

COMMITTEE REPORT

15/10/2025

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2025**

PART 1

**Croxleyhall Woods Management plan 2025 -2030
(ADE)**

1 Summary

- 1.1 A new five-year management plan has been developed for Croxleyhall Woods, Croxley Green.
- 1.2 The new plan contains management actions for the woodland over the next five years from financial year 2025/26 until 2030/31. The detailed actions relate to woodland management for biodiversity and improvements to public access and interpretation.
- 1.3 Officers are recommending that the plan is approved by the Climate Change, Leisure and Housing committee and adopted by the Council. Should the plans be approved, Officers will seek to implement the actions within the plans over the next five years. Work will be completed within existing budgets or subject to external funding.
- 1.4 Recommendation

That the Climate Change and Leisure Committee:

Adopt the new 5-year Management Plan for Croxleyhall Woods

Give delegated authority to the Director of Finance to enter into a contract or funding agreement above the value of £25,000, subject to securing external funding to facilitate works to support the implementation of the Management Plans.

Report prepared by: Alex Laurie, Principal Tree and Woodlands Officer,

2 Details

- 2.1 Plan development process:
 - 2.1.1 The plan was developed and produced by Countryside Management Service (CMS) part of Hertfordshire County Council, who were commissioned by Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) to assist with the management of TRDC Open Space.
 - 2.1.3 Once draft plans had been completed, public consultation on the management plan was carried out between 19th May and 30th June 2025.
 - 2.1.4 A total of 13 people responded to the consultation and provided feedback. The comments focused primarily on access improvements to the woodland and

woodland management works for biodiversity. A desire for interpretation of the history and wildlife of the woods and volunteer tasks to assist with management was also expressed.

- 2.1.5 As summarised in section 2.2, the management plan addresses the need for access improvements and works to enhance the woods for biodiversity.
- 2.1.6 The woods already have on-site interpretation, and Countryside Management Service, who work partnership with TRDC, run regular volunteer tasks on open space across the district.
- 2.2 The Management Plan:
 - 2.2.1 The key actions within the Croxleyhall Wood management plan relate to woodland management for biodiversity and improvements to public access. Some of these actions will be subject to securing external funding. They include:
 - 2.2.2 thinning selected areas of naturally regenerating trees (focusing on Sycamore and Ash suffering from Ash Die Back disease) to favour better quality specimens;
 - 2.2.3 removal of non-native and/or invasive species in particular Laurel and Rhododendron;
 - 2.2.4 making entrances and access points safer and more welcoming;
 - 2.2.5 cutting back trees and vegetation from footpath edges;

Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.2.6 The officer recommendation is that the management plan for Croxleyhall Wood is formally adopted by the Council.
- 2.2.7 Officers will then begin implementing the actions within the plans, subject to the availability of funding where necessary.
- 2.2.8 If the plans are not approved by the committee, maintenance of the Woods will continue at a minimum level, but no additional improvements for biodiversity or public access will be undertaken.

3 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 3.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets. The relevant policies are the Tree Strategy agreed in 2022 and Nature Recovery Strategy agreed in 2023.
 - 3.1.1 The recommendations in this report relate to and support the achievement of the following objectives within the Corporate Framework 2023 – 2026:
 - Achieve net carbon zero and be climate resilient – Maintaining the woodland in good ecological condition will maximise its contribution to storing atmospheric CO² and help mitigate the impact of the urban 'heat island' effect. Support and enable sustainable communities – A welcoming, well maintained, woodland will

continue to provide a valuable recreational asset for the local community over the long term.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Work outlined within the Management Plans will be completed within existing budgets or be subject to external funding.
- 4.2 Work to trees suffering from Ash dieback will be facilitated utilising the existing Ash Dieback budget. Making entrances and access points safer and more welcoming will be completed using existing management plan budgets, subject to adoption of the Management Plan.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 All proposed works and equipment will be tendered within the Council's constitution and contract procedure rules and any other permissions obtained (for example planning) where required.
- 5.2 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, updated by the Environment Act 2021, places a legal responsibility on public authorities in England to have due regard for habitats and species of the greatest conservation importance, whilst protecting all biodiversity.

Section 40(1) states that a "public authority which has any functions exercisable in relation to England must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective."

The accompanying Explanatory Note to the Act (para 923) states that "*the aim of the biodiversity objective is to provide for the enhancement or improvement of biodiversity, not just its maintenance in its current state*". Gone is the former 'have regard' element in respect of conserving biodiversity, and this has been replaced by a proactive duty (new section 40(1)) to "from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective".

Details of the Three Rivers Biodiversity Policy, and its reporting duties can be found on its website at:

<https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/services/environment-climate-emergency/biodiversity#Biodiversity%20Duty>

- 5.3 Under the Council Constitution, Committee approval is required to enter into any contracts above the value of £25,000.

6 Equal Opportunities Implications

A Short Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment is included at Appendix 2. The Management Plan does not propose substantial changes to Croxleyhall woods, but aims to make them more accessible to a wider range of people. This includes physical access by cutting back vegetation from paths, replacing / improving seating and removing barriers and obstacles. It also aims to remove psychological barriers by making entrances more welcoming.

7 Staffing Implications

- 7.1 Officers within Leisure and Natural Infrastructure, and Trees and Woodlands, will manage implementation of the plan over it's lifetime.

8 Environmental Implications

Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment Summary	
Homes, buildings, infrastructure, equipment and energy	0
Travel	0
Goods and Consumption	0
Ecology	3
Adaptation	0
Engagement and Influence	0
Total Overall Average Score	3.0

- 8.1 New management prescriptions for the woodlands will enable a varied and diverse development of habitats, which will have a positive impact on the flora and fauna across the district.

9 Community Safety Implications

Making entrances to the woods more welcoming and cutting back vegetation to make paths more accessible will hopefully give visitors more confidence to use the woods and feel safer when doing so. **Public Health implications**

Trees and greenery may boost lifespan, this has been studied for 8 years by Harvard researchers and published in April Environmental Health Perspectives.

<https://health.usnews.com/wellness/articles/2016-12-09/the-many-health-benefits-of-trees>

10 Customer Services Centre Implications

None specific.

11 Communications and Website Implications

- 11.1 Implementation of the new management plans may require occasional external and website communications to advise residents and site users when works are taking place on site.

- 11.2 Good news stories will be circulated and shared via the Communications team, including across a range of social media channels.

12 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 12.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>.
- 12.2 In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.
- 12.3 The subject of this report is covered by the Landscape and Leisure service plan(s). Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of likelihood and impact)
Actions within the Management Plans are not implemented due to a lack of resources	Reputational damage to the Council	Implementation of the plans is monitored and reported to hi-light any issues at an early stage	tolerate	Low 4

- 12.4 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

<div>Very Likely</div> <div>Likelihood</div> <div>Remote</div>	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
	<div>Low</div> <div>Impact</div> <div>Unacceptable</div>			

Impact Score

4 (Catastrophic)

3 (Critical)

2 (Significant)

1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

4 (Very Likely (≥80%))

3 (Likely (21-79%))

2 (Unlikely (6-20%))

1 (Remote (≤5%))

- 12.5 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.
- 12.6 The remainder are therefore operational risks. Progress against the treatment plans for strategic risks is reported to the Policy and Resources Committee quarterly. The effectiveness of all treatment plans are reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

Background Papers**Appendix 1 - Croxleyhall Management Plan 2025-2030****Appendix 2 – Short Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment****Appendix 3 – Environmental Impact Assessment**

