

COMMITTEE REPORT

14/01/2026

CLIMATE CHANGE &
LEISURE COMMITTEE

CLIMATE CHANGE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 14 JANUARY 2026

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 The plan was considered by Members of the Climate Change and Leisure Committee on 15 October 2025.
- 1.4 Following comments to the committee by Mr Barry Grant of the Croxley Green Residents Association, and questions from Cllr Mitchell, a member of the committee, the Chair proposed the following recommendation:

“That the committee acknowledge the officers for their work on the report and ensuring that all committee members, including substitutes, receive responses to the questions. The report will either be taken to the Policy & Resources Committee in November or returned to the Climate Change & Leisure Committee in January for further consideration”.

- 1.5 On being put to the Committee, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being by general assent.
- 1.6 Officers subsequently produced a written response to points and questions raised (Appendix 2 and 3). Officers have also provided a summary of consultation responses received and a response to the comments (para 2.1.5).
- 1.7 Officers are recommending that the plan is approved by the CCL 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.
- 1.8 Recommendation

That the Climate Change and Leisure Committee:

Adopt the new 5-year Management Plan for Croxley Hall 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 The following table summarises consultation responses received and officers' response

	No. comments	Summary of comments	Officer response
Access Improvements	5	A number of respondents were supportive of access improvements proposed in the plan, although others felt funding should not be spent on this. There were also suggestions for access works in neighbouring woodland, not owned by the council.	A balance needs to be struck between enabling access to the woodland for visitors, without overly formalising the landscape to the detriment of the natural environment. Works in non-council owned woodland is outside the scope this plan.
Grounds Maintenance	5	Several respondents wished to see increased grounds maintenance, such as more frequent bin emptying; removal of fallen branches from all paths; and additional fly-tipping enforcement.	The frequency of bin emptying is carried out in line with the council's existing resources, and additional visits are made on request. Officers inspect fallen branches when reported to assess whether, or not they need to be removed. When fly-tipping incidents are reported, officers assess whether there is sufficient

			evidence to undertake any enforcement action.
Biodiversity	4	There were several responses supportive of works to benefit biodiversity such as Holly control, coppicing and ride management	The new plan includes a range of works to benefit biodiversity. Works will be completed by volunteer tasks, or contractors where funding can be secured for works.
Interpretation	3	Some desire for additional interpretation for the woods was expressed, and promotion of the woodlands and natural environment in the local area more generally.	The need for new interpretation in this plan period has not been identified. However existing on-site interpretation will continue to be maintained and more general council-wide social media on trees and woodlands will continue to be produced.
Volunteer tasks	2	Some interest was expressed in volunteer tasks to assist with management of the woods.	Countryside Management Service, who work in partnership with the council run regular volunteer tasks across the district. Tasks will be held at Croxley Hall Woods where suitable works are identified.

2.1.6 As summarised in section 2.2, the management plan addresses the need for access improvements and works to enhance the woods for biodiversity.

2.1.7 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 footnote to this part of the Act 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”.

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 4. The Management Plan does not propose substantial changes to Croxley hall 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 its 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 highlight 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.

Very Likely Likelihood ↓ Remote	Low	High	Very High	Very High
	4	8	12	16
Low	Medium	High	Very High	
3	6	9	12	
Low	Low	Medium	High	
2	4	6	8	
Low	Low	Low	Low	
1	2	3	4	
Impact				
Low ----- ➤ Unacceptable				

Impact Score
 4 (Catastrophic)
 3 (Critical)
 2 (Significant)
 1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score
 4 (Very Likely ($\geq 80\%$))
 3 (Likely (21-79%))
 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
 1 (Remote ($\leq 5\%$))

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 – Croxley hall Management Plan 2025-2030

Appendix 2 – Responses to comments at CCL committee 15 October 2025

Appendix 3 – Response to member questions at CCL committee 15 October 2025

Appendix 4 – Short Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment

Appendix 5 – Environmental Impact Assessment

