

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council



Tree Charter



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Tree Charter

In 2020 the Borough Council set out the “aspiration for Tonbridge and Malling to be carbon neutral by 2030” and for a strategy to be developed to support this ambition. The Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030 has now been adopted and includes a commitment to biodiversity protection and enhancement.

Trees face many threats and pressures including; land use changes, poor management, damage or vandalism of young trees as well as pests and diseases. However, Trees and woods are essential for people, biodiversity and climate change resilience. They improve our health and wellbeing, clean the air we breathe, cool our towns, help to manage flood risk and by capturing and storing carbon, they play a vital role in addressing climate change. Trees can also make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments through tree-lined streets, as expected in the National Planning Policy Framework. Improving tree coverage will not just benefit existing generations, but also future generations and their quality of life.

The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024

In May 2021, the Government published the [England Trees Action Plan](#). Within this document there is a “call to action” for stakeholders, to: apply for grants for establishing and managing trees and woodlands, access better advice and guidance for tree management and plant trees where they make the most difference for biodiversity and climate resilience.

Tree Cover in Tonbridge and Malling

The national average for woodland cover in the UK is only 13%, compared to an EU average of 37%. Despite being one of the least wooded countries in Europe, woods and trees continue to disappear from our landscapes. In line with the principles of the Woodland Trust, the Council will seek opportunities to “plant the right tree in the right place” as well as working with partners and other landowners in the borough to increase tree cover.

In Tonbridge and Malling percentage woodland cover is above the UK average at 17.6%. However, we know that a single tree can provide huge benefits and landscapes that work for both wildlife and humans is important. Planting trees for climate change is vital, but how we plant those trees can re-establish biodiversity of our landscapes. Opportunities to create wooded areas, by planting native species, connecting them within networks of other nature friendly habitats will be given consideration. In this way we can help to reverse the collapse of biodiversity and create opportunities for species to adapt and thrive.

Opportunities

We need to seek opportunities to increase tree coverage across the Borough. For Council owned land, we will retain the planting budget and seek additional funding opportunities. For land outside our control we will work with partners, landowners, community groups and through the planning decisions taken, we will support native tree planting schemes in suitable locations.

The Woodland Trust estimate that the UK's woodland cover needs to be increased from 13% to at least 19%. However, planting the right native species of trees in the right place is vital. Any commitment to maintain and increase tree cover in the borough, needs to be part of a wider strategy to protect, restore and create a variety of diverse habitats.

We will:

Work with partners to maintain and increase trees in the Borough

- Review TMBC land to identify suitable sites for trees, working with the Woodland Trust to start tree planting schemes.
- Engage with tree planting initiatives such as The Queens Green Canopy tree planting scheme, to encourage community tree planting.
- KCC have committed to planting a tree for every person in Kent, which totals just over 1.5 million. In partnership with KCC we have recently planted a trial "Tiny Forest " at Leybourne. We will seek opportunities to plant further Tiny Forest plots across the Borough if suitable sites are identified.
- Work with local landowners to encourage tree planting and explore opportunities for planting within boundaries and hedgerows.
- Work with organisations such as The Woodland Trust to get more trees for schools and community groups to undertake planting projects.
- Work with developers to plan for more native trees and canopy coverage within new developments.

Explore available grant funding opportunities to maximise opportunities for tree planting schemes

- Accessing grants will allow the Council to go beyond the current tree planting budget to enable additional planting and management of existing trees.
- Accessing the Defra Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF) the England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO), the Emergency Tree Fund, Nature for Climate Fund and the Urban Tree Challenge Fund will support increased tree planting and natural regeneration in local communities. This could enable additional tree planting in areas such as riverbanks, hedgerows, parklands, urban areas, beside roads and footpaths, in copses and community spaces.

Opportunities

Tree Conservation

- The Council will minimise the removal of trees on Council owned land, unless there are overriding arboriculture or health and safety needs for felling.
- The Council will protect ancient woodlands and veteran trees in line with Government policy.
- The Council will support planting of new trees as part of developments to support biodiversity, habitat creation and carbon reduction measures.
- The Council will seek opportunities to deliver “Biodiversity Net Gain” in line with Government policy at the time decisions are taken. This will include using native species when planting new trees and supporting existing habitats. Working with the Kent Local Nature Partnership, the Council will look to Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) as these may help identify locations where tree planting may help support existing habitats best.

The Tonbridge & Malling Tree Charter recognises the value of trees, the many benefits they have in terms of biodiversity and the increasingly important role they can play in mitigating the effects of climate change, risks of flooding and pollution control.

Funding opportunities will be explored to plant native trees in the borough that survive and thrive. A tree that is wanted and planted appropriately will bring the most benefit and avoid potential problems as it grows. In supporting the aims of the Tree Charter, the Council recognises the importance of trees now and for future generations.

The Tonbridge & Malling Tree Charter sits alongside the

[Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030](#) and the Annual [Climate Change Action Plans](#). Tree planting ambitions and targets will be incorporated into future Climate Change Action Plans.

