Trees and Woodland Strategies

Working together for resilient treescapes

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

fera
Original thinking... applied

Forestry Commission

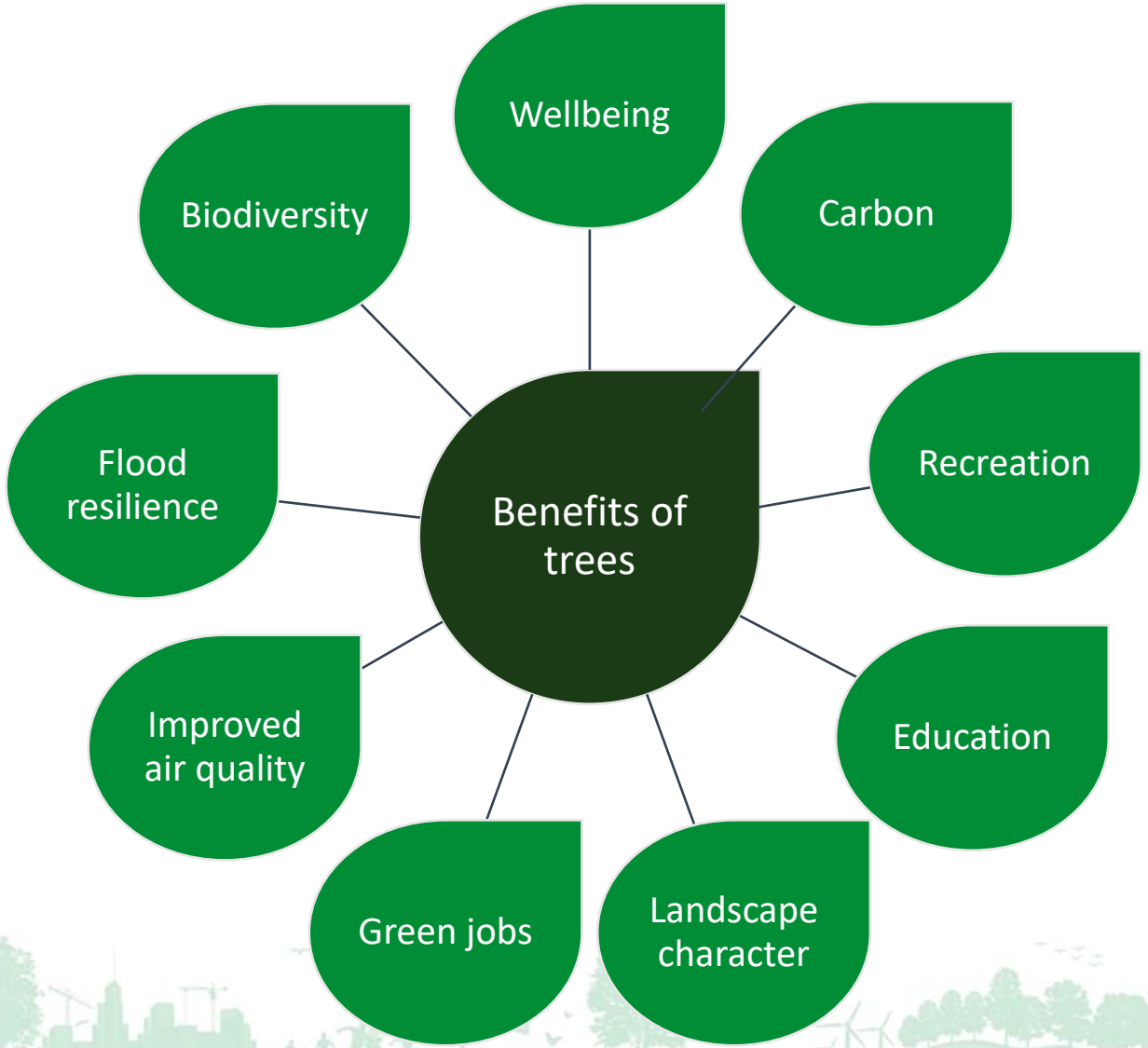
Forest Research

the tree council

Why we need Trees and Woodland Strategies

Jon Stokes
The Tree Council

Trees and woodlands are essential for people and nature



England Trees Action Plan

Over-arching aim of expanded, better-connected, resilient treescapes

1.12. Publish guidance for local authorities to develop their own local tree and woodland strategies;

The enriched treescape we need across England will often be created with the help of local authorities. Local tree and woodland strategies offer an opportunity for local communities to decide where new trees will be planted and how existing trees will be protected. Local tree and woodland strategies will also dovetail with Local Nature Recovery Strategies to help target woodland creation opportunities.

Planting and establishing more trees and woodlands will play an important role in supporting the green economy, levelling up rural areas and creating thousands of new jobs. It will encourage a growing demand for sustainably sourced timber to be provided domestically and it will unlock new streams of green finance.

Environmental Improvement Plan 2023

- Update to the 25 Year Environment Plan.
- Sets out how government will work with landowners, communities and businesses to deliver goals.
- Includes canopy cover target for trees in and out of woodlands.
- Includes a new hedgerow restoration and creation target.
- The EIP is available here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan
- Synopsis of key points available here: https://treetalk.substack.com/p/new-environmental-improvement-plan-trees.

TAWS link national targets & funding with local delivery

Long term target:

- Increase tree canopy and woodland cover to 16.5% of total land area by 2050.

Interim target:

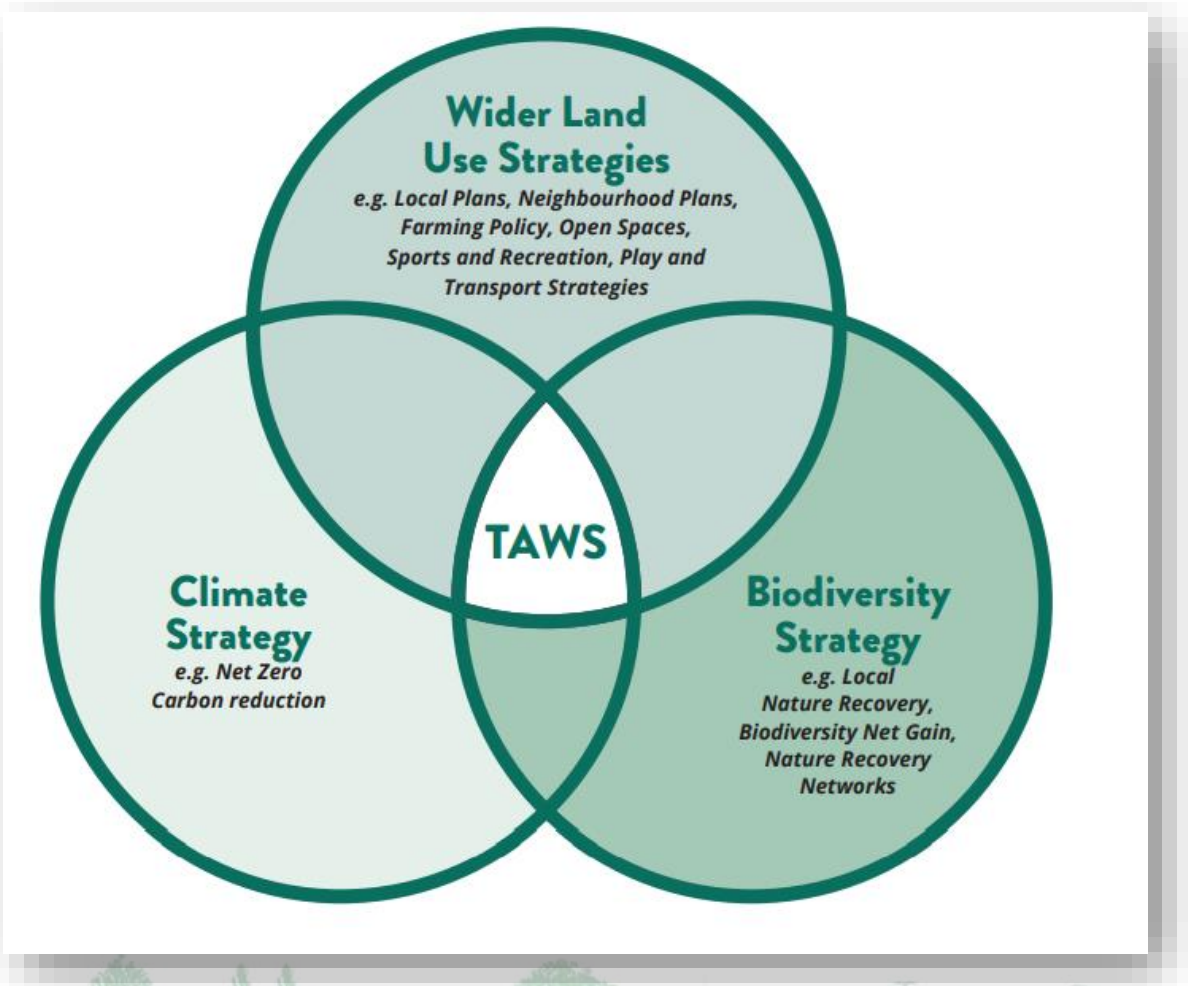
- Increase tree canopy and woodland cover by 0.26% of land area (equivalent to 34,000 hectares) by 31 January 2028.

We have published a **Local Authority Tree and Woodland Strategy Toolkit** to support local authorities to develop their own local tree and woodland planting strategies.

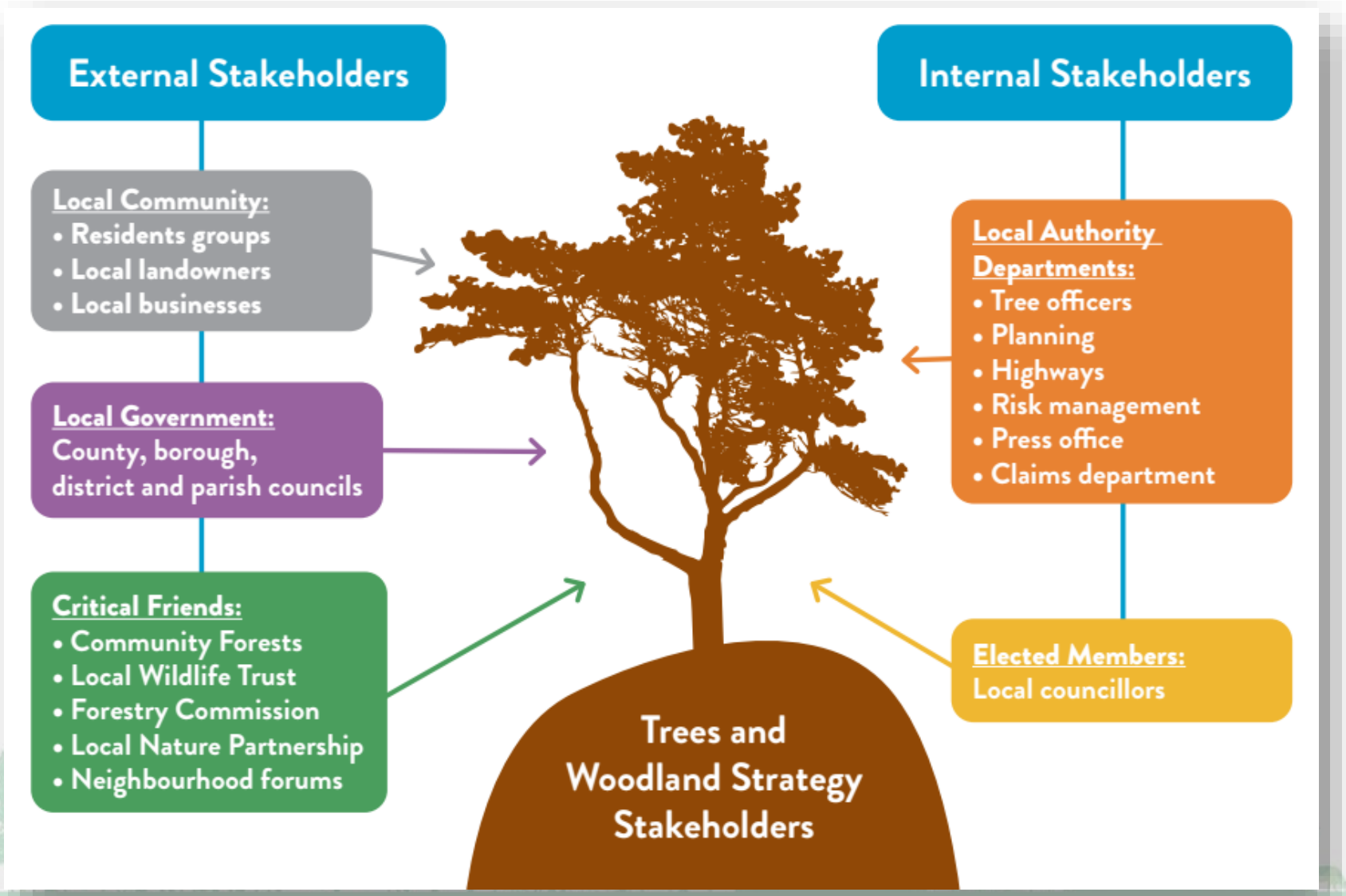
- Invested over £250 million across the Urban Trees Challenge Fund, Local Authority Treescapes Fund and via England's Community Forests and our Woodland Creation partners to support tree planting and regeneration in urban and peri-urban areas, particularly in areas with high levels of social and tree canopy deprivation. In 2022, 82% of the woodlands planted by England's Community Forests have full or partial public access.

- Published the **Local Authority Tree and Woodland Strategy Toolkit,** providing guidance for local authorities to develop effective tree and woodland strategies to harness the long-term benefits that trees can bring to local communities, including for public access.

TAWS sit at the heart of national and local policy objectives



TAWS bring together a range of key internal and external stakeholders

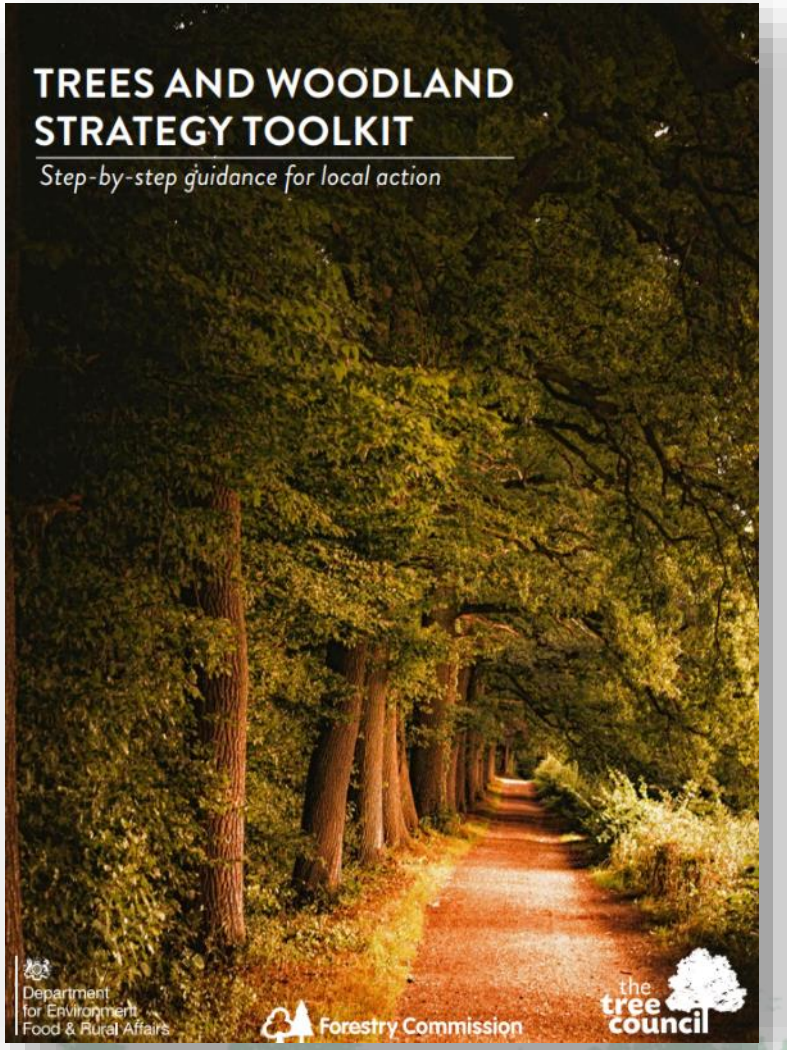


Message from Defra Minister Trudy Harrison

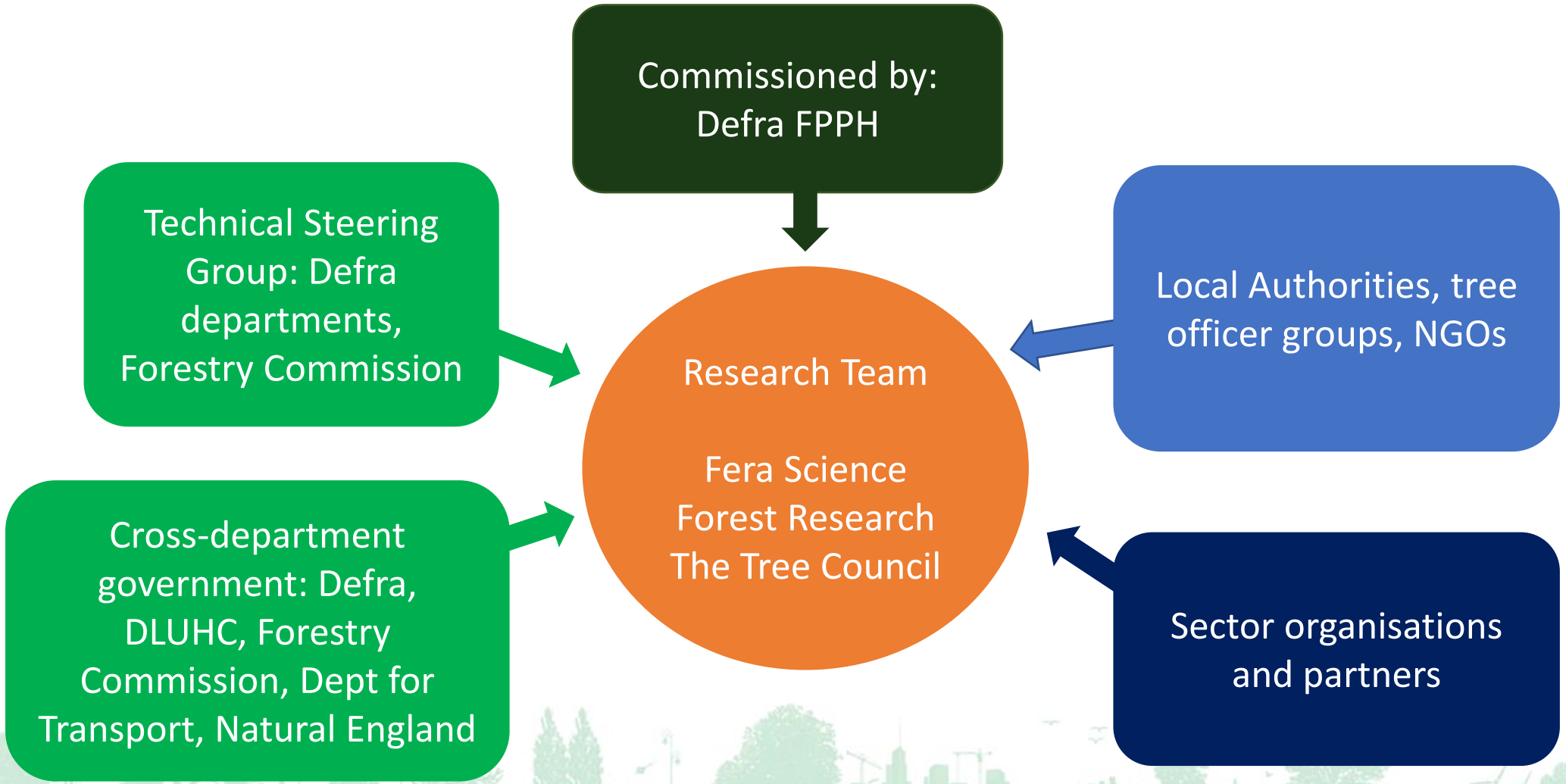
https://youtu.be/1hL3CaoL40U

Toolkit aims

- To **empower and enable** Local Authorities to create TAWS.
- To produce a **go-to document** that signposts useful resources.
- To **share solutions** through informative new case studies.
- To **support you at all stages** of strategy creation, delivery and review.
- To **reflect the diversity** of Local Authority contexts and needs.

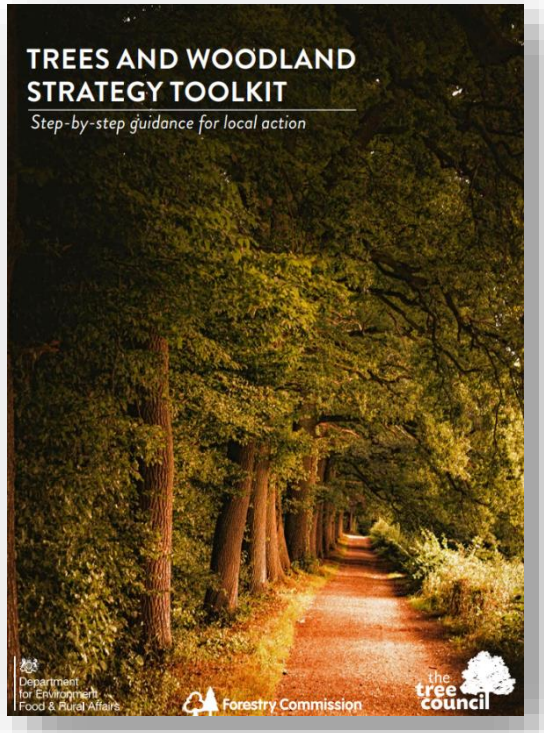


Working in partnership



Building on experience together

- Many of you have a TAWS in some form.
- The world is changing, and trees matter more, and to more people.
- We can learn together as a community and the toolkit is a vehicle for this.
- This is a journey we're all on – we can only do it together.



Practical guidance with key steps

Phase	Steps	Key resources
1: Get started	Make the case for a TAWS	• List of how trees benefit local authority services and policies – page 13 • Practical guidance for public engagement – page 19-21
	Assemble a team	
	Define a project brief	
	Identify stakeholders	
2: Develop the strategy	What to include in your strategy?	• A list of useful types of evidence and how to obtain it – pages 32-33 • A downloadable checklist to help you decide what to include in the strategy – pages 26-27
	Gather the evidence	
	Create a shared vision	
	Set effective targets	
3: Deliver the strategy	Secure funding	• Action Plan example – Appendix D • Recommendations taken from the case studies – pages 51-43
	Develop an action plan	
	Consult and engage	
	Monitor, evaluate, review and update	

Phase

1

Getting started on your strategy

Demonstrate the full relevance of trees across services

Table 1: Benefits of trees to local authority services and policies

Local authority services	Relevant benefits of trees
Adult social care and health services	• Wellbeing and mental health • Physical health • Equal access to the environment • Green jobs
Children's services	• Wellbeing and mental health • Physical health • Educational opportunities • Environmental equity
Leisure and cultural services	• Tourism • Recreational values and opportunities • Cultural and intrinsic value of trees
Environmental services	• Improved flood resilience and cooling • Improved air quality • Reduced soil erosion and water pollution • Carbon sequestration and storage • Improved biodiversity • Enhanced and restored historic landscapes
Highways, roads and transport	• Strategically planted and well-managed trees pose fewer risks • Improved flood resilience and cooling • Improved air quality • Enhanced landscape character and sense of place
Housing	• Improved flood resilience and cooling • Environmental equity • Enhanced landscape character and sense of place • Creating healthy and attractive places to live • Property values • Land stabilisation
Planning and development	• Green jobs • Conservation benefits • Climate change resilience • Conserve and enhance biodiversity and habitat connectivity • Air quality • Carbon sequestration and storage • Meeting good design standards • Contribute to sustainable communities and access to green infrastructure • Attracting inward investment • Enhanced landscape character and sense of place • Drainage and flood risk mitigation • Land remediation and pollution control
Protective services	• Strategically planted and well-managed trees pose fewer risks • Improved flood resilience and cooling • Crime prevention

Phase

1

Getting started on your strategy

Define a clear brief for your strategy

Phase

2

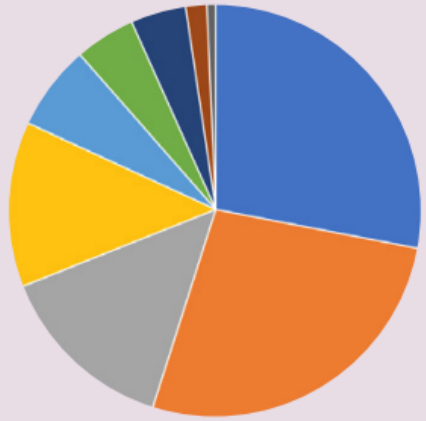
Developing the strategy

Consider all elements of the treescape

Elements of the UK treescape*

Source: Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, National Trust

1,637,100 ha	commercial conifer forests
1,511,700 ha	hedgerows and other woody linear features **
821,870 ha	ancient and long-established planted woodland
751,030 ha	other native broadleaf woodland
390,000 ha	small woodlands (between 0.1 – 0.5 ha)
278,004 ha	wood pasture
255,000 ha	groups of trees (less than 0.1 ha)
97,000 ha	lone trees (over 2-3 m tall)
43,017 ha	orchards



* These numbers do not include reference to the number of urban trees in gardens, streets, parks, schools and churchyards etc – an important part of the UK's treescape but for which no comparable data exists.

** Calculated by The Tree Council from UKCEH published data on the extent of woody linear features in Countryside Survey 2007 (700,000 km) and average hedgerow width(s) in CS2007 (unpublished data)

- Commercial conifer forests
- Hedges and other linear features
- Ancient and long-established woodlands
- Other native broadleaf woodlands
- Small woodlands
- Wood pasture
- Groups of trees
- Lone trees
- Orchards

Phase

2

Developing the strategy

Checklist of questions to guide strategy development

Table 4: A checklist to help you decide what to include in your strategy

You can download this useful table here

Element	Questions for discussion
Context	• What is the geographic area covered by the TAWS? • Will it include both publicly owned and private land? Have you mapped your existing trees? • How would you characterise the area? What are some key features of the landscape? • How do you plan to manage your existing and future trees? • Are there any types of trees, woodlands and habitats that are common or significant? How has this changed over time? *E.g. fruit trees, orchards and hedges* • Are there areas or habitats where trees should NOT be planted? • What is the relationship between local communities and trees and woodlands? • Why are trees important to local residents and businesses? • What resources do you have in place (both skills and finances) to manage both your amenity trees and woodlands, as the two require different skill sets? See Box p45.
National policies	• What key national policies influence the treescape? See Appendix C • How does local treescape management link to national objectives? *Will your strategy help with:* *a) Increased extent of trees and woods (canopy cover targets, identifying available planting space on all local authority land holdings, retaining what's there i.e. use of Tree Preservation Orders)* *b) Better connected trees and woods (identifying green infrastructure (GI) corridors, linear tree networks and GI island reservoirs for wildlife)* *c) Increased resilience to climate change, pests and diseases through increased diversity and improved condition of treescapes (tree species selection and increasing age range diversity of the tree stock to respond to climate change, pest and disease management, protections for ancient woodlands and ancient and veteran trees).* *d) Improved access to trees and woods (engagement with communities, publicity and communications, opportunities to increase permission and permanent access including open access policies for local authority owned sites, improved access infrastructure (e.g. signage)* *e) Supporting forest and tree-based industries (timber and associated products, silvicultural and arboricultural service companies, support green jobs)* *f) Protecting and enhancing the historic environment (identifying historic monuments and heritage assets)* • More info on this can be found in Section 2.4 and Appendix C • What national/global challenges may impact the local treescape? *E.g. climate change, pests and diseases, tree related building damage insurance claims.* • How can the TAWS ensure that local action contributes to overcoming national challenges? • Does it include opportunities for green employment, e.g. apprenticeships?
Local policies	• What key local policies influence the treescape? *For example, planning, heritage, climate change, biodiversity, health, rights of way improvement plans and existing tree management policies.* • How do trees help the local authority deliver their policies? • More info on this can be found in Section 2.4 • What local challenges may threaten the local treescape and your ability to achieve your aspiration? *For example, development pressure, tree related building damage insurance claims, socio-economic inequality, lack of publicly owned greenspaces.* • Will those challenges be addressed in the TAWS?

Phase

2

Developing the strategy

Gather data and evidence – use our checklist

You can download this useful table here

Table 5: Types of useful evidence and information and how to obtain it

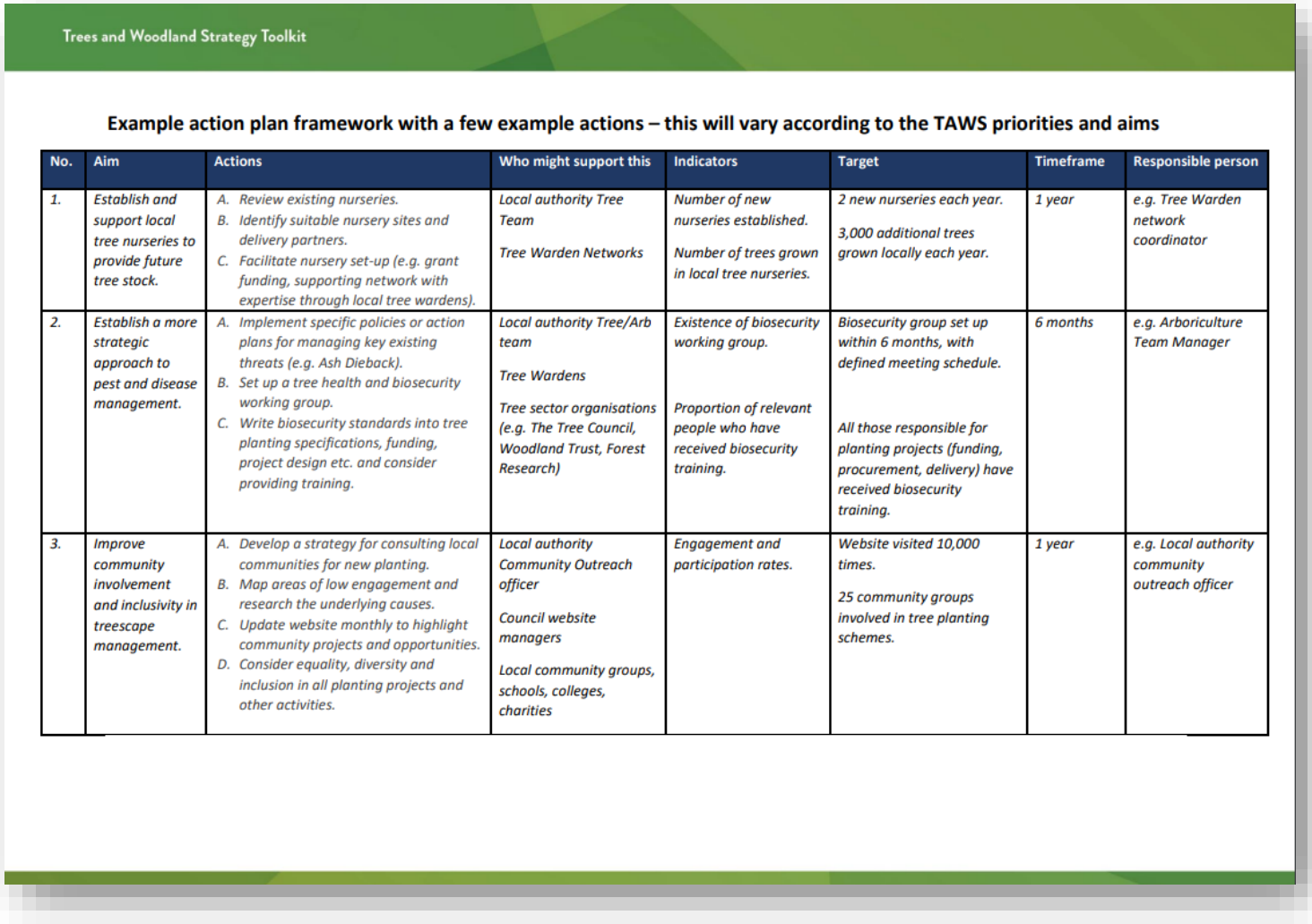
Type of evidence and contextual information	Why this is useful	How to obtain it
Policy context		
National policy and legislation *e.g. climate change, habitat and species targets, or tree health policy*	• Helps to inform and justify targets and action plans • Heavily influences local policy • Relevant legislation and obligations may need to be factored into plans • Help identify payment incentives e.g. the new Environmental Land Management Schemes	• Desk-top review • Seek advice and support from national organisations, e.g. Defra, Forestry Commission • See Appendix C of this toolkit
Regional policy and initiatives *e.g. Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Community Forests, National Parks*	• Essential to understand regional strategies that may be relevant and useful to treescape management	• Desk-top review • Discussions with local organisations and leads of regional projects. • Community Forests • Local Nature Recovery Strategies
Local policy *e.g. local planning policy and tree management policies*	• Defines agreed policies, principles, or ideas as the basis for decision making or developing a strategy • Helps identify opportunities and challenges • Identifies stakeholders for consultation and co-design	• Desk-top review • Discussion with relevant local authority departments
Local context		
Community demographics *e.g. socio-economic data, access to greenspace and woodlands*	• When managing treescapes for public benefit, now and in the future, the needs of the community must be understood • Pursuing equity and access for underrepresented groups • Identifies stakeholders for consultation and co-design	• Discussion with relevant local authority departments • Census data • Include community groups in co-design process • Public consultation (online, open meetings). • ONS datasets, such as Index of Multiple Deprivation
Land use and ownership	• Helps understanding of opportunities, e.g. for tree planting • Understanding the land use and status can help to identify available funding, for example funding targeted for brownfield	• Internal maps of publicly owned land

Phase

3

Delivering your strategy

Use our case studies and framework to build your action plan



Trees and Woodland Strategy Toolkit

Example action plan framework with a few example actions – this will vary according to the TAWS priorities and aims

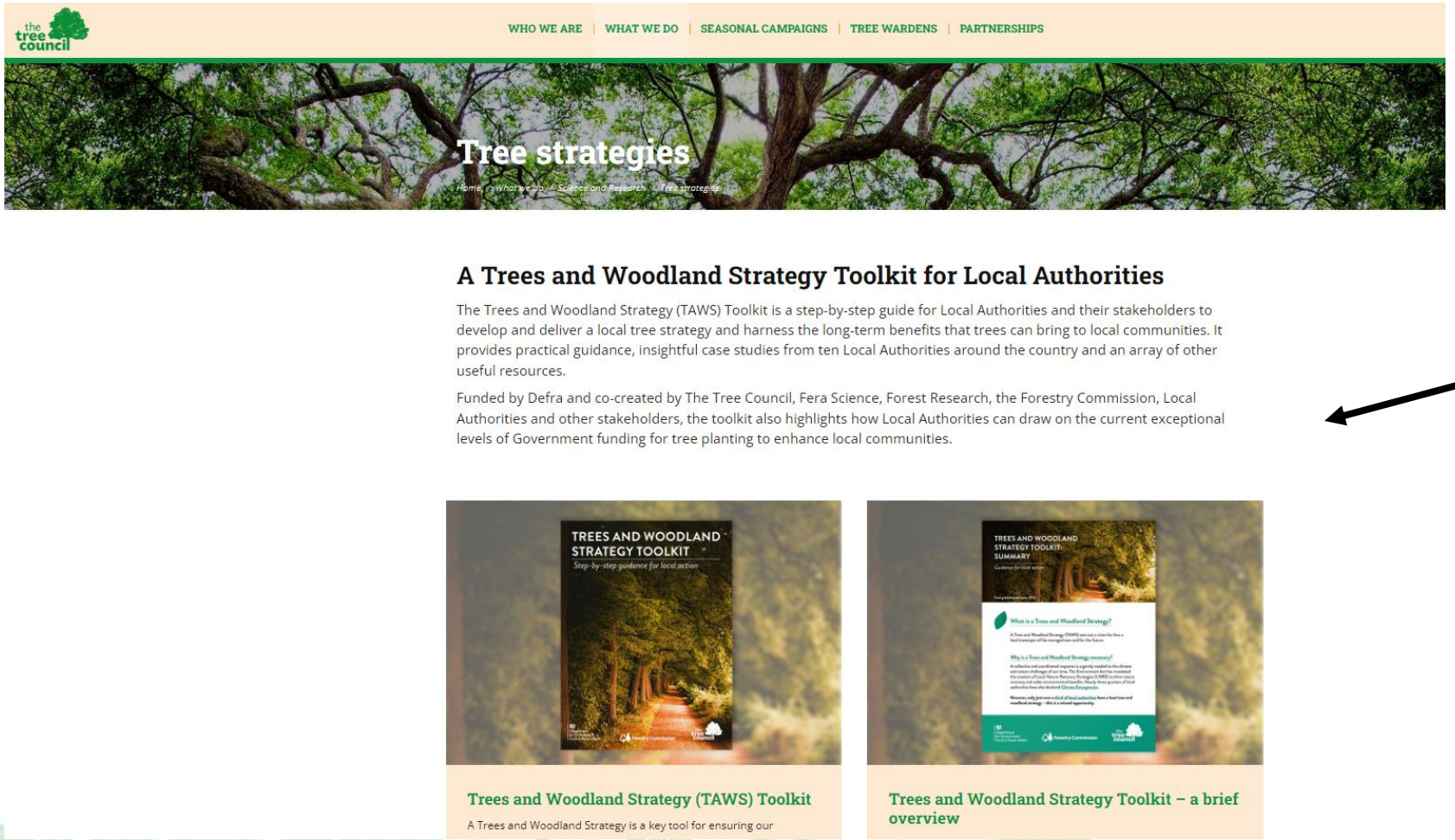
No.	Aim	Actions	Who might support this	Indicators	Target	Timeframe	Responsible person
1.	Establish and support local tree nurseries to provide future tree stock.	A. Review existing nurseries. B. Identify suitable nursery sites and delivery partners. C. Facilitate nursery set-up (e.g. grant funding, supporting network with expertise through local tree wardens).	Local authority Tree Team Tree Warden Networks	Number of new nurseries established. Number of trees grown in local tree nurseries.	2 new nurseries each year. 3,000 additional trees grown locally each year.	1 year	e.g. Tree Warden network coordinator
2.	Establish a more strategic approach to pest and disease management.	A. Implement specific policies or action plans for managing key existing threats (e.g. Ash Dieback). B. Set up a tree health and biosecurity working group. C. Write biosecurity standards into tree planting specifications, funding, project design etc. and consider providing training.	Local authority Tree/Arb team Tree Wardens Tree sector organisations (e.g. The Tree Council, Woodland Trust, Forest Research)	Existence of biosecurity working group. Proportion of relevant people who have received biosecurity training.	Biosecurity group set up within 6 months, with defined meeting schedule. All those responsible for planting projects (funding, procurement, delivery) have received biosecurity training.	6 months	e.g. Arboriculture Team Manager
3.	Improve community involvement and inclusivity in treescape management.	A. Develop a strategy for consulting local communities for new planting. B. Map areas of low engagement and research the underlying causes. C. Update website monthly to highlight community projects and opportunities. D. Consider equality, diversity and inclusion in all planting projects and other activities.	Local authority Community Outreach officer Council website managers Local community groups, schools, colleges, charities	Engagement and participation rates.	Website visited 10,000 times. 25 community groups involved in tree planting schemes.	1 year	e.g. Local authority community outreach officer

Case studies

Diverse range of Local Authorities/regional initiatives

- Surrey County Council
- Islington Borough Council
- Wirral Borough Council
- Leeds City Council
- Birmingham Urban Forest Master Plan
- Norfolk County Council
- Greater Manchester City of Trees
- Forest of Avon Plan
- Fareham Borough Council
- Stonehouse Town Council

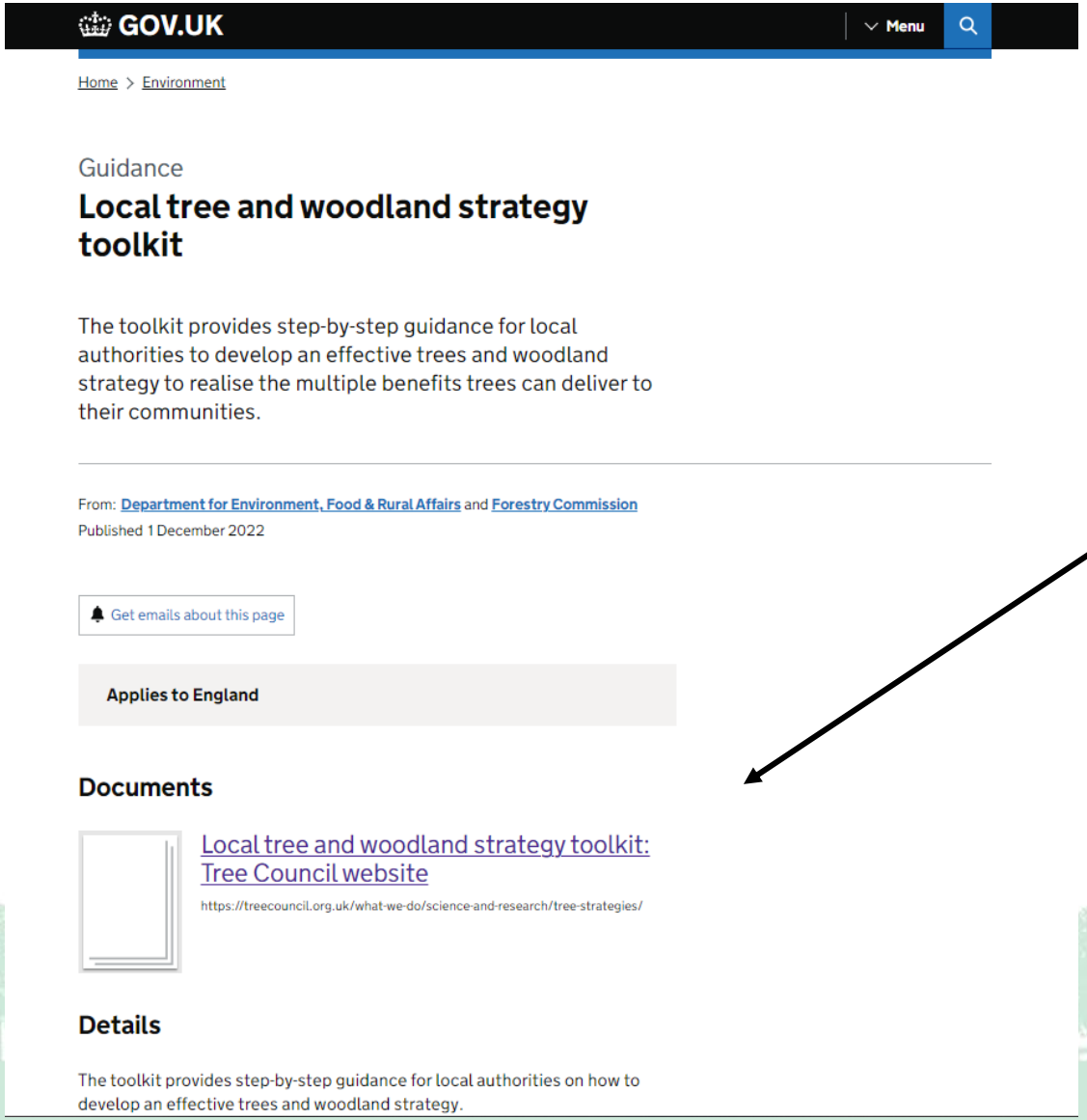
How you can access the toolkit



The toolkit is hosted on The Tree Council website, visit:

https://treecouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/science-and-research/tree-strategies/

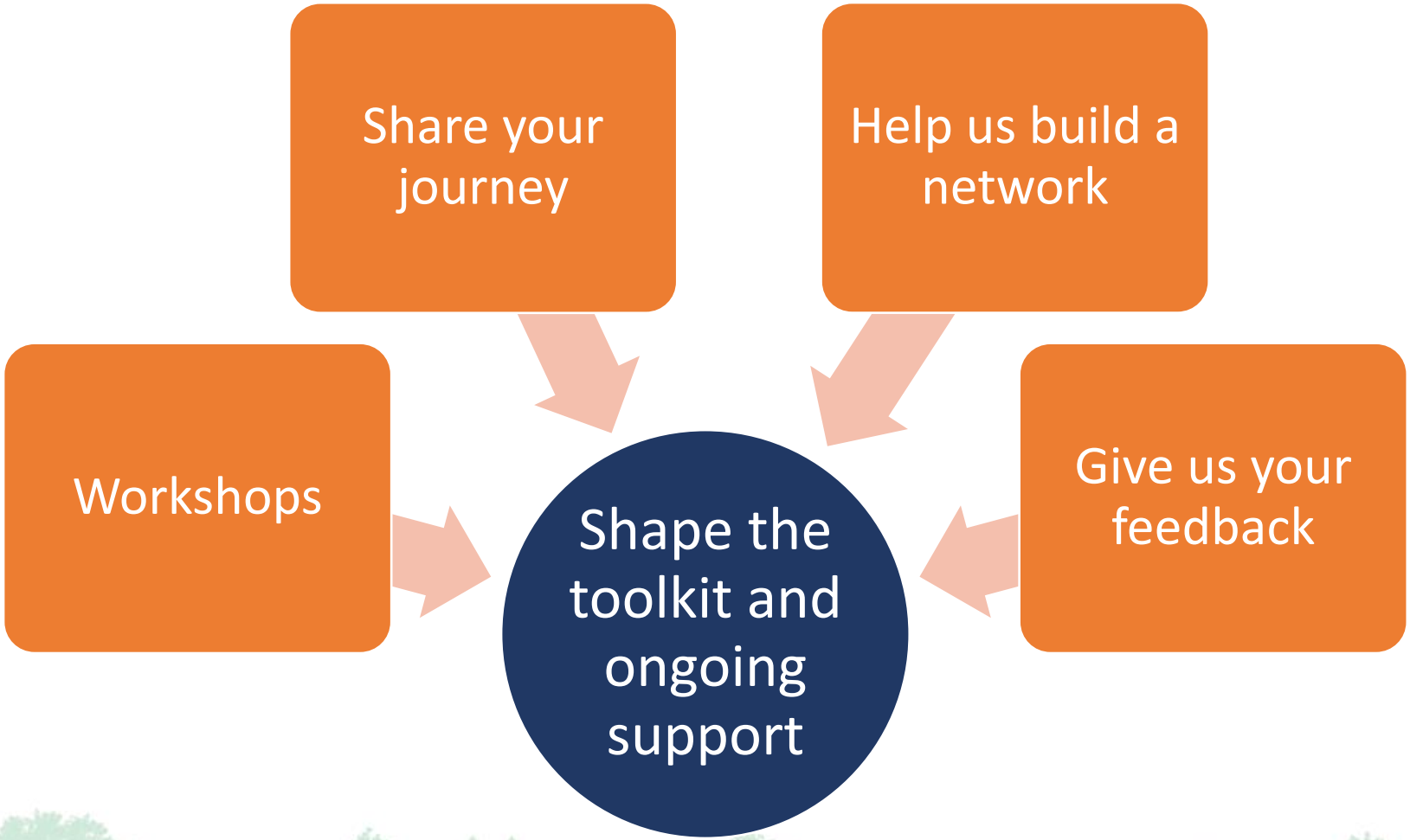
How you can access the toolkit

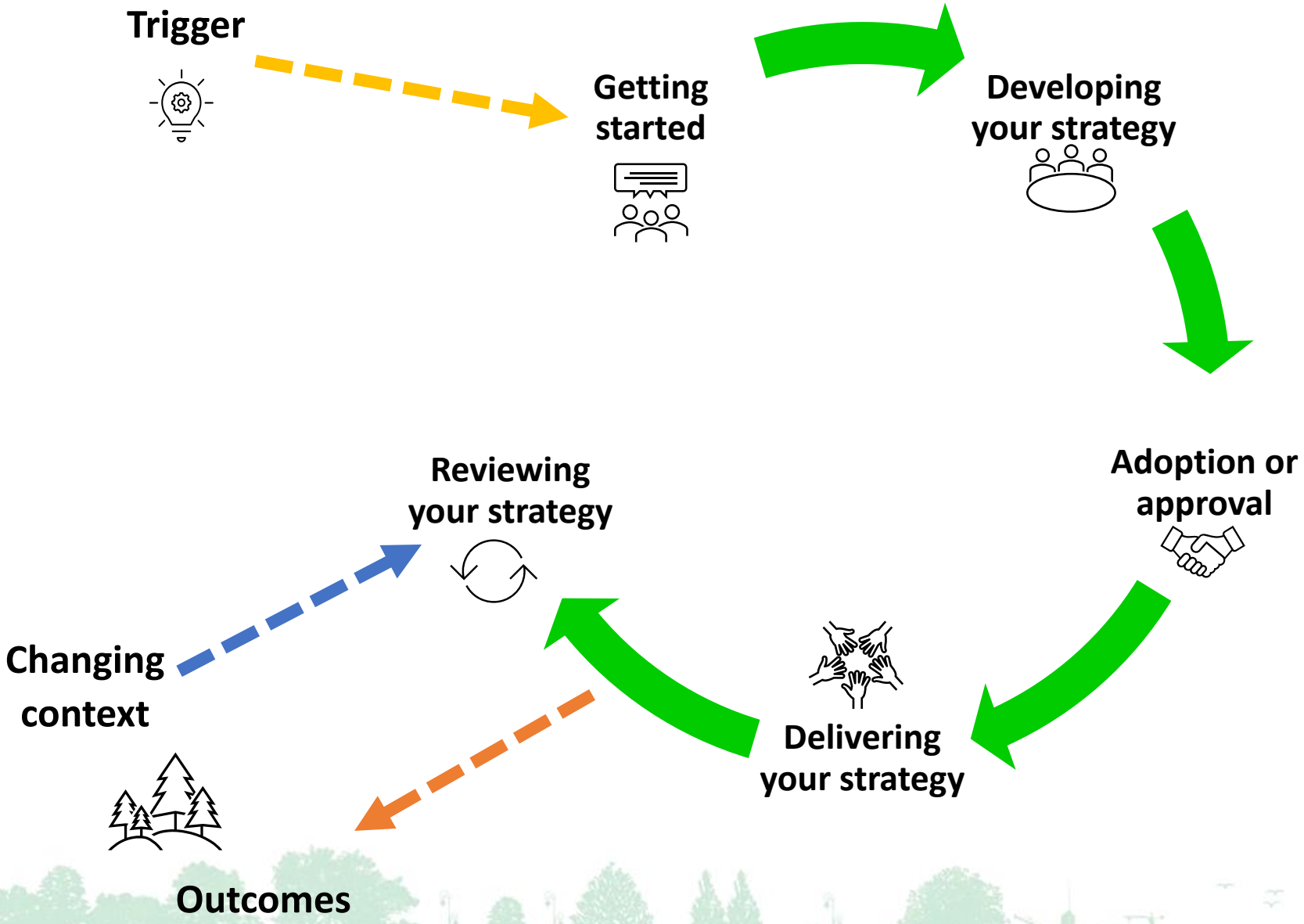


The Local tree and woodland strategy toolkit page on gov.uk will also link you to the right place

What we hope to achieve

Get involved





Workshop Session 1

Where are you on the TAWS cycle?

What are your priorities?

What is your TAWS delivering?

How do you measure outcomes?

Where do you get advice and support from?

What support would you like? Let us know!

Landscape?

Resilience?

Connectivity?

Nature connectedness?

History and heritage?

Additional toolkit content?

Social and cultural values?

Balancing risks and benefits?

Economics?

Online forum/hub?

In-person networking?

Online meetings?

More case studies?

Support advocating within your LA?

Regular email updates?

Please join!

TREES AND WOODLAND STRATEGY TOOLKIT

Step-by-step guidance for local action

2022

Acknowledgements

This toolkit features case studies that highlight the work of a range of local authorities and partner organisations. They are on different stages of their trees and woodland strategy journeys and we are hugely grateful to them for sharing their insightful and varied experiences for the benefit of others.

A large number of sector stakeholders and representatives also contributed to a series of research interviews and workshops that enabled the development and testing of ideas. Again, our sincere thanks to all those who participated.

This toolkit has been developed through a partnership of The Tree Council, Fera Science, Forest Research, Forestry Commission and Defra. As a digital document, it is a living resource and we hope to add new knowledge and experience in years to come from other inspiring individuals and organisations creating and implementing Tree and Woodland Strategies.

This toolkit has been prepared with assistance from:

- Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Tree People
- City of Trees, the Community Forest for Greater Manchester
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
- Fareham Borough Council
- Islington Borough Council
- Kent County Council
- Leeds City Council
- Norfolk County Council
- Surrey County Council
- West of England Combined Authority, West of England Nature Partnership
- Wirral Borough Council, Wirral Tree Initiative on Trees, Wirral Tree Wardens

Citation

Allan, J., Ambrose-Oji, B., Bowen, C., Clements, J., Jones, G., Pohlschneider, S., Stokes, J., Woodfall, G., 2022. *Trees and Woodland Strategy Toolkit.* Tree Council, London

Keywords: trees and woodlands, treescapes, toolkit, local authorities, strategy