# **NELC Tree Strategy Survey**

Responses = 287

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**Introduction**

In June 2023 approval was given by North East Lincolnshire Council to commence public consultation of the draft Tree Strategy. This survey forms part of the process in advance to further a report for the Tree Strategy to be formally adopted by the council.

This strategy demonstrates the council’s commitment to caring for trees under its management and help respond to the challenges of climate change and the natural ecosystem. It will provide a strategic approach towards ensuring all communities experience the environmental and health benefits that trees afford.

1,758 people viewed the survey with 214 submitting a partial response and 287 completing the survey.

**Methodology**

The online survey was live from the 14th August to 11th October 2023. The survey was promoted by North East Lincolnshire Council in a number of locations like the NELC’s Have your Say Consultations and Surveys webpage and across various local authority social media platforms.

The survey was emailed to members of the public who have signed up to our Consultations mailing list, as well as going out in NEL Sector Support Newsletter to reach voluntary-community sector organisations (VCSEs). It was also promoted by other organisations; these were not monitored.

**Key Findings**

* 72.5% found out about the service via an email from NELC, while 15.4% found out about it via social media.
* 93.4% responded to the survey as an individual.
* 72.7% of respondents said that the draft Tree Strategy was easy to understand, where 12.2% said it wasn’t easy to understand, and 15.1% didn’t know.
* The statements in Q4 relate to North East Lincolnshire Council’s ambitions were strongly agreed with across all statements.
* Concerns were raised around the generalised tree canopy target by 2050 since we are specifically a coastal town. Concerns were also raised around the number of new buildings and homes being built, neglecting and creating threats to green heritage.
* 38.8% of respondents stated they had further objectives to include in the strategy, while 36.5% didn’t and 24.7% didn’t know.
* Of those that had objectives to provide, education was noted numerous times to provide advice and support to homeowners on the value and how-to care for trees etc. Some raised the point of increasing the number of trees specifically on private land. And also prioritising brownfield sites as opposed to green.
* The statements in Q6 that relate to aims to achieve the Tree Strategy standards were strongly agreed with across all statements.
* Respondent noted that there shouldn’t be barriers to planting due to strict rules as to having the ‘right tree in the right place for the right reason’, fearing such language could be used as an excuse for removing, and not planting trees. Respondents were also concerned around the local authority having the appropriate staffing, resources, finances and knowledge to commit to the Tree Strategy, as well as post-planting maintenance and management too.
* 3.6% of respondents were very confident that North East Lincolnshire would reach a tree canopy cover of 16% by 2050, while 23.5% was largely confident, 50% had limited confidence, 15.5% had no confidence and 6.9% didn’t know.
* Respondents voiced concerns over the amount of land being available to reach the target, especially due to new homes and buildings being built. Others said the target is too far away and should be reached sooner and should be less generalised; ad instead be specific to our coastal town and what we have to offer.

**Survey Results**

**Survey Questions**

**Q1 How did you find out about this consultation?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Communication Type | Count (n) | Percentage (%) |
| An email from NELC | 329 | 72.47 |
| An email from another organisation or contact | 10 | 2.20 |
| From a friend or relative | 9 | 1.98 |
| NELincs.gov.uk website | 18 | 3.96 |
| Poster displayed on a community notice board / Library / Park | 0 | 0.00 |
| Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.) | 70 | 15.42 |
| Word of mouth | 13 | 2.86 |
| Other | 5 | 1.10 |
| Total | **454** | **100** |

**Q2 Are you responding on behalf of … ?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Statement | Count (n) | Percentage (%) |
| Yourself as an individual | 401 | 93.91 |
| Yourself in your professional capacity | 5 | 1.17 |
| A Parish / Town / Borough / District Council in an official capacity | 2 | 0.47 |
| As a Parish / Town / Borough / District / County Councillor | 1 | 0.23 |
| A government organisation or agency | 0 | 0.00 |
| A nature-related charity or organisation | 3 | 0.70 |
| A landowner / farming related organisation or association | 0 | 0.00 |
| An educational establishment, such as a school or college | 0 | 0.00 |
| A charity, voluntary or community sector organisation (VCS) | 1 | 0.23 |
| A representative of a local community group or residents' association | 4 | 0.94 |
| A health organisation | 0 | 0.00 |
| A local business | 1 | 0.23 |
| Other, please specify: | 2 | 0.47 |
| If you are responding in a professional capacity, please tell us what it is: | 0 | 0.00 |
| If you are responding on behalf of an organisation (business, community group, residents' association, council or any other organisations), please tell us the name of your organisation: | 7 | 1.64 |

**Q3 Is the draft North East Lincolnshire Council Tree Strategy easy to understand?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Understanding | Count (n) | Percentage (%) |
| Yes | 256 | 72.73 |
| No | 43 | 12.22 |
| Don't know | 53 | 15.06 |
| Total | 352 | 100 |

**Q4 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following… North East Lincolnshire Council should:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Statement | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree | Don’t know | Overall |
| Work towards reaching the national average tree canopy cover of 16% by 2050 | 21 | 9 | 15 | 58 | 209 | 2 | 314 |
| 6.69% | 2.87% | 4.78% | 18.47% | 66.56% | 0.64% | 100.00% |
| Preserve and enhance the green infrastructure | 11 | 3 | 11 | 45 | 236 | 0 | 306 |
| 3.59% | 0.98% | 3.59% | 14.71% | 77.12% | 0.00% | 100.00% |
| Address the decline of trees in our urban environment | 10 | 4 | 4 | 43 | 251 | 0 | 312 |
| 3.21% | 1.28% | 1.28% | 13.78% | 80.45% | 0.00% | 100.00% |
| Tackle the multiple threats to our tree population | 11 | 2 | 9 | 51 | 237 | 1 | 311 |
| 3.54% | 0.64% | 2.89% | 16.40% | 76.21% | 0.32% | 100.00% |
| Increase our knowledge and provide better protection | 8 | 5 | 6 | 65 | 225 | 1 | 310 |
| 2.58% | 1.61% | 1.94% | 20.97% | 72.58% | 0.32% | 100.00% |
| Contribute towards North East Lincolnshire Council’s net zero targets | 13 | 4 | 27 | 74 | 183 | 7 | 308 |
| 4.22% | 1.30% | 8.77% | 24.03% | 59.42% | 2.27% | 100.00% |
| Provide enhanced and improved recreation and amenity | 7 | 5 | 16 | 89 | 188 | 2 | 307 |
| 2.28% | 1.63% | 5.21% | 28.99% | 61.24% | 0.65% | 100.00% |
| Realise the multiple benefits trees provide: economic, social and environmental | 9 | 3 | 9 | 63 | 223 | 1 | 308 |
| 2.92% | 0.97% | 2.92% | 20.45% | 72.40% | 0.32% | 100.00% |
| Deliver sustainable solutions to some of the borough’s challenges | 9 | 3 | 17 | 82 | 190 | 3 | 304 |
| 2.96% | 0.99% | 5.59% | 26.97% | 62.50% | 0.99% | 100.00% |

See below a summary of what was provided by respondents for each statement (see Appendix A for numerated, qualitative responses).

*Work towards reaching the national average tree canopy cover of 16% by 2050*

Responses believed the target should be higher than that current set target of 16%, and instead should be 20-25%. Concerns were raised over developments such as schools and housing being built, and the notion that we would be more specific in our target, being NEL is a coastal town.

*Preserve and enhance the green infrastructure*

Concerns were raised over poor planning and maintenance of trees and shrubs, and responses noted the large amounts of unused fields and waste grounds available to use.

*Address the decline of trees within our urban environment*

Responses stated consent should be gained before addressing declines of trees in our urban environment, and the awareness that seeing this decline may drive visitors and tourists away.

*Tackle the multiple threats to our tree population*

Responses stated of the importance to remove diseased trees, and to not neglect green heritage for in the way of housing sites being built.

**Q5 Are there any objectives not included in the strategy that you think should be included?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Response | Count (n) | Percentage (%) |
| Yes | 115 | 38.85 |
| No | 108 | 36.49 |
| Don't know | 73 | 24.66 |
| Total | **296** | **100** |

The following ideas were put forward as proposed objectives or areas of interest for the strategy:

* More enforcement of trees by rogue developments; make larger gardens compulsory to new building applications
* Increase and protect hedgerows so to fill in gaps on semi-rural roads to encourage wildlife
* More enforcement to ensure residents care for hedgerows so not to cause safety issues on paths and roads
* Grow native trees and mix planting wherever possible to diversify habitats and to reduce monocultures
* Increase the number of trees on private land
* Guidance on how tree planting can help flood management
* Prioritise brownfield sites and not green
* Reduce the number of trees being cut down in places such as parks to include police visibility [Sussex Rec]; so to stop trees being cut down without good reason
* Plant more trees on streets where patches of grass are
* Accessible advice and support for homeowners on how to correctly and safely maintain their trees and other greenery; more guidance on preventing root erosion; highlight via education the value of trees in feeding/roosting/nesting habitats for wildlife; general education on the average person’s understanding of trees and the value they have in the environment and wellbeing; educate housing associations to know they place a part in caring for trees too
* Integrate trees and greening more into sports, culture and leisure, utilising woodlands and natural materials more in comparison to spending a lot of money of new play equipment
* Plant more fruit trees to provide free sources of valuable, healthy fruit to our local community
* Provide trees or individuals to plant and nurture them on private or public land themselves, enforcing personal responsibility
* Consider tree content on private land more
* Better consideration of planting trees at the right time of year so they don’t simply die from incorrect or no aftercare
* Don’t cut down trees at the first sign of disease because it’s easier and cheaper
* A set number of trees being planted each year to be identified and not just a percentage by year 2050
* The Local Nature Recovery strategy to be considered side-by-side when undertaking the planning/removal of trees

**Q6 The Strategy has two guiding principles:**

* **Protect and care for North East Lincolnshire’s trees.**
* **Plant more trees.**

**Our two guiding principles aim to achieve the overall objective of a sustainably managed and protected, healthy and diverse tree population with sufficient canopy cover to benefit and meet the needs of all who live, work and visit North East Lincolnshire.**

**In order to deliver on the standards of the Tree Strategy, to what extent do you agree or disagree that:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Statement | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree | Don’t know | Overall |
| There will be better management and protection of our existing tree stock | 8 | 6 | 32 | 94 | 126 | 12 | 278 |
| 2.88% | 2.16% | 11.51% | 33.81% | 45.32% | 4.32% | 100.00% |
| Careful consideration should be given to the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason, with the right management | 8 | 2 | 8 | 64 | 190 | 3 | 275 |
| 2.91% | 0.73% | 2.91% | 23.27% | 69.09% | 1.09% | 100.00% |
| New tree planting will deliver multiple benefits | 5 | 1 | 8 | 50 | 211 | 0 | 275 |
| 1.82% | 0.36% | 2.91% | 18.18% | 76.73% | 0.00% | 100.00% |
| We should ensure biosecurity of new tree stock through the application of strict standards | 5 | 4 | 13 | 70 | 180 | 4 | 276 |
| 1.81% | 1.45% | 4.71% | 25.36% | 65.22% | 1.45% | 100.00% |
| There will be better post planting maintenance and management | 7 | 5 | 24 | 76 | 153 | 11 | 276 |
| 2.54% | 1.81% | 8.70% | 27.54% | 55.43% | 3.99% | 100.00% |

*There will be better management and protection of our existing tree stock*

Responses stated for this statement to be met correct identification of early fungal problems of trees should be acted upon to prevent further damage. Concerns were raised over funding for maintenance costs against annual saving pressures.

*Careful consideration should be given to the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason, with the right management*

Responses didn’t want this statement to be a barrier for planting trees, and concerns were raised over Equan’s history of failing to take action in allowing developers to destroy trees where appropriate planning conditions were not in place.

*New tree planting will deliver multiple benefits*

This statement was received well but responses stated consideration should be given to the location, and to ensure the planting is suitable for both the local authority and the public, dependent on management and funding.

*We should ensure biosecurity of new tree stock through the application of strict standards \**

Responses stated strict standards would generally be useful, but they should not become bureaucratic and political. Concerns were raised over this becoming a barrier towards people wanting to plant on their land.

*There will be better post planting maintenance and management*

Concerns were raised over the local authority having the appropriate resources, including staffing, finances and knowledge for not just the tree planting process, but the post-planting maintenance.

**Q7 Based on the aims and objectives set out within the tree strategy, to what extent are you confident that the strategy will deliver on reaching the average tree canopy cover target of 16% in North East Lincolnshire by 2050.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Confidence | Count (n) | Percentage (%) |
| Very confident | 10 | 3.61 |
| Largely confident | 65 | 23.47 |
| Limited confidence | 140 | 50.54 |
| No confidence | 43 | 15.52 |
| Don’t know | 19 | 6.86 |
| Total | **277** | **100** |

Numerous respondents who had limited or no confidence voiced concerns over the amount of land available to reach this target may be a problem, given a lot of homes are being built too. Concerns were also raised around having the appropriate resources, time, money and workforce to commit to the target, with few saying priorities are elsewhere in our local authority which may slow down the target process where other targets can take precedence respectively.

It was raised the current target seems ‘too far away’, and states no specifics to where the trees will be planted, when they will be, which species etc. Respondents also stated at times trees get removed then conversely trees get planting, further defeating the object and slowing the target down.

One respondent noted the idea of allowing the public to have the opportunity to suggest planting locations, providing a more personalised approach. Lastly, concerns were raised around the target due to respondents having previously been ‘let down’ in other means by local authority targets, reducing confidence in the current

**Demographics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ward | Count (n) |
| Sidney Sussex | 13 |
| Croft Baker | 21 |
| Haverstoe | 24 |
| Heneage | 11 |
| East Marsh | 5 |
| Park | 19 |
| Scartho | 25 |
| Humberston and New Waltham | 15 |
| Wolds | 16 |
| Waltham | 10 |
| Freshney | 18 |
| Yarborough | 22 |
| Immingham | 18 |
| South | 4 |
| Out of area | 4 |
| West Marsh | 13 |
| Total | 244 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Age | Count (n) | Percentage (%) |
| Under 18 | 1 | 0.38 |
| 18-24 | 2 | 0.76 |
| 25-34 | 12 | 4.55 |
| 35-49 | 46 | 17.42 |
| 50-64 | 85 | 32.20 |
| 65-79 | 98 | 37.12 |
| 80+ | 4 | 1.52 |
| I prefer not to say | 16 | 6.06 |
| Total | 264 | 100 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Gender | Count(n) | Percentage (%) |
| Woman | 138 | 53.49 |
| Man | 100 | 38.76 |
| Non-binary | 0 | 0.00 |
| I prefer not to say | 18 | 6.98 |
| Total | **258** | **100** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Transgender | Count (n) | Percentage (%) |
| Yes | 2 | 0.77 |
| No | 232 | 89.58 |
| I prefer not to say | 25 | 9.65 |
| Total | **259** | **100** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Sexuality | Count (n) | Percentage (%) |
| Straight | 209 | 80.38 |
| Lesbian | 1 | 0.38 |
| Bisexual | 5 | 1.92 |
| Gay | 4 | 1.54 |
| I prefer not to say | 37 | 14.23 |
| In another way | 4 | 1.54 |
| Total | **260** | **100** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Relationship Status | Count (n) | Percentage (%) |
| Single | 20 | 7.69 |
| Married | 136 | 52.31 |
| Civil Partnership | 2 | 0.77 |
| In a relationship (living together) | 27 | 10.38 |
| In a relationship (not living together) | 10 | 3.85 |
| Widowed | 15 | 5.77 |
| Divorced | 16 | 6.15 |
| I prefer not to say | 33 | 12.69 |
| Total | **260** | **100** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Disability | Count (n) | Percentage (%) |
| No disability | 158 | 53.92 |
| Physical impairment such as difficulty moving your arms or mobility issues | 28 | 9.56 |
| Wheelchair user | 1 | 0.34 |
| Sensory impairment such as being blind or having a visual impairment | 6 | 2.05 |
| Sensory impairment such as being deaf or having a hearing impairment | 18 | 6.14 |
| Mental health condition such as depression, dementia or schizophrenia | 14 | 4.78 |
| Long-standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease or epilepsy | 30 | 10.24 |
| Learning disability or difficulty (such as Down's syndrome or dyslexia) or cognitive impairment (such as autistic spectrum disorder) | 4 | 1.37 |
| I prefer not to say | 29 | 9.90 |
| Other | 5 | 1.71 |
| Total | **293** | **100** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Religion or belief | Count (n) | Percentage (%) |
| Christian | 107 | 41.15 |
| Muslim | 0 | 0.00 |
| Buddhist | 2 | 0.77 |
| Sikh | 0 | 0.00 |
| Jewish | 0 | 0.00 |
| Hindu | 1 | 0.38 |
| No religion | 93 | 35.77 |
| I prefer not to say | 46 | 17.69 |
| Other religion | 11 | 4.23 |
| Total | **260** | **100** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ethnicity | Count (n) | Percentage (%) |
| White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British | 222 | 89.16 |
| White - Irish | 1 | 0.40 |
| White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller | 1 | 0.40 |
| White - Any other White background | 3 | 1.20 |
| Mixed - White and Asian | 1 | 0.40 |
| Mixed - Any other Mixed background | 1 | 0.40 |
| Mixed - Asian or Asian British-Indian | 1 | 0.40 |
| I prefer not to say | 17 | 6.83 |
| Any other ethnic group | 2 | 0.80 |
| Total | **249** | **100** |

**Appendix**

Appendix A – Q4 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following… North East Lincolnshire Council should: Numerated Qualitative Responses

*Work towards reaching the national average tree canopy cover of 16% by 2050*

10 respondents think the target should be higher than that of 16%, and should be 20-25% since we should strive to be above the national average, not a target; five respondents think the current target should be achieved sooner than 2050.

Two respondents voiced concerns over schools and housing being built, reducing the number of existing trees on the proposed land. Two respondents noted the importance of instead of aiming to achieve a generalised, national target, the target should be specific to the borough, taking into account appropriate consideration of habits and water management, especially since we are a coastal environment. It was also mentioned to plant trees dependent on type and purpose e.g. to encourage olive, walnut, pecan consumption in preference to high carbohydrate foods, for their proven chronic health benefits.

*Preserve and enhance the green infrastructure*

Two noted the current poor planning and maintenance of tree canopy coverage and shrubs, with one stating trees require adequate re-evaluation. Two respondents mentioned the importance of making use of unused fields and waste grounds to produce more green infrastructure, for example unused land in our town centre area.

*Address the decline of trees within our urban environment*

One noted the importance of where it is possible, to gain people’s consent for addressing relevant declines of trees – and for this to only occur if it can be afforded. Another respondent noted how when you see declining areas green spaces in urban towns, it can drive visitors and tourists away.

*Tackle the multiple threats to our tree population*

It was noted the importance to remove diseased trees if they cannot be saved, and regular checks to be made on the tree population. It was also noted the recent neglect of green heritage in the way for new build housing being built.

Appendix B - Q6 In order to deliver on the standards of the Tree Strategy, to what extent do you agree or disagree that: Numerated Qualitative Responses

*There will be better management and protection of our existing tree stock*

Respondents stated that management should dependent on the type of Tree Protection Order (TPO) being used. It was also noticed people should be more able to identify and diagnose tree fungal problems quicker and more accurately as trees are falling and causing damage because of this.

The strategy should be matched appropriately to funding as maintenance costs are subject to annual saving pressures. It was also noted there should be more focus on fruit and nut-bearing trees. Few respondents required more detail to answer this question. Some respondents noted this standard wouldn’t be achieved due to trees being planted and then ‘forgotten’ about, and the fact weedkiller is still being used around the base of trees and pathways are regularly damaged by these roots searching for water, as they have been tarmacked over.

*Careful consideration should be given to the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason, with the right management*

Respondents recognised that the statement should not be used as a barrier for planting and to not be a broad-ranging excuse to remove trees from streetscape. It was noted that previously Equans has failed to take appropriate action in allowing developers to destroy trees, and appropriate planning conditions have not been in place.

Instead, the strategy should deliver a commitment to recognise mature tree specimens which will expectantly cost more in paved areas but should be reflected upon in amenity and conservation value.

*New tree planting will deliver multiple benefits*

Generally, this standard was received well; but of respondents who did not agree with the statement, it was noted careful consideration has to be given to the types of trees and the location, and to ensure the tree planting is suitable for both the local authority and the public, dependent on effective management and funding.

One respondent stated the benefits need to be communicated better to residents.

*We should ensure biosecurity of new tree stock through the application of strict standards \**

One respondent stated the application of strict standards would be helpful, but only if it does not become bureaucratic, making the original task more difficult. Others were concerned this would create a barrier for people wanting to plant on their own land by taking away personal agency to create environments which work for the person on an individual basis. Concerns were also raised as the statement infers an excuse to defer planting due to lack of stock availability due to the excessively strict standing, which can thus reduce the eligible stock, or conversely increase the procurement cost.

One noted a level of calculated risk should be used in this instance to encourage community participation.

*There will be better post planting maintenance and management*

Numerous respondents voiced worries over the local authority having the appropriate staffing, resources, finances and knowledge to commit to better post-planting maintenance and management, with the worry stemming from a previous lack of resources.

For example, one respondent noted during the previous mitigation for the Suggits Lane Bridge, trees planted there have not been protected. Another stated a beating-up programme would be useful in regard to the statement, replacing successive lost trees over seasons on a regular basis.