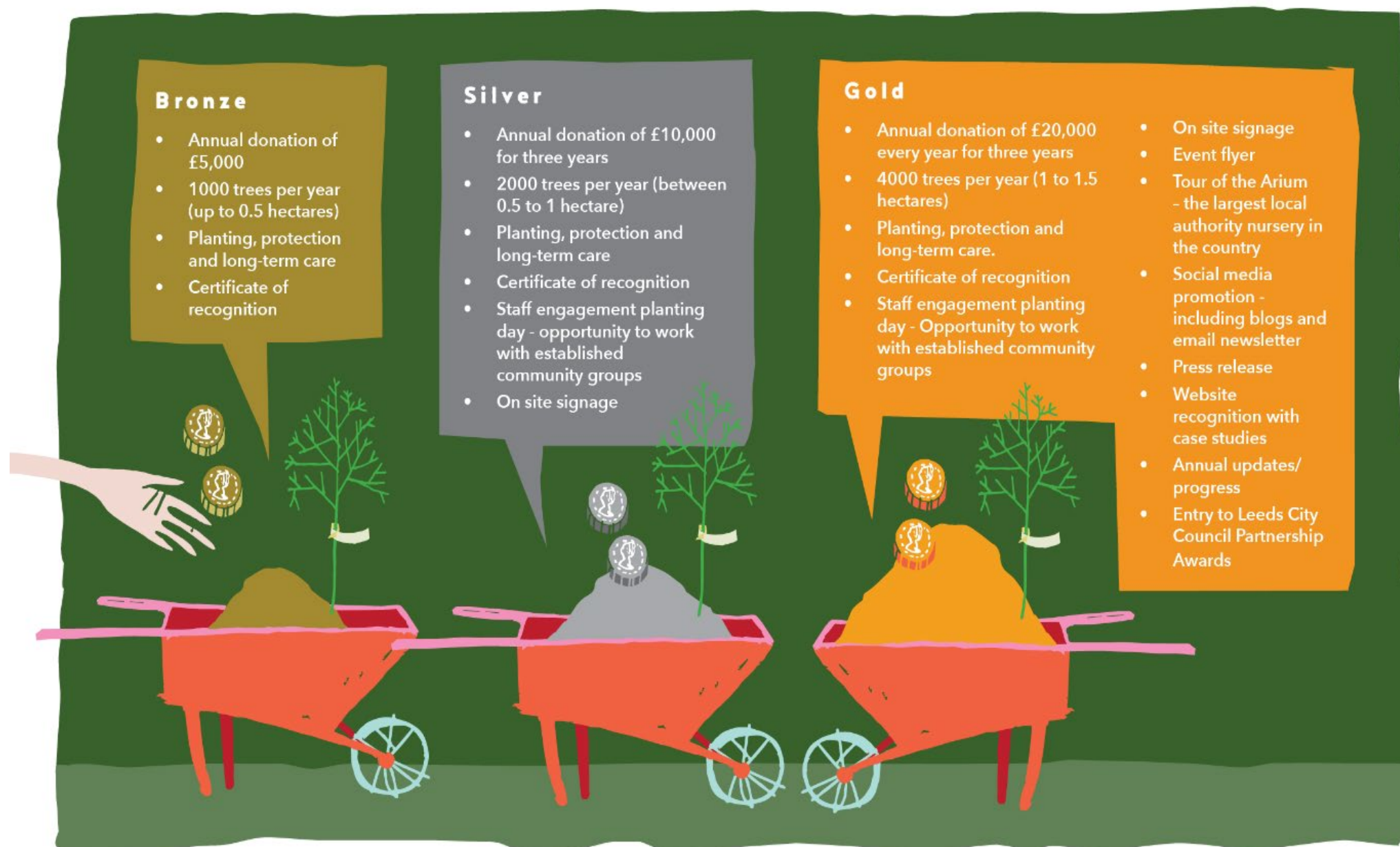
- Tier 2: Locally targeted environmental outcomes – including tree and hedge planting
- Tier 3: Landscape scale, land-use change projects - includes woodland creation

### **Donations**

A web based approach to donations is being developed. The Council will charge an agreed amount per tree for planting and maintenance per tree which includes:

- Community engagement and education
- Supply of cell grown sapling from The Arium council nursery
- Land checks, preparation and cultivation
- Protection measures (for the tree or appropriate fencing)
- Environmental impact assessments/notification to the Forestry Commission
- Handling, storage and delivery of trees to site
- Planting using gardening teams or supervised volunteers and weed suppression
- Ongoing maintenance and management for 20 years.

Figure 16: Donations strategy



As well as monetary donations the Council will accept volunteer time and/or land donations as well which will be reflected in the award system. There would also be an acknowledgement of individual donations.

### **Corporate funding**

The Council has developed links with local businesses through its work on environmental project delivery and existing services provided by Parks and Countryside. These will be coordinated and further links made through the communications and engagement strategy. Part of the engagement with businesses is to gain a further understanding on their corporate giving strategies and how we can help them achieve their carbon zero aspirations.

Since 2014 the cornerstone of funding for woodland creation in Leeds has been Trees for Cities who provide a conduit for companies to channel financial contributions through to local authorities who have land and require resources for tree planting.

### **Carbon trading**

This is a scheme to encourage landowners to invest in woodland creation and sign up to woodland carbon credits. There is no compensation for loss of income due to change of land use.

### **Other sources**

There are other sources of funding available which fall into two groups:

Funding to enable organisations to purchase land to plant trees on or to purchase woodlands.

- Crowdfunding – the attraction of funding for a specific scheme through seeking support from members of the public through the internet. A case study being Brewdog.
- Mortgages – certain building societies offer mortgages to purchase land for tree planting.

As part of our mobilisation we will explore further ways for people to donate funds to woodland creation, including but not limited to:

- Inclusion of tree planting in wills.
- Corporate and Social Responsibility of local businesses - provision of both labour and possibly resources.
- Donations at site via contactless payment points.

### **Green Jobs Challenge Fund**

The £40 million Green Recovery Challenge Fund launched this year will bring forward funding to help charities and environmental

organisations start work on projects across England to restore nature and tackle climate change. The fund will help conservation organisations and their suppliers create up to 3,000 jobs and safeguard up to 2,000 others in areas such as protecting species, finding nature-based solutions to tackling climate change, conservation rangers and connecting people with the outdoors.

### **HS2 Funding**

For Phase 1 and 2a of the HS2 project a [Woodland Fund](#) has been established to support the planting of woodlands within 25 miles of the line. It is expected that a similar fund will become available for Phase 2b which covers the route through Leeds. Currently (2020) it is a £4 million fund which involves a competitive process.



## 5.3 PLANTING DESIGN

### Woodland and tree planting design

Design of woodlands and tree planting schemes will be carried out by the Council on public land, consultants, landowners themselves, third sector organisations and individuals. These design services will be either self-financing, provided free or through funding provided by the WRF Joint Venture. All planting over two hectares will require an Environmental Impact Assessment which assess the level of impact that woodland planting will have on environmental features of a site. The Council provides general guidance for the design of tree planting and management which can be found [here](#).

At a very general level the design of woodland and tree planting schemes will be affected by:

#### In urban areas:

- Underground services / overhead power lines
- Legal constraints and charges on the land
- Community comments and requirements
- Access
- Species defined by the carbon based tree planting strategy

- Underlying soil and drainage conditions
- Existing landscape and built features
- Features of nature conservation interest
- Vulnerability of the planting to vandalism
- Future developments and road schemes.

#### In rural areas (in addition to the above):

- Landscape character
- Agricultural operation requirements
- Compliance with The UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) -sustainable forest design, planting and management. A condition for the receipt of government funding for tree planting and woodland management.

#### Carbon based tree planting strategy – species choice

Guidance on tree species will be taken from this strategy which includes definition of four woodland mixtures to represent a range of species composition and management levels. Some species which have known pests, pathogens or other environmental factors will not be used.

### Green Streets®

A design tool for the council must use when designing West Yorkshire Combined Authority Schemes in urban areas is the [Green Streets](#) approach. Its purpose is to integrate green infrastructure into the designs of West Yorkshire Transport Fund schemes and other city region investments to achieve multiple benefits of tree planting and good growth.

#### Creating woodland through wilding

Wilding is a relatively new concept and its speed at creating woodland quickly is open to debate. From a biodiversity viewpoint the experience of the pilot project at [Knepp Farm](#) in Sussex demonstrates that there is a dramatic increase in biodiversity as a consequence of reducing use of chemicals and the greatly reduced intensity of farming practice. The Council will engage with organisations such as the National Farmers Union, farmers and landowners to pursue this approach as appropriate.

### Ponds

Recent studies have shown that ponds can help boost the total carbon captured from a woodland site. Creation of ponds will be considered at proposed woodland sites larger than 1 hectare. Although there will clearly be safety considerations where there is public access.

## **Orchards**

The inclusion of orchards in planting schemes and on their own in appropriate locations is to be encouraged as part of the strategy. The Council will consider locations for orchards proposed by communities on council owned land.

## **Footpaths**

After areas of planting are identified the Council's Public Rights of Way team can advise on recorded or claimed public paths and on useful linkages to surrounding highways / and the wider rights of way network. The team can also provide advice on the possibility of 'created' footpaths acquiring rights through long term usage. Advice can also be given on signing, access controls and duty of care.

## **Equality Considerations**

There is currently unequal access to green space in Leeds with some of the most disadvantaged wards having disproportionately less tree cover and easy access to outdoor open space. We know that access to nature can have significant improvements to health by increasing outdoor physical activity.

According to research by Defra, living in or near to greener environments reduces mortality rates and improves mental wellbeing. Tree planting in disadvantaged areas where access to nature is low therefore has the potential to address the health inequalities that currently exist and improve access to nature for all.

To ensure the WRF strategy includes input from all areas of Leeds, the project team will present at all Community Committees and Equality Hubs. We will also reach out to third sector and faith organisations to provide an opportunity for feedback. Existing environmental work taking place by such groups will be supported and encouraged.

Accessibility will also be a key consideration in the planning and design of woodlands to ensure that the community forest can be enjoyed by as many as possible. This will be achieved as far as the constraints on location and funding allow. Woodlands will be made as safe as possible by ensuring personal security is considered at an early stage of design.

## 6. HOW DO WE TELL PEOPLE AND GET THEM INVOLVED?

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Achieving the aims of this strategy isn't something that the council can realise on its own. Landholders, businesses, organisations, communities, and schools will all have an important part to play.

Our communications and engagement strategy will complement, and avoid duplication of, the communications activity of the regional White Rose Forest Joint Venture or that of existing council initiatives, such as the Woodland Creation scheme and 'Leeds By Example' climate emergency initiative.

The council will regularly engage and communicate with these key audiences. In doing so, we aim to not only raise awareness of the benefits of this strategy but also to secure sponsorships and partnerships that unlock additional resources and help make the Forest a reality.

Whilst there are specific communications objectives and targeted approaches for each of the audiences below, a common underlying thread to all of our engagement activity will be to raise awareness of the many health, economic, and health benefits of woodlands. A range of communications channels will be used including social media, stakeholder work, press

releases, digital newsletters, roadshows, and marketing.

A brief summary of how we will seek to engage with these key audiences is outlined below.

## 6.2 LANDOWNER ENGAGEMENT

As this strategy has already stated, the White Rose Forest cannot feasibly be planted solely on land owned or managed by Leeds City Council. Therefore the council will engage with landowners and landholders across the city, big and small, to identify and utilise additional tree planting sites.

Currently, the council is working in partnership with the Environment Agency to engage landowners and landholders in the Aire Valley as part of the Flood Alleviation Scheme Phase 2 natural flood management programme and has recently appointed a project manager to lead on this work. This work will identify best practice and will inform broader engagement.

Once the council has identified priority areas for tree planting based on the quantity and suitability of land for successful tree planting, landowners in these areas will be approached directly by the council. Officers will explain the opportunities and benefits of getting involved in the White Rose Forest and how to do so.

Outside of these priority areas, a targeted communications campaign aimed at local farmers will make the environmental and economic case for planting trees and encourage them to get involved with the WRF. This campaign will include promoting the initiative at agricultural/country shows, at local farming union events, in farming trade press, and by engaging with the National Farmers Union and Country Landowners Association.

Once landowners have expressed an interest in getting involved by contacting a dedicated email address, landowners will receive a package of information detailing the support available to deliver tree planting and properly maintain trees on their land. The council and joint WRF Joint Venture will provide continued support to landowners to help ensure a successful tree planting

After trees have been successfully planted, the council will communicate regularly with landowners via an e-newsletter to update them on the progress of the White Rose Forest and share tips and reminders for proper tree maintenance.

### **6.3 BUSINESS/ORGANISATION ENGAGEMENT**

Businesses, organisations and institutions in Leeds will be approached and invited to support the White Rose Forest through sponsorships, value-in-kind donations and/or participating in corporate volunteer days to plant trees.

When engaging with businesses and encouraging their involvement, the council will highlight and explain how supporting the Forest can support their own corporate social responsibility, environmental and/or team objectives.

This engagement work will include direct communications to existing networks, hosting 'business breakfast' and seminar type events, and attendance and promotion at existing business events. A physical and digital 'business pack' will be developed as part of this work.

We will also work with Doing Good Leeds to ensure that they include tree planting initiatives as a potential opportunity for Employer Supported Volunteering.

We will also engage fully with environmental organisations including the Woodland Trust to assess opportunities for joint working.

After businesses and organisations have contributed to the Forest once, they will be encouraged to share their experiences and celebrate their contributions with other businesses in the city and their own networks, helping to promote the Forest.

They will also receive regular communications via an e-newsletter that will update them on the continued progress of the White Rose Forest as well as highlight additional opportunities for getting involved.

### **6.4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Residents, community groups, schools and charities will also have an important part to play. The council will work with communities to identify tree planting sites, promote volunteer tree planting events, and to raise awareness of the importance of protecting and maintaining existing trees on private land.

As a community forest, one of this strategy's most important aims is to ensure that every resident in our city can access quality, wooded green space and is able to enjoy all of the benefits that green spaces have been linked to. Leeds residents know their localities best. The council will encourage residents to use their local knowledge to help bring the White Rose Forest to their community by referring

potential tree planting sites in their area for the council to explore and implement if feasible.

When residents were asked to indicate their support for a council-backed volunteer scheme to plant millions of trees as part of the 2019 Big Leeds Climate Conversation, the proposal was supported by 96% of residents. It was even popular among those who said they do not believe that the Earth is warming due to human activity.

The council will implement this proposal and will facilitate and promote a number of volunteer tree-planting events every year across Leeds. This will build upon the success of tree planting events at Beeston Royds and the Woodland Creation Scheme, which will work with schools and community groups to plant 50 hectares of woodland every year.

In addition to facilitating council-run tree planting events, the council will also support and help amplify events organised by the community. Many local groups are doing this already. For example, 550 trees were recently planted at Carr Manor Fields to celebrate the 550th birthday of Guru Nanak following a successful crowdfunding campaign led by local Sikh volunteers. The council will produce a 'community pack' that includes information, tips and shareable assets to make organising a



community tree planting event as simple as possible for local groups.

The council will also consider the re-introduction of voluntary tree wardens—residents empowered to plant, look after and advocate trees in their area. Tree wardens will be organised into local groups that are supported and managed by a council coordinator.

Finally, the council will also communicate the importance of retaining and protecting existing trees and promote best practice as part of a campaign under the 'Leeds By Example' branding. This will encourage residents with gardens to preserve any existing trees as another way of contributing to the White Rose Forest.

## 7. WHAT DO WE DO NEXT?

After approval by the Council's Executive Board in December 2020 there will be a period of mobilisation to review processes, allocation of resources and programme management as outlined in Figure 17. The Council will work with the White Rose Forest Joint Venture finalising communications approaches, website design, monitoring and funding processes. During this time key stakeholders with a direct input into woodland planning and planting will be engaged in detail to understand how partnership opportunities can be maximised.

#### 2022 – 2025

Strategy reviewed annually with key stakeholders.

#### 2025

Review of targets and any changes as a consequence of the introduction of the Environmental Land Management Scheme.

#### 2030

Full strategy review.

**Figure 17: Mobilisation.**



### **On-going Performance management**

The recording of tree planting and biodiversity increase will be achieved by a variety of means as outlined in the list below.

- Planting facilitated by Highways Services, Flood Control, Planning Services will be collected through reporting back to the WRF Project Group held monthly
- Data on tree planting which is the subject of funding applications to the WRF Joint Venture will be placed on a GIS system and figures outputted annually
- Parks and Countryside will provide collected data through reporting back to the White Rose Forest Project Group held monthly
- Applications for the felling of trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders will where possible be captured and applied to the calculation
- Felling licences will be obtained from the Forestry Commission
- For the measurement of biodiversity improvement a dedicated project officer at the WRF Joint Venture will make a Biodiversity Net gain assessment on projects that have

registered on the WRF Delivery Pathway. This will be achieved by calculating current level of Biodiversity Units with an estimation of biodiversity after 20 years.

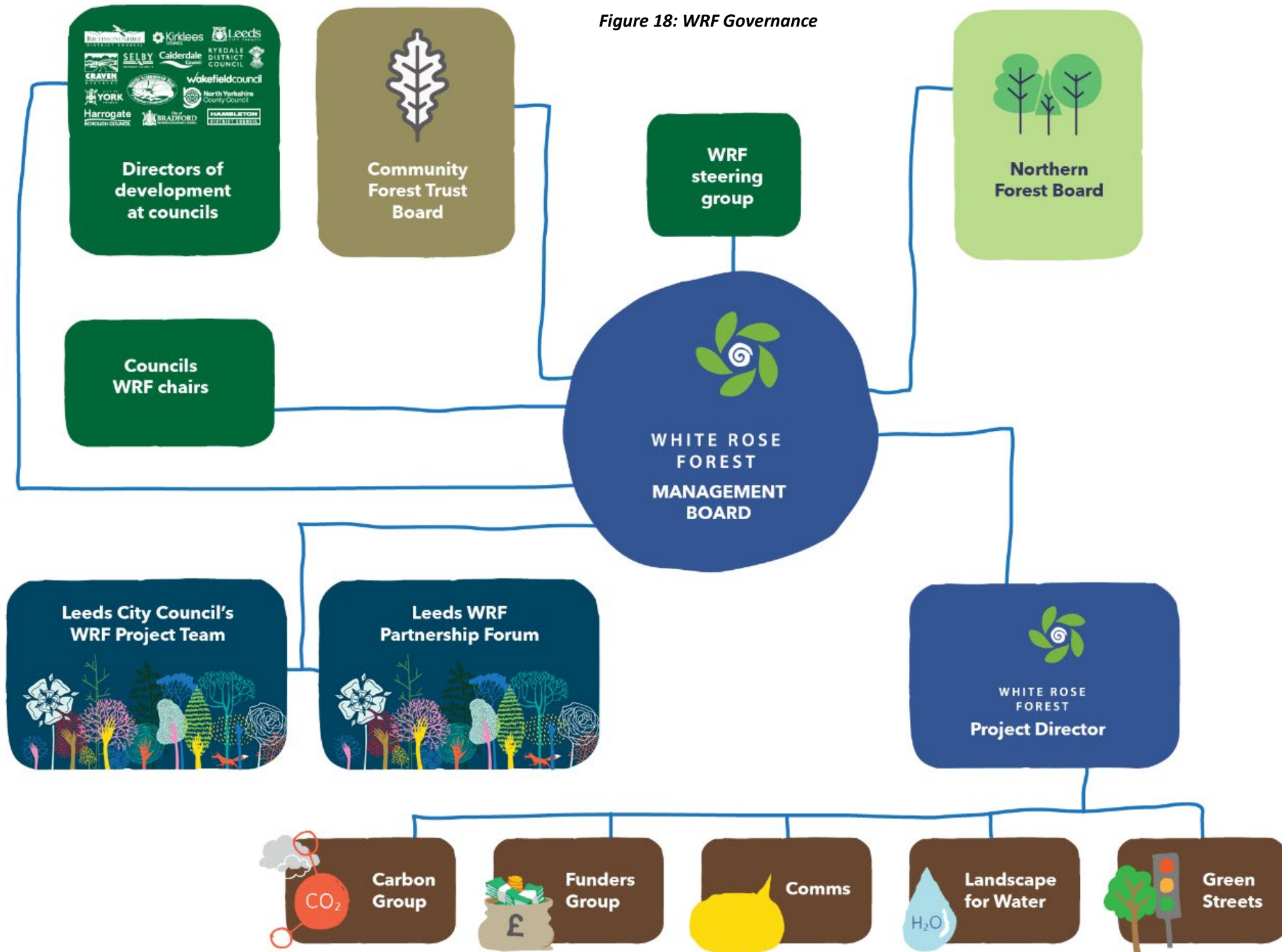
- Total annual tree planting will be translated into carbon capture figures.

Every five years low level radar recording of the canopy cover provided by “Blue Sky” will be used to see how tree cover is increasing. This has limitations as the technology only records trees with a canopy of more than 3 metres.

### **Governance**

The White Rose Forest governance structure is shown in figure 18. The structure includes a possible partnership board to be developed, made up of representatives from business, institutions and the community.

Figure 18: WRF Governance





# 8. CONCLUSION

This strategy sets out a broad framework that, if successfully followed, could dramatically increase tree planting and almost double tree canopy cover in Leeds from 17% to 33%. Increased rates of planting will help Leeds tackle the climate emergency while also supporting the wellbeing of residents. Achieving the above targets would serve the regional ambitions of the White Rose Forest, which in turn supports the Northern Forest plan to introduce 50 million trees across the North of England.

The current pandemic has shown the benefits of natural spaces for health and wellbeing and highlighted the need for access to be more equitable. Given the obvious benefits of increasing the quality, quantity and access to green spaces, the Council intends to play a key supporting role in the delivery of the forest in our district. Ensuring the success of the White Rose Forest will support the three pillars of the Best Council Plan: improving the city's health and wellbeing, promoting inclusive economic growth, and tackling the climate emergency. It would also support local wildlife at a time when

many loved species are increasingly threatened.

Many local tree planting schemes will require minimal input from the Council. Many landowners will continue to identify areas of land which they have earmarked for planting and will proactively implement these schemes. However, the Council cannot reliably achieve its ambitious target without also taking an active role. Therefore, the Council will work in partnership with local communities to identify and plant additional sites for woodland, prioritising areas that maximise the social and natural benefits of doing so. We will also work in partnership with, and seek to avoid duplicating the work of, the regional White Rose Forest Joint Venture team.

A key element of this strategy will involve communicating with businesses, communities and landowners in Leeds to spread the word about the Forest and to gain support, sponsorship and volunteering. We will use social media and existing networks to reach as broad a range of people and organisations as possible. It's important that we relay the importance of trees and get people actively involved. We already engage with a lot of communities and we will look to build on those

networks. The renewed Tree Warden scheme will also help communities look after trees in their local areas and be more engaged.

In addition to planting new trees, the Council will also play an important role in protecting trees that Leeds already benefits from through effective management of trees on council land and implementing national legislation and our local policies. We will seek to avoid felling trees wherever practical, and will replace felled trees with a far greater number of planted trees.

Looking forward, we hope to engage and work with environmental organisations, businesses and stakeholders to develop this strategy and create new opportunities for tree planting. This strategy is intended to provide a broad framework that is flexible enough to be adapted for local needs.

The Council will review our implementation of this strategy, the city's priorities, national policy and any new funding opportunities for tree planting and maintenance in 2022.

## GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
<b>Biodiversity</b>	Types and levels of biological variation across the urban and rural landscape. It is a scientific measure of the variety of species and habitats and at a global scale is essential for human existence in underpinning food production, providing an air supply and a flourishing rural environment
<b>Canopy Cover</b>	Percentage of total ground area covered by tree the extent of the tree's branches and leaves
<b>Carbon Dioxide</b>	A heavy odourless colourless gas formed during respiration, by the decomposition of organic substances and the burning of fossil fuels; absorbed from the air by plants in photosynthesis. A major greenhouse gas.
<b>Carbon Neutral</b>	Balance between emitting carbon and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere.
<b>Carbon Sequestration or capture</b>	As trees and plants grow they take carbon dioxide from the air and store approximately half of it in their trunks, branches, roots and other biomass; the other half is released back again as the plant respire. The overall removal of carbon dioxide from the air is referred to as <i>carbon sequestration</i> and over a period of decades, carbon will accumulate in woodlands to provide a long-term carbon store.
<b>Climate Emergency</b>	Changes in the world's weather systems, in particular the world getting warmer and prone to more extreme weather events as a result of human activity increasing the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
<b>DEFRA</b>	Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs which includes Forestry Commission, Natural England, Environment Agency and the Food and Environment Research Agency.
<b>GIS – Geographical Information System</b>	A computer program used for gathering, managing, and analysing data as layers of information using maps.
<b>Green Infrastructure</b>	A network of multi-functional green space and other green features, urban and rural, which can deliver quality of life and environmental benefits for communities. It includes public open space, parks, and woods.
<b>Green Streets</b>	Collaboration between the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and the Yorkshire West Local Nature Partnership to integrate green blue infrastructure into the designs of West Yorkshire Transport Fund (WYTF) schemes and other city region investments to achieve multiple benefits and “good growth”. Promoted by White Rose Forest.
<b>Habitats</b>	Areas of land that provide resources such as food, cover, and water and environmental conditions such as precipitation and soil types that affect occupancy of individuals or populations of species, allowing those species to survive and reproduce.
<b>Landscapes for Water</b>	A strategic approach to natural flood management in river catchment areas promoted by White Rose Forest Joint Venture across Forest area including tree planting to reduce flood risk.
<b>Natural Flood Management</b>	Natural processes such as tree planting, building small informal dams are used to reduce the risk of flooding and erosion.
<b>Woodland Trust</b>	The largest woodland conservation charity in the United Kingdom concerned with the creation, protection, and restoration of native woodland heritage. It has planted over 43 million trees since 1972.

