

Tree Strategy

The objective of the tree strategy is to promote the growth and maintenance of a healthy tree population throughout Biddulph

Why is this important

Trees are vital in reducing the carbon emissions that contribute to global warming, as well as promoting biodiversity and providing amenity to the residents and visitors of Biddulph.

Relevant Legislation

The most relevant legislation applies to Staffordshire Moorland as the Planning Authorities. The legislation below outlines that planning authorities must give due process to trees, especially veteran trees and ancient woodland when considering planning applications. The Town and Country Planning Act also provides the duty for the planning authorities to make Tree Preservation Orders as part of the planning process.

- The National Planning Policy Framework
- The Town and Country planning Act 1990 (section 19)

Biddulph's Tree and Woodland Landscape

As the 'Garden Town of Staffordshire,' Biddulph Town Council is committed to ensuring that the Town is identifiable by a great variety of green spaces and natural environments which are appropriately managed and accessible to residents and visitors to the Town.

Within this remit, Biddulph is fortunate in the numerous range of wooded environments that fall within the Council's boundaries and remain accessible to the public.

- **Biddulph Grange Country Park** is owned by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. Most of the 73 acre site comprises of a large wooded hillside. With free parking and entry, disabled access, public toilets and a café supported by the Town Council, this is a key site for the residents of Biddulph to spend time in a wooded environment.
- Developed by James Bateman and perhaps the most significant tourist attraction in the town, **Biddulph Grange Gardens** is a 14.5 acre site owned and managed by the National Trust. As well as the Woodland

Walk and wooded surroundings of the gardens, the site hosts trees and plants from all around the world, including Britain's oldest Larch, brought in from China in the 1850's.

- **Baileys Wood** is a publicly accessible, 6.6 acre semi-natural ancient woodland, sited in the North Ward of Biddulph. Made up of broadleaved tree species, the site is managed by the Woodland Trust.
- **Biddulph Valley Way** is lined by trees almost in its entirety of its 4.5 mile length through the West of Biddulph. As a former railway line, the public footpath and cycleway connects to Congleton heading north, and southwards the route passes through Brindley Ford before terminating at the Chatterley Whitefield Heritage Park within the City of Stoke-on-Trent. The Biddulph section of the Route is maintained by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
- Straddling the boundaries of Biddulph Town Council, and Brown Edge and Endon Parish, **Greenway Bank Country Park** covers an area of 100.5 acres where extensive woodlands line the banks and surrounds of Knypersley Reservoir. The site is owned and managed by Staffordshire County Council and provides disabled access, public toilets and free carparking. A footpath follows the woodland corridor which stretches from the woods of the country park to Rock End.
- **Butterfly Gardens** is a small wooded area adjacent to the A527 on the very southern boundary of Biddulph Town Council's boundaries. The site is maintained by Biddulph in Bloom.
- Following a significant amount of tree felling and Japanese Knotweed takeover and eradication, **The Clough** was replanted with a over 300 native trees at the turn of the millennium. Accessible via a public footpath, the privately owned site is popular with local ramblers, dog walkers and visitors to the nearby pub, The Talbot
- A woodland corridor lines the **Eastern Edge of the Thames Drive and Biddulph East estates**. Accessed via public footpaths, particularly from the Biddulph Valley Park and continuous from Biddulph Valley Park, the site comprises natural and unmanaged woodland among steep banks of small tributaries.

Biddulph also hosts a number of privately owned woodlands and wooded areas which, while they may have limited accessibility for the public, continue to provide great benefit to the local community and environment in promoting

a range of natural views, enhancing biodiversity and combating climate change.

Furthermore, within the numerous local green spaces located throughout Biddulph, there are many sites that can not be classed as wooded, or woodland areas. However, these sites are host to a number of trees which continue to be extremely valuable to the local community, environment and wildlife, and promote accessibility to trees and nature throughout residential areas of Biddulph.

Trees currently protected

It should be noted there are a number of tree preservation orders in place throughout Biddulph and a significant conservation area surrounding the Biddulph Grange Gardens (this includes the Country Park, Town Burial Ground, and the North Eastern Edge of Bateman Walk.)

It is not possible to list all the protected trees in Biddulph, and this is best obtained from the map accessible from <https://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk>, however significant clusters of tree protection are in place in the following areas

- Knypersley Hall
- Mill Hayes Nursing Home
- Tunstall Road, various sites extending from the double roundabout south to the industrial estate.
- Tall Oaks Nursing Home
- Throughout the Biddulph North estate, particularly in the green area between Weaver Close and Palmerston Way (Local Green Space No 9)
- The area between the Grange and Woodhouse Lane
- Whitemore, Round Wood, Baileys Wood and the Clough
- Dorset Drive, particularly at the Pocket Park and woodland between Mason Drive and Thatcher Grove
- The Wooded Areas extending from Biddulph Valley Park
- Cubis, Biddulph Moor

It is a legal requirement that permission is sought from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council before work on any of the affected trees is carried out, and stringent conditions may be attached to work on any of these trees.

Tree Charter

In November 2017, Biddulph Town Council signed the Woodland's Trust Charter for Trees, Woods and People. Within this Charter, Biddulph commits to:

- Sustain landscapes rich in wildlife
- Plant for the future
- Celebrate the power of trees to inspire
- Grow forests of opportunity and innovation
- Protect irreplaceable trees and woods
- Plan greener local landscapes
- Recover health, hope and wellbeing with the help of trees
- Make trees accessible to all
- Combat the threats to our habitats
- Strengthen our landscapes with trees

In November 2018, in coordination with the School Learners' Forum, Biddulph Town Council, celebrated the anniversary of the Tree Charter by committing to the following additional actions:

- Mapping and identifying ancient woodland
- Identifying Mature and Veteran Trees
- Increasing the Number of Tree Preservation Orders
- Developing a Tree Planting Scheme.

This Tree Strategy outlines what actions and procedures Biddulph Town Council will undertake to promote and protect the Trees and Woodlands of Biddulph and achieve the commitments signed up to in the Tree Charter.

Surveying Trees

At least annually, a tree survey will take place of all Trees on Town Council land. This survey will identify all trees and any risk associated with trees, and will make recommendations based on this assessment. The Survey report will be considered by the Recreation and Amenities Committee, with the expectation that all recommendations will be carried out.

Felling trees

It may seem contrary within this strategy, which is intended to protect and promote trees and woodland, that felling trees would be an important subject

to consider. However, there are occasions where the felling of a tree or trees is necessary in order to ensure a safe environment for the public, to manage damage to local buildings and infrastructure or to protect local flora and fauna. For example

- Trees with split trunks, dead branches, fungus on the upper trunk or which are heavily leaning are potentially unstable. Unstable trees present particular risk to the public if next to a road or an area often frequented by the public.
- Trees which carry disease, pests or fungus may need to be felled in order to prevent, slow or manage the spread of disease. For instance, Larch or Oak affected by Ramorum, or Ash with Ash Dieback may require felling.

However, the felling of trees on Town Council land will only be considered as a last resort, and where less destructive measures such as pruning or crown raising fail to mitigate the risk. Felling will only take place upon the recommendation of a professional surveyor working on behalf of the Town Council due a high level of risk to the public, buildings or infrastructure, or to local flora and fauna (for instance the spread of disease). While Councillors, officers or members of the public may raise an alert regarding a tree which they are concerned about, only a surveyor is able to accurately assess the level of the risk a tree presents and advise on appropriate action.

Planting replacement trees

Where the felling of a tree on Town Council land is undertaken, the Town Council commits to planting a further two species of tree within 12 months of the felling. This time period specified to permit the tree planting to take place during suitable weather conditions and to identify an appropriate site.

During storms and high winds, it is possible that trees may fall. The Town Council will endeavour to replace such fallen trees on Town Council under the same scheme as felled trees, though in the instance of widespread tree damage following a storm, there may be a need to extend the time for replacement.

As far as possible to the Town Council will endeavour to replace felled with similar species, though this will be dependent on availability and the suitability of site conditions at the planting site. Native trees will always be the prime consideration for planting except where expert advice recommends planting a non-native species to improve biodiversity or disease resistance of an area.

Biddulph Town Council has undertaken a number of tree planting initiatives outside the scope of the felling and replanting strategy above. While all planted trees will be added to the tree planting log, trees planted as part of the scheme will only usually be considered as replacements for felled trees where the planting meets the requirements set out above.

Sites for tree planting.

The sites for possible tree planting locations will be considered at the Environment Working Group and Recreations and Amenities Committee. When planting trees, it is, and must remain, the intention that the trees will mature, and age in that location, providing long lasting mitigation against climate change, and providing natural habitats, particularly as they progress to ancient trees. Therefore significant consideration must be given to where to plant trees to minimise any conflict with current or future users of the area. Trees been planted in a hastily chosen site are more likely to cause problems thus potentially removed at a future date, eliminating the benefits for which the trees were planted. Therefore, to select appropriate sites, the Committee or Working group will consider the following:

- a) Sites should be distributed throughout the town and focus placed areas which would benefit from increased tree coverage
- b) The impact of the trees on the community or local residents (for instance the impact on light in to houses, nearby gardens and allotments and views)
- c) The potential impact on buildings and infrastructure as tree roots grow
- d) The ground conditions and appropriate species for planting
- e) How does the site support the aims of the Tree Charter

In considering the above points, the Committee or Working Group must also consider how and who to consult regarding the chosen site. This is likely to include local residents, businesses and users of the site, but may also include environmental expertise from associations such as Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and teams with infrastructure in the area including utility companies and Staffordshire Highways.

Recording Felling and Replanting

To ensure that Biddulph Town Council remains accountable for tree planting and felling, the Town Council logs details of all trees felled and planted. This log will include the dates, species, sites, and where trees are felled, the reason for

the recommendation to do so. This log will be reviewed by the Council's Recreation and Amenities Committee at least annually in the Spring of each year to ensure compliance with this strategy.

Trees of Special Interest

Trees of special interest are trees that have some particularly outstanding features, whether it be due to association with a historic event, their appearance or age. Trees of special interest include

- **Ancient or Aged Trees** - Trees which have passed beyond maturity
- **Veteran Trees** – Trees with habitat features such as wounds or decay, or that are showing signs of age despite not necessarily meeting the age of ancient trees
- **Heritage Trees** - Trees with historical, archaeological or cultural value. For instance the first tree of its kind in the UK, rare trees, commemorative trees or trees associated with a particular historical event or figure
- **Champion Trees** - Trees with the largest height or girth in the country or local area
- **Notable Trees** – Trees that stand out in their local environment due to their size.

Trees of special interest may fit in to the multiple categories of the above, as outlined here:



The Ancient Tree Inventory (<https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk>) currently lists two trees in Biddulph as notable or veteran trees, both which are sited within Biddulph Grange.

There are a likely to be many more trees within the council boundaries which meet the criteria to be included on the inventory. For this reason, Biddulph Town Council commits to ensuring there is a local body of knowledge trained in identifying key signs of trees of special interest and suitable

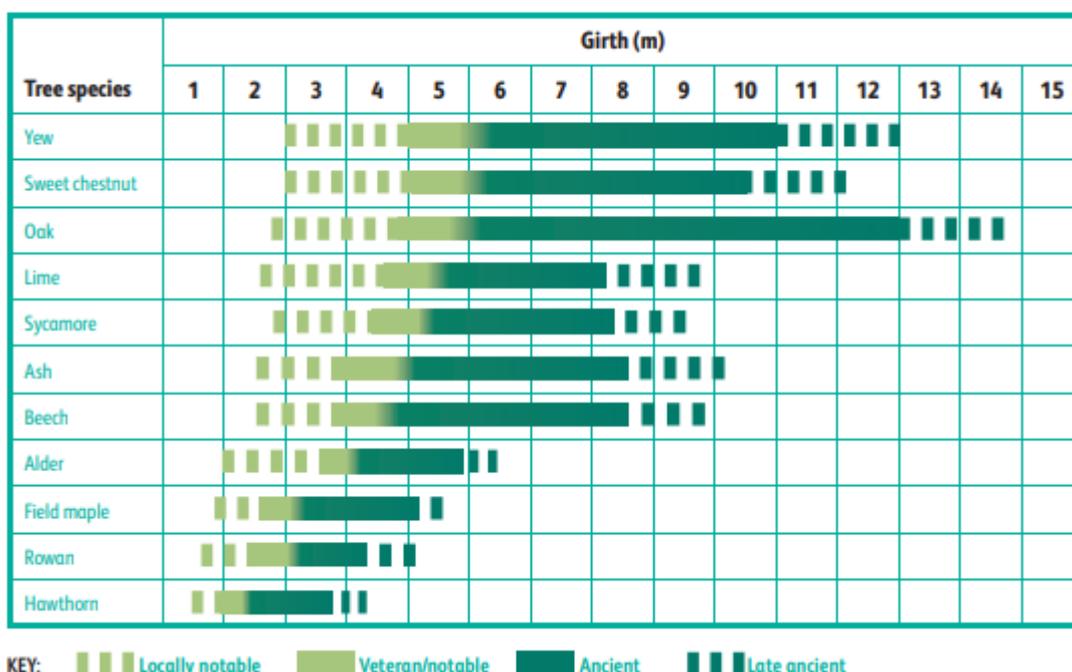
Identifying Ancient Trees and Trees of Special Interest

Biddulph Town Council funds training for officers and local community and partnership groups in identifying trees of Special Interest and encourages individuals to submit details of any trees that meet the criteria either directly to the Ancient Tree Inventory (<https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/add-a-tree/>) or to Biddulph Town Council who in will pass on for addition the inventory.

Detailed guides for identifying ancient trees and trees of special interest can be found on at <https://www.ancienttreeforum.org.uk/resources/ancient-tree-guides/>. A brief summary for identifying ancient, notable or veteran and heritage trees is included below.

The girth of a tree trunk is a good indicator when assessing whether a tree notable, veteran, ancient or very ancient. Older and ancient trees tend to have a larger girth compared to other trees of the same species.

It should be noted that this is a guideline only, and many different factors can affect girth size. So It wouldn't be unusual, for example, for an ancient tree in an upland area to have a smaller girth than may be expected from the chart below



It should be noted that the girth of a tree trunk is usually measured at approximately 1.5m above ground level.

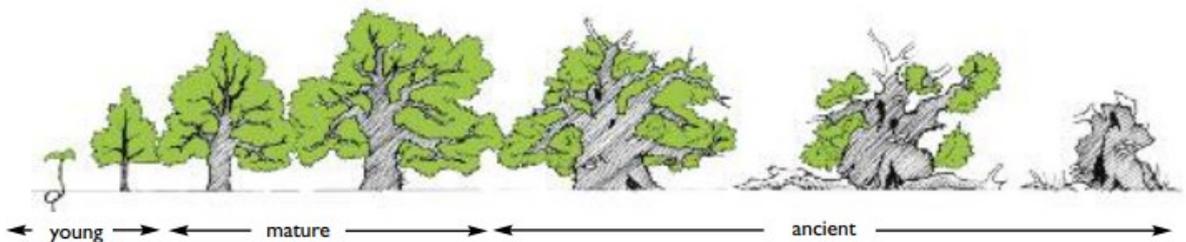
Ancient Trees

Ancient Trees are trees which are past maturity and exhibit signs of a number of aging processes to enable them to continue living and provide excellent natural habitats.

A large girth is a key characteristic of an ancient tree (though this may vary according to its life and environment. Other key indicators of ancient trees are

- Crown 'growing downwards', or in conifers 'flattening,' with the aging process
- A hollowing trunk, potentially with one or more openings to the outside
- 'Stag-headedness' – dead antler-like branches extending beyond the crown
- Visible fungi on the tree trunk
- Hollows and Cavities in the tree trunk or where branches have broken
- Rough creviced bark
- Internal aerial roots growing down in the decaying trunk or branches.

Diagram showing the stages in the life of an ancient tree



It should be noted that many of the above key characteristics of ancient trees may be mistaken for being a dead or dying tree. This raises two points of note

- Many of these characteristics, such as hollowing of the tree and lowering crown are not signs of ill health but are a natural part of aging which enables the tree to live longer and continue providing vital habitats for other plants and animals. In such ancient stages, these trees can continue to live decades, if not centuries more
- Where the tree is dying, this process can still take several decades, and even when dead, the trees are still of great significance, providing

habitats. Dying and dead ancient trees should still be registered on the Ancient Tree Forum due to their uniqueness

Veteran Trees

Veteran Trees are trees which show the signs of aging or scars that may be expected on an ancient tree, but as a consequence of events or environments. It therefore may not have the same girth of an ancient tree, and be of a relatively young age (though of course there can be ancient veteran trees too), but may show signs of decay, fungal fruiting bodies or deadwood. These veteran trees also provide valuable habitats for wildlife and plants.

The key features of a veteran tree include

- Evidence of decay – e.g. hollowing trunk, fungi bodies on the trunk or branches, cavities or rot holes
- Significant amount of dead wood, with dead limbs or branches (greater than 20cm diameter in the crown) or having fallen.

Notable Trees

Notable trees are marked by their significant size compared to the local treescape, without having any veteran or ancient tree characteristics. They are usually mature trees, and while their size may not be particularly large (in height or girth) for the species, it is the comparison against the surrounding environment for which they are noted and can be submitted to the ancient tree inventory. By default, all **Champion Trees** (which are the tallest or fattest trees in the area or country) are notable.

Heritage Trees

Heritage trees are not always identifiable in their appearance. However, visual clues that a tree may be considered a heritage tree may include

- Particularly interesting shape, either natural or due to human intervention
- Significant design statement of a tree / selection of trees
- Rare native trees

However, a number of non-visual clues of a heritage tree may include

- The tree being planted as a commemorative event
- A tree planted by or associated with a notable person

- A tree that is subject to local legend or associated with a particular historical event or person
- A tree that has been managed in a distinctive way
- The first tree of a species grown in the UK

Managing and Protecting Trees of Special Interest

The Town Council commits to ensuring that Trees of Special Interest remained well protected and valued in the community. This may include raising awareness of important trees, ensuring that consideration is given to such trees in the planning consultations and potentially considering applying for tree preservation orders.

Where there are concerns or work needed about an Tree of Special Interest, the Town Council may need to seek specialist advice regarding best management. This would be best obtained from a tree surgeon or agriculturalist with VETcert certification. Documentation on the management of ancient and veteran trees can also be found at

<https://www.ancienttreeforum.org.uk/ancient-trees/protecting-ancient-and-veteran-trees/ancient-tree-care-management/>

Where the Town Council believes a tree of special interest or an ancient woodland to be under threat, the Ancient Tree Forum (<http://www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk/who-we-are/contact-us/>) and / or Woodland Trust (<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/protecting-trees-and-woods/campaign-with-us/campaign-in-your-community/tell-us-about-a-threat/>) are contactable, and may be able to provide advice.