

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
4 DECEMBER 2017	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Woodland Trust	
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THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF TREES AND WOODLAND

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM: Woodland Trust	Deadline date: N/A

It is recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Board:

1. Recognise the importance of trees and woods in helping with delivery of health outcomes and requests that the Director of Public Health work with departments across the City Council and with external partners to promote these benefits.
2. Look for opportunities to work with the City Council and partners to make better use of woodland and natural greenspace in the Peterborough City Council area for activities aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of local people.
3. Work with the City Council and other partners such as the Woodland Trust and Peterborough Environment City Trust to identify areas of land within the district for creation of new woodland and opportunities for planting of street trees and trees in other locations such as parks or housing areas. This will help to address air quality issues and can also have benefits near the hospital, by reducing the average length of stay.
4. That the Board request the Director of Public Health examine whether it is possible for some of the City Council's public health funding to be used to support the initiatives proposed under items 2 and 3 above.

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board by the Woodland Trust following a request from Councillor Ferris.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to set out how woods and trees can help contribute to the delivery of the 5 markers set out in the Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Whilst woods and trees cannot deliver all the answers they can contribute to a holistic city-wide approach to health and wellbeing.

The report is being presented to the Board to:

- (a) Provide a briefing on how woodland and trees can help improve health and wellbeing in Peterborough.
- (b) Suggest opportunities to work in partnership with other groups to achieve health outcomes.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 Headings taken from the 5 priorities set out on the Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Strategy website.

Narrow the gap between those neighbourhoods and communities with the best and worst health outcomes

Air quality is the fundamental starting point for ensuring equality in health outcomes. Trees and woodland improve air quality by adsorbing pollutants such as sulphur dioxide and ozone, intercepting harmful particulates from vehicle emission, smoke, pollen and dust and of course release oxygen through photosynthesis. This helps to reduce the occurrence of the problems caused by chronic respiratory disease. The British Lung Foundation suggests that one in every five people in the UK is affected by lung disease, more than 12 million people.

Researchⁱ on the impact of installing a kerbside line of young birch trees demonstrated more than 50% reductions in measured Particulate Matter (PM) levels inside those houses screened by the temporary tree line. Electron microscopy analyses showed that leaf-captured PM is concentrated in agglomerations around leaf hairs and within the leaf microtopography. Furthermore, iron-rich, ultrafine, spherical particles, probably combustion-derived, were abundant on the leaf, noted these as a particular hazard to health. The researchers concluded that “the efficacy of roadside trees for mitigation of PM health hazard might be seriously underestimated in some current atmospheric models.”

Trees will have a proportionately greater benefit in urban areas, where they are close to sources of pollution and nearer to people who might be affected.

Ensure that children and young people have the best opportunities in life to enable them to become healthy adults and make the best of their life chances

Woods and trees provide multiple benefits for children and young people from helping them learn through play to helping them learn healthy lifelong behaviours by providing a green environment that encourages active travel choices. There are also many physical benefits, for example, research shows that asthma rates among children aged four and five fell by a quarter for every additional 343 trees per square kilometre (one in every garden on an average street).

Studies also show that natural surroundings have a positive impact on children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Enable older people to stay independent and safe and to enjoy the best possible quality of life

The Woodland Trust and Dementia Adventure carried out a pilot project to consider the value of woodland visits for older people living with dementia. Getting people out into woods showed that nature is potentially a significant non-pharmacological treatment which is accessible and readily available for all people living with dementia. The project found that there were multiple social and economic benefits. The potential cost-benefits are huge, primarily in helping to dramatically reduce use of anti-psychotic medication and reducing the frequency and severity of anxiety, apathy, anger and depression which all too commonly predominate in long term care settings.

These can occur with less frequency out in nature, and after exposure to nature. This can also reduce the number of unnecessary hospital admissions.

Enable good child and adult mental health through effective, accessible health promotion and early intervention services

Trees and woods can play a part in a holistic approach to mental health; both through limiting the onset of mental health problems and through having a restorative and therapeutic effect on the mind. Studies have found that woods and trees can be an antidote to stress, providing an opportunity to escape modern urban life.

Maximise the health and wellbeing and opportunities for independent living for people with life-long disabilities and complex needs.

Trees can play a key role in the Patient recovery rates improve when they can view trees from their hospital window. The evidence is so strong that the NHS is developing the NHS Forest to green their estate. The Woodland Trust can help identify opportunities for tree planting on suitable land.

Research shows that if just 1% of the 2.5 million people on incapacity benefit in Britain adopted healthier lifestyles it would have significant cost savings. The current cost to the Exchequer is around £13 billion and to industry £11 billion a year. Over a third of people are on benefits because of mental health problems or muscular or skeletal disorders – both of which can respond to tailored physical activity programmes. If just one per cent of people on incapacity benefit could be helped back into the workplace through active lifestyles, it could save the country £67 million a year. Woods and trees offer opportunities to encourage people to engage more actively in their surroundings.

Examples of partnerships work undertaken by the Woodland Trust:

- (a) Tree Packs for community groups - Group can apply for up to 420 trees in each planting season.
- (b) Use of our local woods for community activities and events for example our woods are used for activities such as green gyms, parkrun and 'boot camp' fitness; in particular activities aimed at physically inactive adults. They are also used for educational projects such as forest schools which have associate health and wellbeing benefits.
- (c) Use of our woods to enable social prescriptions.

5. CONSULTATION

N/A

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

6.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board to work with others to achieve:

- Better air quality through the planting of street trees. This has been shown to reduce childhood asthma rates.
- Identify opportunities for planting around the hospital – which will help to reduce the length of hospital stays.
- Identify opportunities for use of woodlands by the community (to help address physical and mental health issues).

- Consider the anticipated outcome of consideration of this report. For example, it may be that a new major policy or statutory plan is being developed to improve service delivery for a particular group of the population; or a review of existing policy is expected to streamline current processes. This section will assist the Board in scheduling items into its work programme for further work or determining whether this is a one-off item which can be resolved quickly.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

7.1 N/A

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8.1 NONE

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

9.1 N/A

Legal Implications

9.2 N/A

Equalities Implications

9.3 N/A

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

10.1 Barbara A. Maher , Imad A. M. Ahmed , Brian Davison , Vassil Karloukovski , and Robert Clarke Centre for Environmental Magnetism & Palaeomagnetism, Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University; *Impact of Roadside Tree Lines on Indoor Concentrations of Traffic-Derived Particulate Matter*, <http://pubs.acs.org/doi/pdf/10.1021/es404363m>

Trees in residential developments:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2015/07/residential-developments-and-trees/>

Space for People report:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2017/06/space-for-people-2017/>

11. APPENDICES

11.1 None