



Somerset Tree Strategy 2023 - 2033



**This strategy
has been
developed by**



With the support of  **Evolving Forests**



Trees People Place

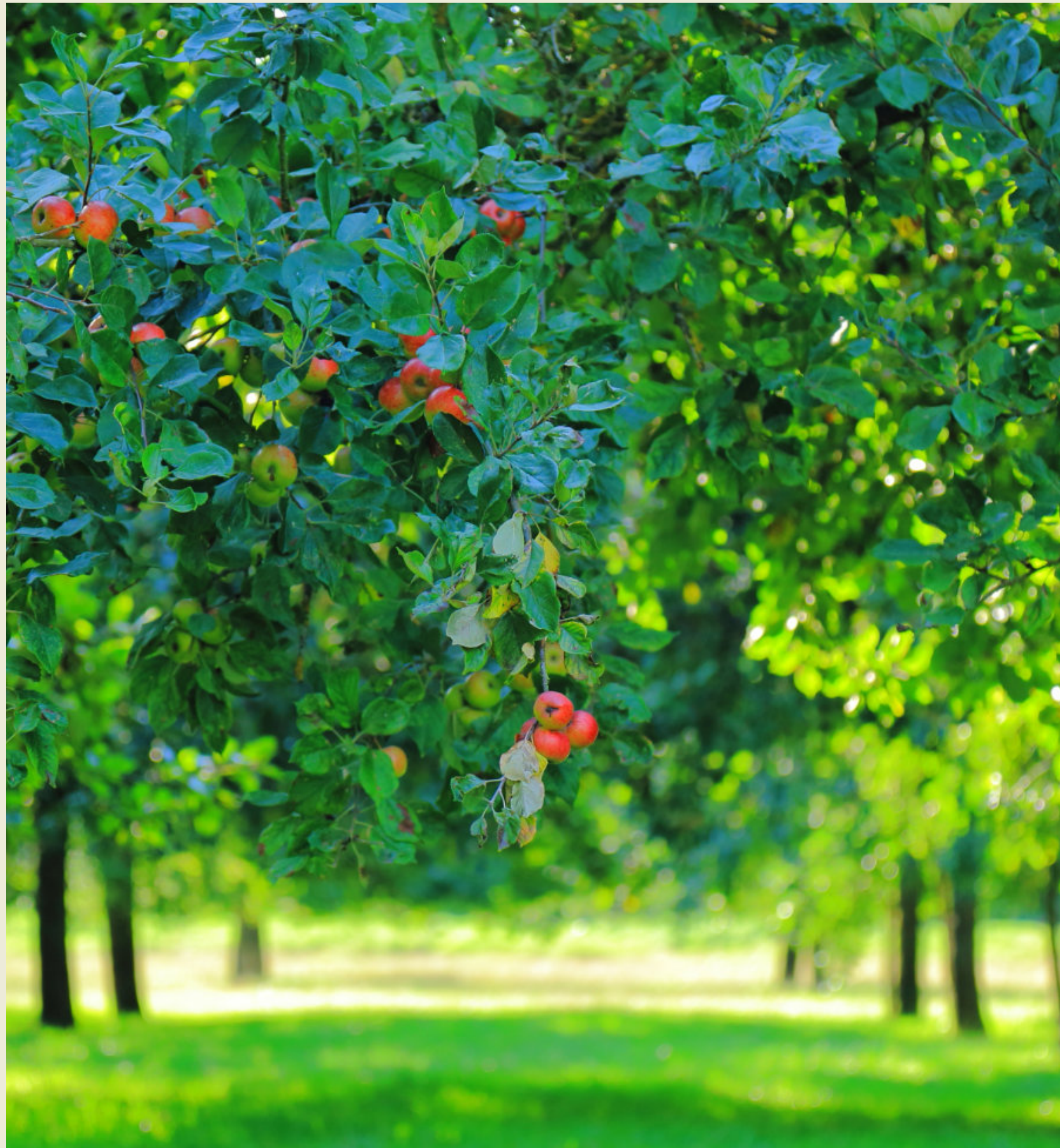
Treescapes are undergoing a time of unprecedented change globally, nationally, and regionally. This strategy sets out how Somerset's treescapes can embrace ecology, climate, community and how the county can manage and protect its existing and future trees.

Treescapes:

Found in all settings from forestland to moorland, agricultural to urban landscapes.

The word treescapes acknowledges the increasing level of importance that trees take on within the landscape.





Somerset's Trees Today

Where this strategy begins

Somerset has a deep history of woodland management and innovation. It has the oldest and tallest trees in the country and a history of wood-use dating back to the Bronze Age.

Via its long history of orchard creation, Somerset is an unacknowledged leader in progressive forms of woodland management such as agroforestry.

Somerset has a high diversity of landscapes to manage and a wide variety of treescapes creating resilience.

Somerset's Future Trees

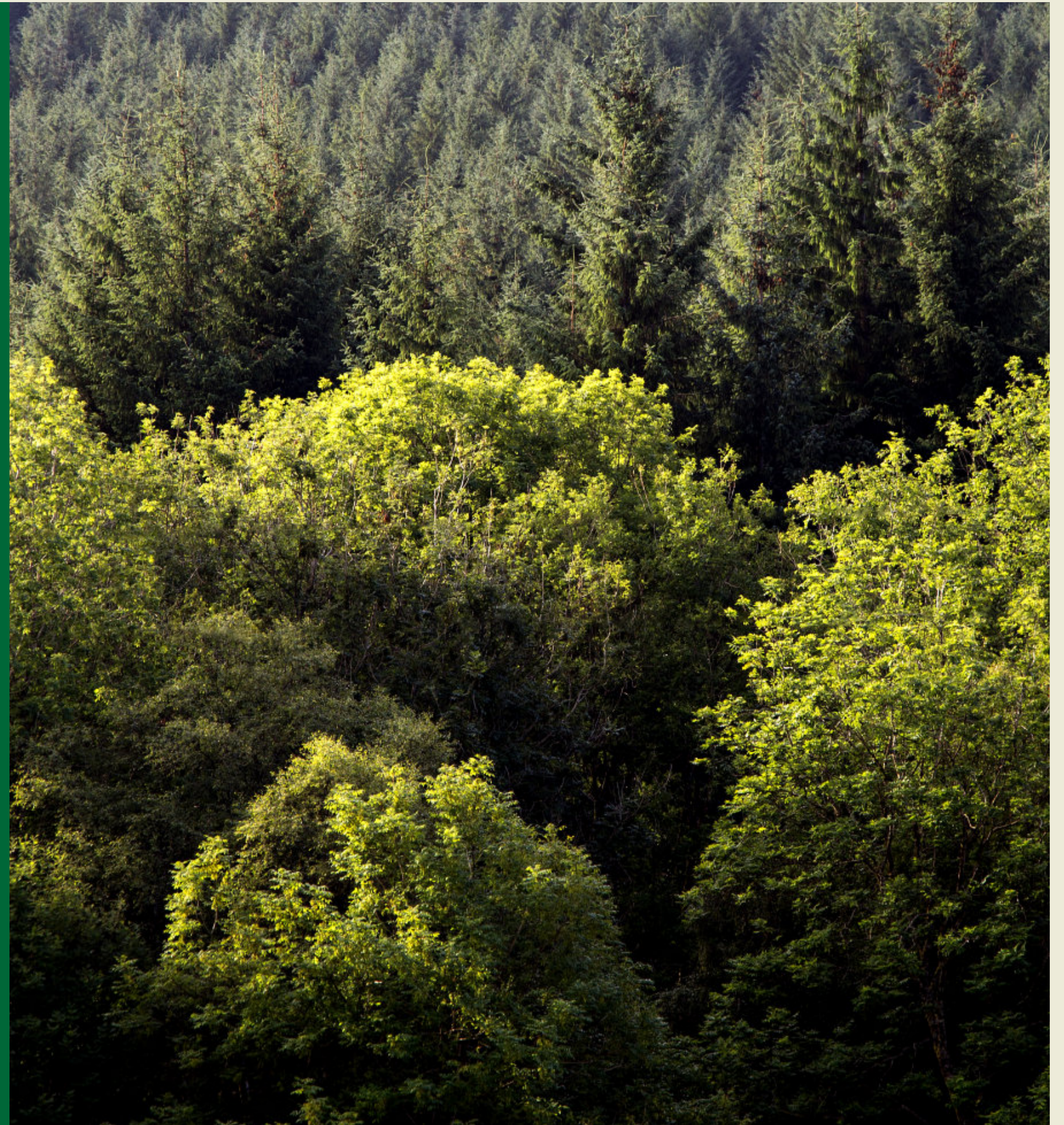
Where this strategy will take us

Somerset's climate is changing and its diverse treescapes will be resilient enough to adapt to these changes.

Everyone across Somerset will be engaged with trees in their daily lives.

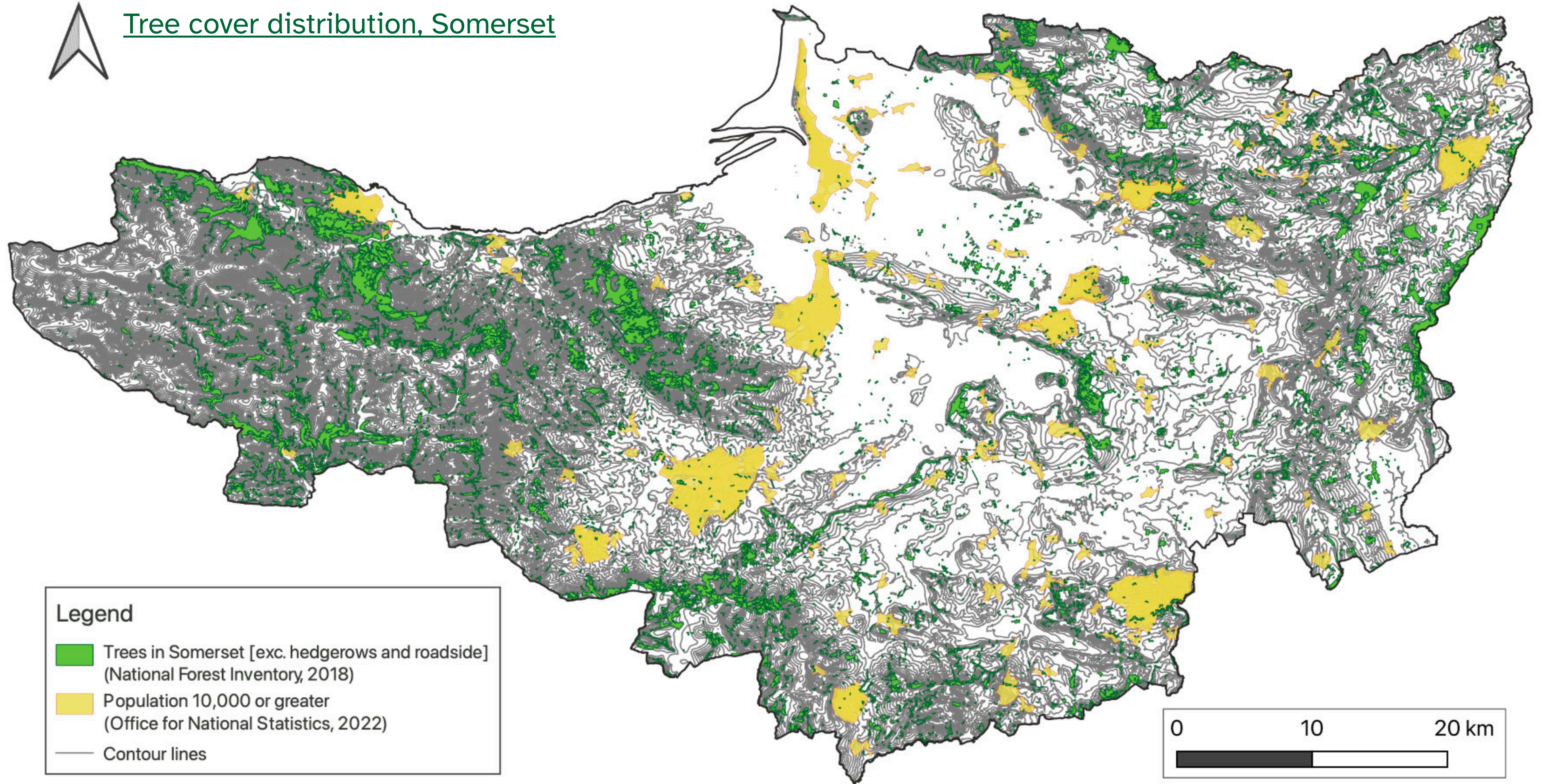
Somerset exceeds the national average of tree cover with diverse types of planting.

Biodiversity within Somerset has the chance to move across landscapes via ecologically rich connected corridors.








Tree cover distribution, Somerset

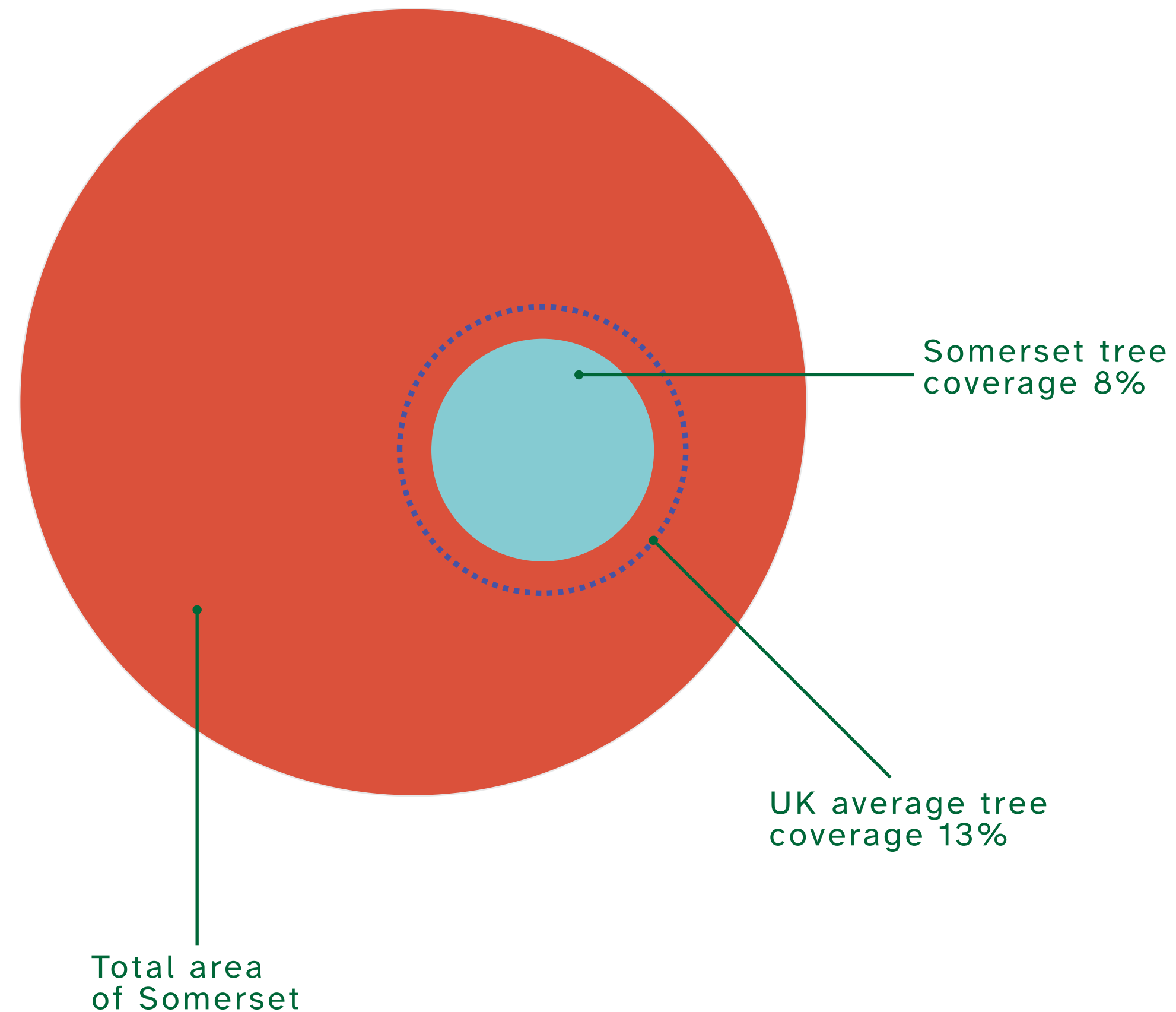


Legend

-  Trees in Somerset [exc. hedgerows and roadside] (National Forest Inventory, 2018)
-  Population 10,000 or greater (Office for National Statistics, 2022)
-  Contour lines



Tree cover averages by area, UK and Somerset



The broader picture

Somerset recognises its role in tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Tree cover across the UK increased from 3-13% in a century. Somerset's tree cover by area is below the national average (8%).

Rates of new planting in England within the last decade have remained relatively low (average 2,060ha/ year). Government target for tree-planting in England by 2024-25 is 7,500ha/ year.

Just 59% of woods in England are in legal and sustainable management.

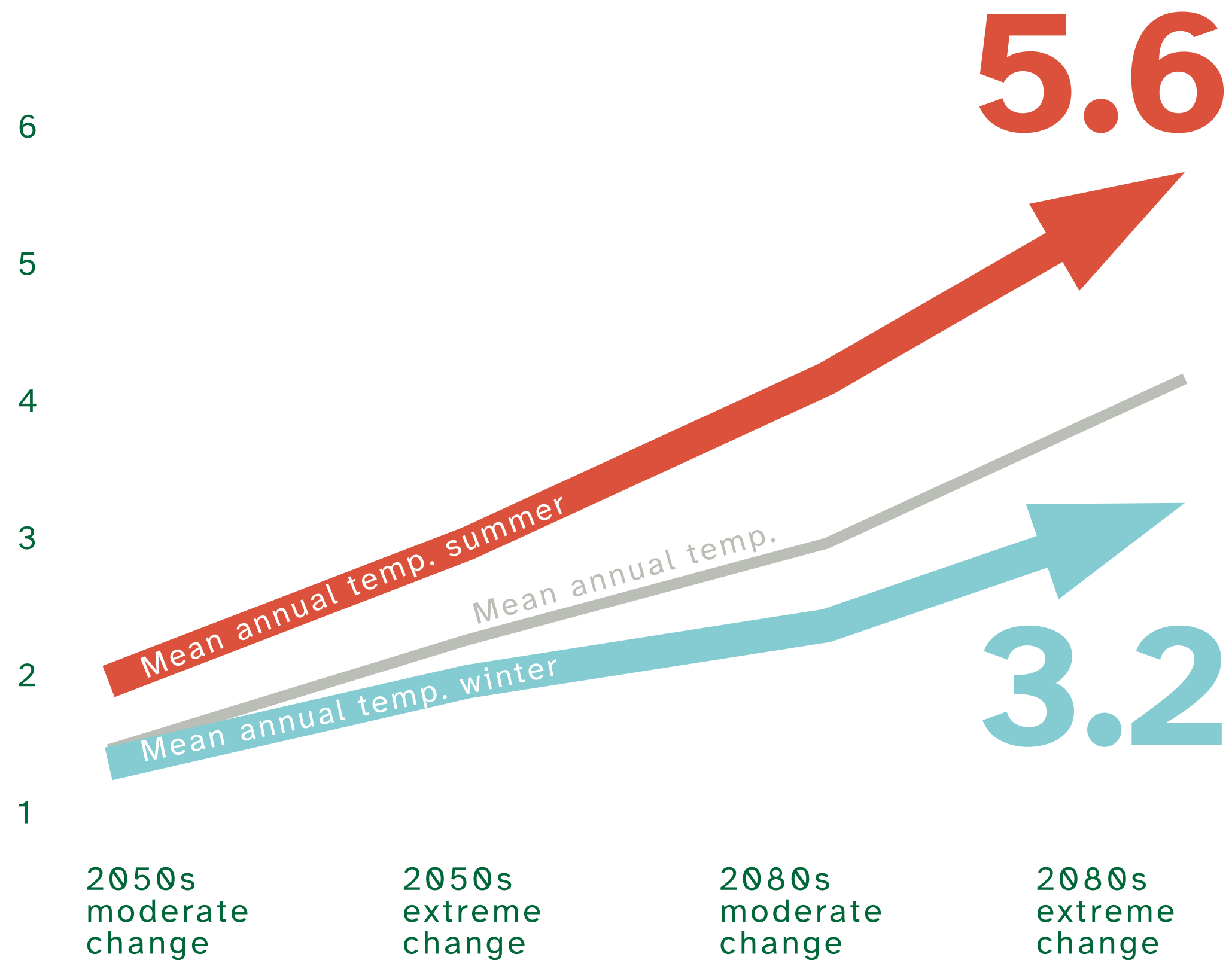
A strategy governed by climate and resilience

At a landscape level, woodland size, diversity, and connectivity need to increase

There needs to be a diverse range of management practices that improve woodland quality and flexibility in the range of species being planted in rural and urban areas. This will enable Somerset's trees and woodlands to be resilient to changing climate, sea level rise, disease and pests, and to increasingly complex land uses.

This is as true for our urban trees as our rural trees; our forests and our orchards; our timber producers, our farmers, our urban planners, and our floodplain managers. Improving our treescapes will help protect and enhance our biodiversity. It will provide connected corridors to allow habitats to flourish, migrate, and adapt.

Predicted temperature increase changes in the South West (°C)



Somerset's climate is changing

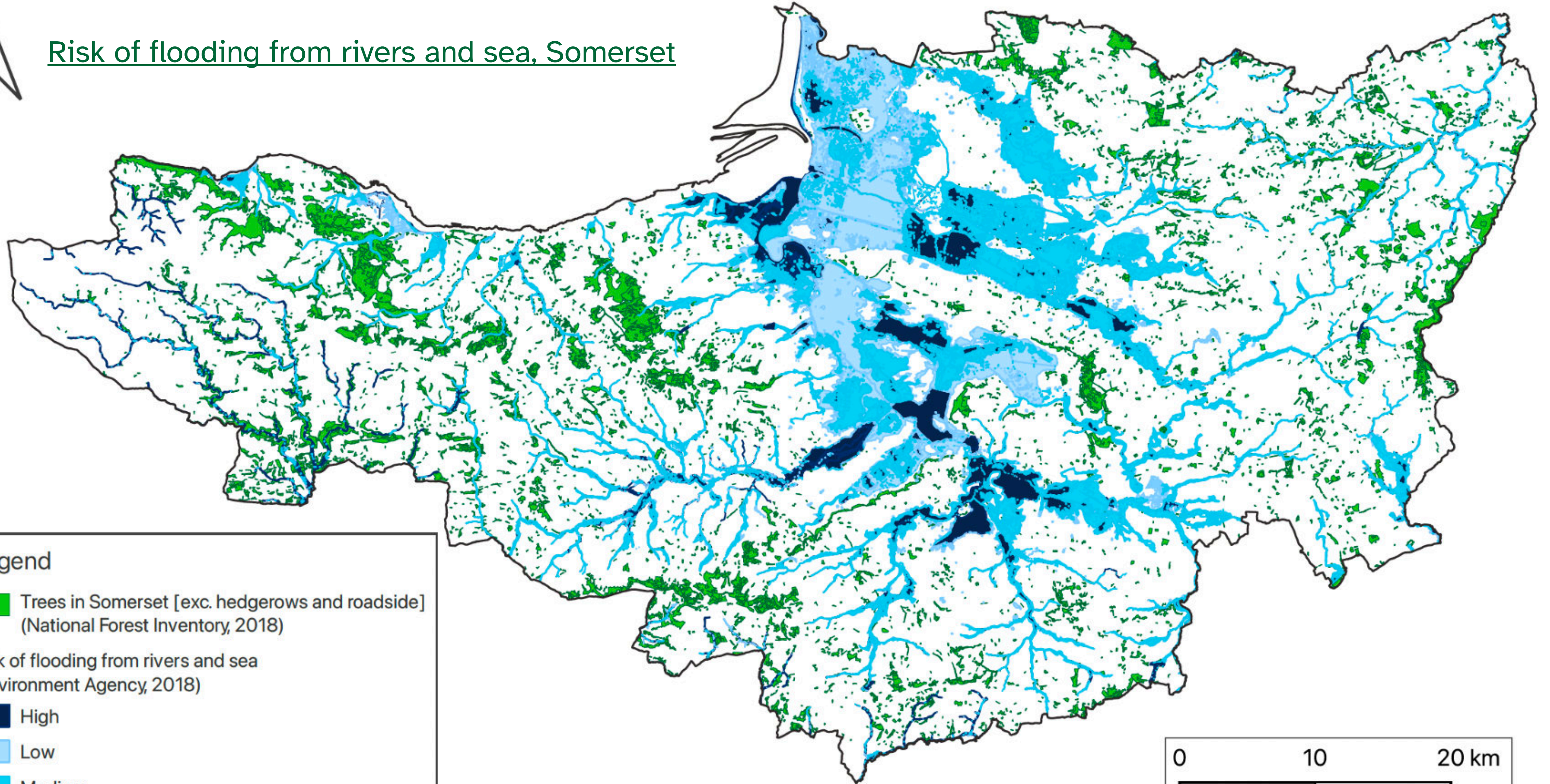
We will see warmer conditions with increased frequency of extreme weather events such as heavy rainfall and drought. Our trees and people need the resilience to cope with this. Many trees will suffer but some will benefit.

Models show a range of temperature increase possibilities and Somerset needs to manage its treescape flexibly so that it can adapt to any scenario.

The approach to building a resilient treescape needs to be flexible and adaptable.



Risk of flooding from rivers and sea, Somerset



Legend

 Trees in Somerset [exc. hedgerows and roadside] (National Forest Inventory, 2018)

Risk of flooding from rivers and sea (Environment Agency, 2018)

 High

 Low

 Medium

0 10 20 km



Somerset's strategy for the next 10 years will be to:

- 1** **Create a wood culture** where everyone understands the importance of trees to the County, its natural environment, and its communities.
- 2** Make our trees **resilient and adaptable** to climate change by protecting, expanding, managing, and diversifying our existing treescapes.
- 3** **Expand the number of trees** in Somerset in urban and rural areas through planting initiatives to create cohesive connected treescapes that include woodland, parks, roadsides, and urban spaces.
- 4** Create a range of **services and products** that allow our treescapes to contribute to society through local supply chains and creating natural capital opportunities.
- 5** Create a **sustainable and flexible governance** structure that ensures successful implementation of the strategy over the next ten years.



**This is
YOUR
strategy**

This is Somerset's strategy to help trees be a thriving part of our landscape, our ecology and our society.

This strategy belongs to all of us in Somerset.

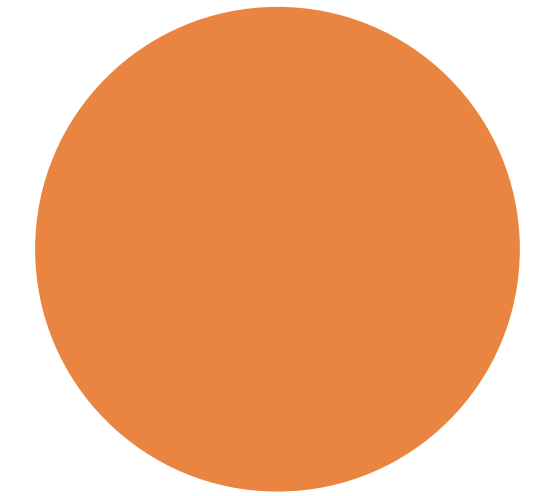
We all have a role to play in making sure it happens.

Theme 1

Create A Wood Culture

Over the next 10 years Somerset will invest in creating a wood culture amongst its population. This means everyone notices and cares about the trees they share the landscape with.

Somerset's trees need to rely on a broader cross section of residents to take an active part in their future. Future generations will be impacted most if Somerset's trees are not managed in a resilient way.



Every school child and adult will have the chance to connect with and learn about their County's trees and be a vital part of their future.

We will ensure and create local options to take up tree-based education, professions, and research to make Somerset a leader in tree management.

We will work with developers and planners to make sure trees become a priority in the built and rural environment.

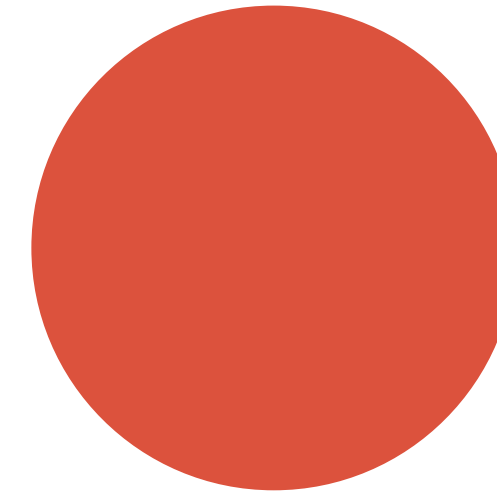


Theme 2

Resilient and Adaptable Trees

Creating resilient and adaptable treescapes will bring greater ecological and economic diversity to our woodlands from a landscape to individual tree level, from unmanaged ancient woodland to restructuring plantations.

This diversity will include greater structural, age, and species diversity ensuring new generations of trees thrive. Diversity means increased resilience to pests, disease and the impacts of climate change. It will create greater ecological diversity and adaptability in the landscape.



To do this we need to manage the trees we have more effectively. Bringing under-managed woodland back into management will be a priority as will taking care of our street trees.

We will make sure that anyone involved in managing trees, from planners to planters, managers to communities can draw on expert tree management advice and will feel comfortable accessing that advice.

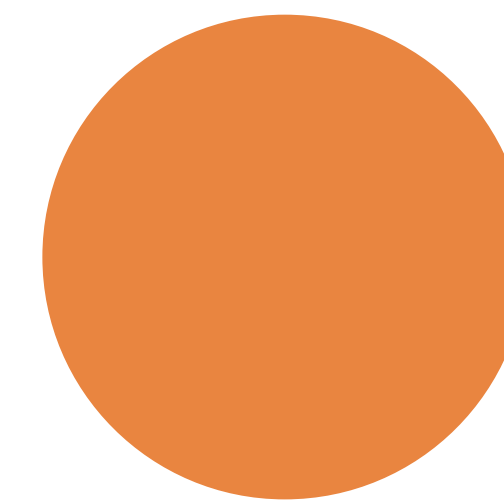


Theme 3

Expanding Tree Cover

There is a need to increase and enhance tree cover. There is also a need to be sensitive to Somerset's varied local landscapes and ecological conditions alongside the many other motivations those planting woodlands will have.

We want to create ambitious corridors of treescapes that traverse the County and connect its landscapes. These corridors will be made up of linear features like hedgerows and verges, of conventional woodland, of urban planting, and agroforestry systems that link habitats and provide corridors for nature.



To meet our contribution to national targets for woodland creation we will plant a minimum of 240ha new woodland a year. We will aim to increase our woodland cover from 8% to the national average 13%.

We will ask those planting trees to show that their plans are the right plans for place, to demonstrate they add to the resilience of our County's treescape and to prove the ecological condition of an area will be enhanced.

By providing impartial expert advice we will work to remove the blockages to woodland planting that exist.

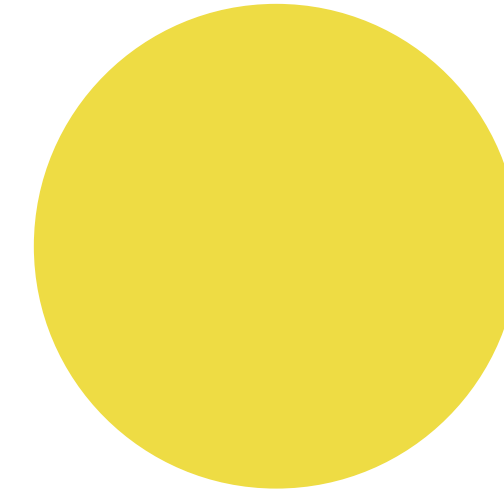


Theme 4

Woodland Services

We will protect and enhance our trees and in return they help protect and enhance our communities. As part of the wood culture we create we will work towards increasing the diversity of woodland products and services our treescapes sustainably provide.

Key to this is building a culture of local provision of solutions. Whether it is optimising carbon storage within sustainable management systems; building with local materials; ensuring flood mitigation; providing shade in town centres, trees will be used to create local solutions.



We will ensure that local communities benefit from their treescapes through the quality of landscape and living space that trees enhance. We will work with land managers, urban planners, developers and community groups as well as public agencies to integrate trees into our living and working landscapes better.



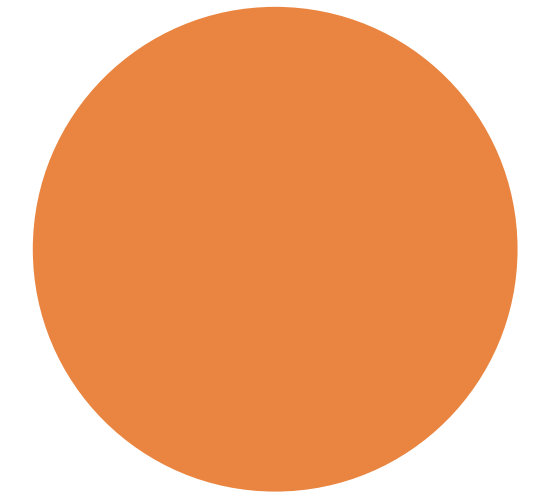
Theme 5

Governance

Everyone should have the chance to be part of our treescapes.

Somerset Council will lead on ensuring that this strategy is implemented. The council will be held to account by a steering group of experts who meet regularly. The steering group will review the strategy annually and create a flexible approach to how it evolves.

Alongside this strategy the council, the steering group, and public bodies will ensure regulatory compliance and where necessary bolster this with Somerset-specific planning documents.



When strategy actions are put in place they will be implemented within the context of the UK Forestry Standard, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other relevant regional policies.

Most importantly this strategy aims to create a wood culture where enhancing our treescapes is seen as a moral responsibility of everyone in the County.

In ten years time community groups, farmers, individual owners, agents, developers, ecologists, school children should all see themselves as being part of the governance of this strategy.