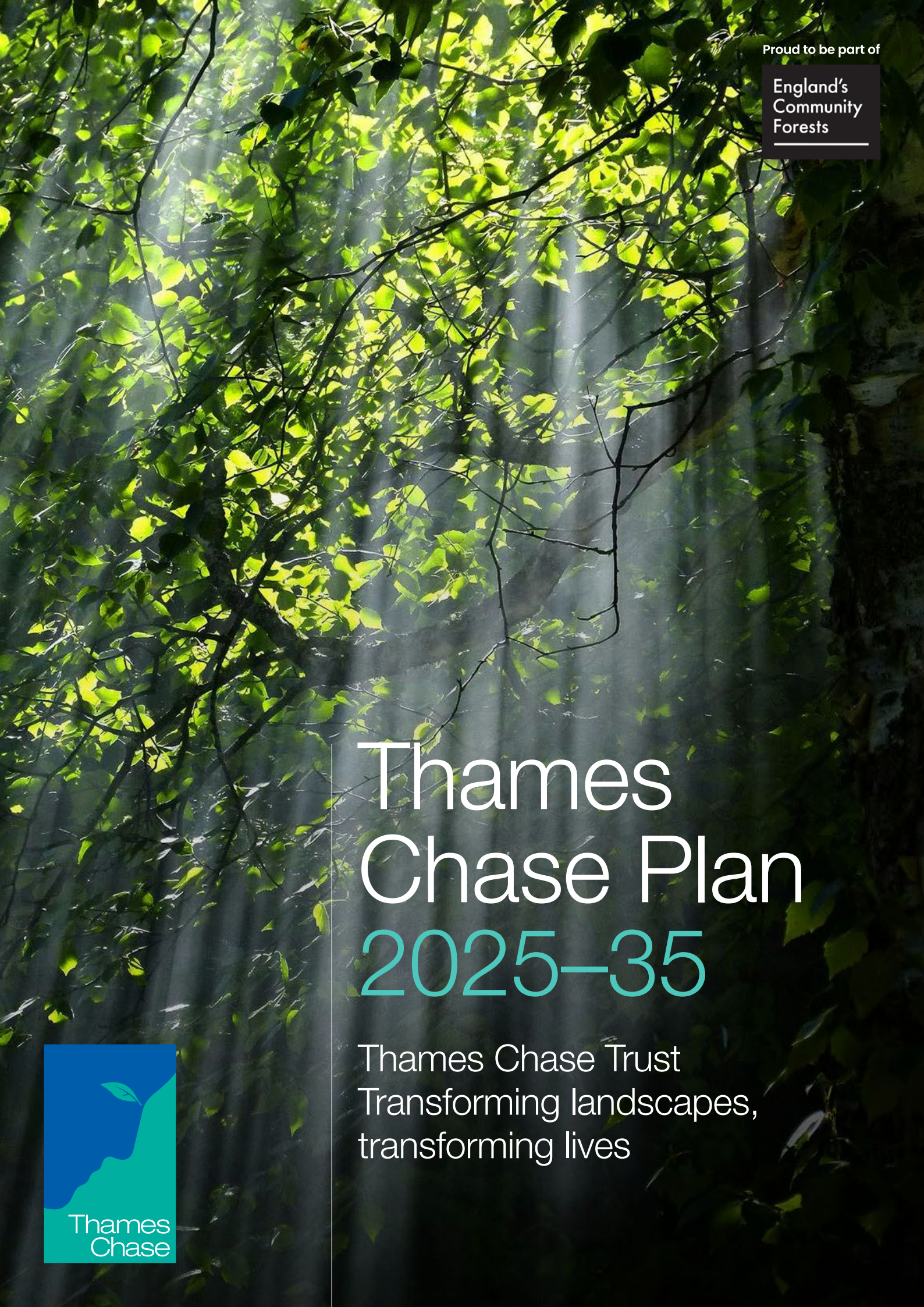


Proud to be part of

England's Community Forests

Thames Chase Plan 2025–35

Thames Chase Trust
Transforming landscapes, transforming lives

Thames Chase

Published
December 2025

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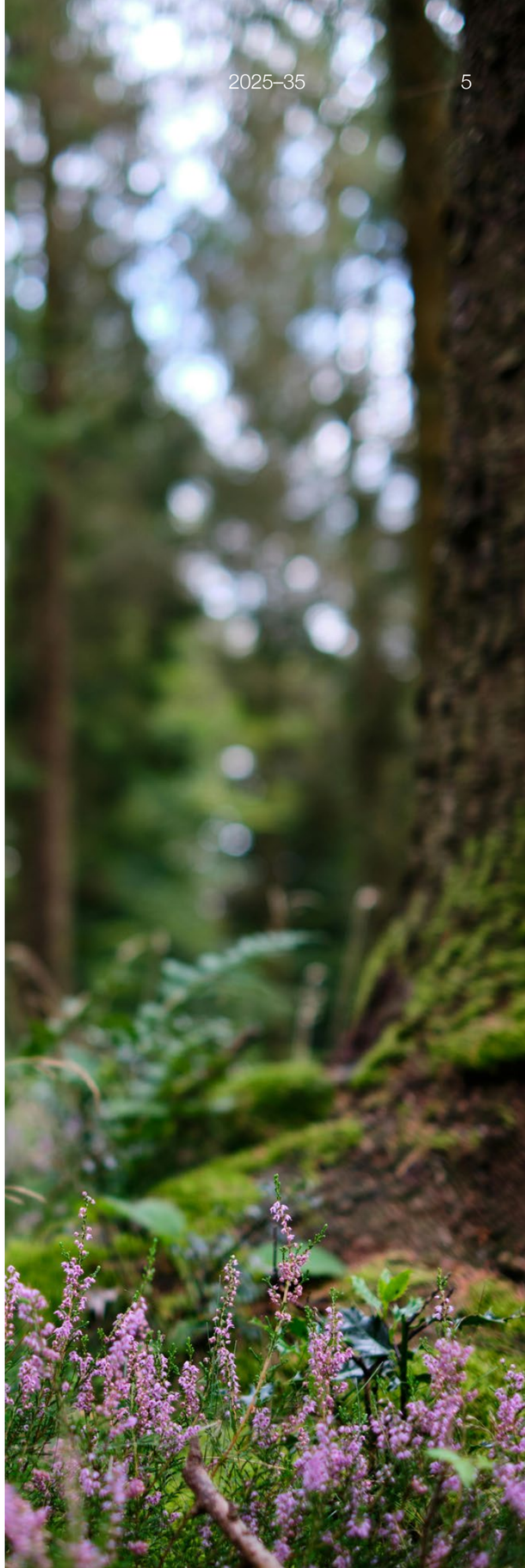
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Foreword

There is an old quoted Chinese proverb which fits Thames Chase at this moment in time. **“The best time to plant a tree was 30 years ago. The second best time is now,”** Thames Chase did start planting trees 30 years ago and it continues to carry on the tree planting mission now!

Over the past three decades, the world has witnessed unprecedented environmental challenges, from rising global temperatures to the loss of biodiversity and increasingly extreme weather patterns. The United Kingdom, East London and Essex has not been immune to these changes. Our landscapes have felt the strain of hedgerow removal, deforestation, pollution, and urban expansion, while communities have grappled with air quality concerns and the urgent need for green spaces. Yet, amidst these challenges, England’s Community Forests have emerged as beacons of resilience, restoring woodlands, enhancing biodiversity, and reconnecting people with nature. Thames Chase led the way in 1990 as one of the three “Lead Forests”.

As we look ahead to the next thirty years, the work of Thames Chase will be more critical than ever. Climate change is set to intensify, bringing new pressures on our ecosystems and communities. By expanding tree cover, restoring habitats, and promoting sustainable land use, we can mitigate carbon emissions, improve air and water quality, reduce flooding and create thriving spaces for both wildlife and people. The role of Thames Chase will not only be about protecting nature but also fostering social and economic wellbeing – offering places for recreation, education, and mental health support while driving local green economies.

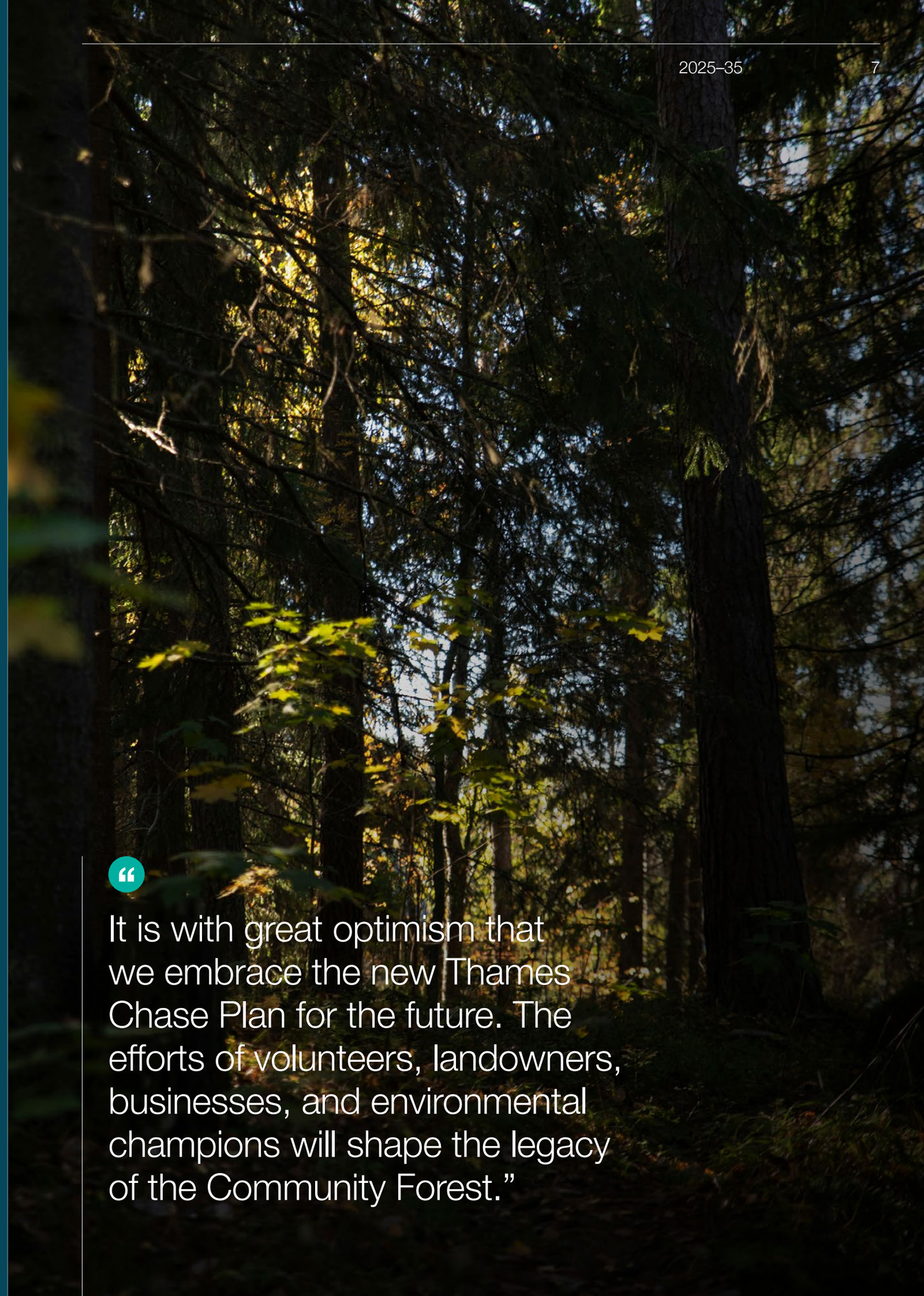
It is with great optimism that we embrace the new Thames Chase Plan for the future. The efforts of volunteers, landowners, businesses, and environmental champions will shape the legacy of the Community Forest, ensuring that generations to come inherit landscapes rich in beauty, diversity, and resilience. Together, we can turn vision and ambition into action and safeguard our environment for the decades ahead.

I commend the 2025 Thames Chase Plan to you all.



John Meehan

Chair of the Thames Chase Trust
On behalf of Thames Chase Trustees



“It is with great optimism that we embrace the new Thames Chase Plan for the future. The efforts of volunteers, landowners, businesses, and environmental champions will shape the legacy of the Community Forest.”

Introduction

The new Thames Chase Plan is a strategic document that sets out the Vision and Objectives of Thames Chase for the next 10 years.

This is the 4th Plan since Thames Chase was established in 1990 and its mission is more important now than at any other time in its history. The Plan is a critical document in shaping and influencing this part of east London and south-west Essex, as Thames Chase straddles the boundary and has already transformed these areas out of recognition – from degraded wastelands to wooded recreation landscapes, alive with people and nature.

This Plan is about continuing the change Thames Chase has made and, as such, it is about influencing and informing those in the best positions to make that change.

These are:

- Local Planners
- Public sector (The Government, Local Authorities, the Mayors, Public health, Climate change, Nature recovery strategy deliverers etc)
- Voluntary sector (Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, National Trust, Sustrans etc)
- Developers
- Land Owners
- Businesses
- Local Communities

This is the successful Thames Chase Partnership which has achieved enormous landscape transformation over the last 35 years and this Plan seeks to show the route map to further accelerated change. The Plan's function is to enable these partners to understand the Thames Chase Vision and Objectives and engender their continuing support allowing Thames Chase to deliver these. The public are welcome to read the detail of the Thames Chase Plan but as a very technical document, a version will be summarised to ensure the continuing support for Thames Chase in east London and south-west Essex.

The Thames Chase Plan sets out 6 Programmes, namely:

Forestry and Landscape

People

Nature

Climate

Access and Connectivity

Resources

These Programmes list the vital Core Actions that will be taken, who the Core Partners are and the Core Funding that the Thames Chase Partnership is seeking to support these transformational changes. Finally, the Plan sets out how we will monitor these changes to evaluate the Plan's success.

> "This Plan is about continuing the change Thames Chase has made and, as such, it is about influencing and informing those in the best positions to make that change."



Guide to the Plan

The underlying theme for this Thames Chase Plan is **“Connect and Create”**. This supports the Thames Chase Trust’s strapline **“Transforming landscapes, transforming lives”**.

The **Connect** section encourages you to learn about and connect with Thames Chase.

The **Create** section contains the Vision and Objectives and considers the management of woodlands and habitats created to date, allowing for the need for longer-term management planning.

Sections 1 and 2 are supported by a series of detailed appendices.

Connect

This section provides essential information about Thames Chase. It actively encourages you to connect with and benefit from it.

1

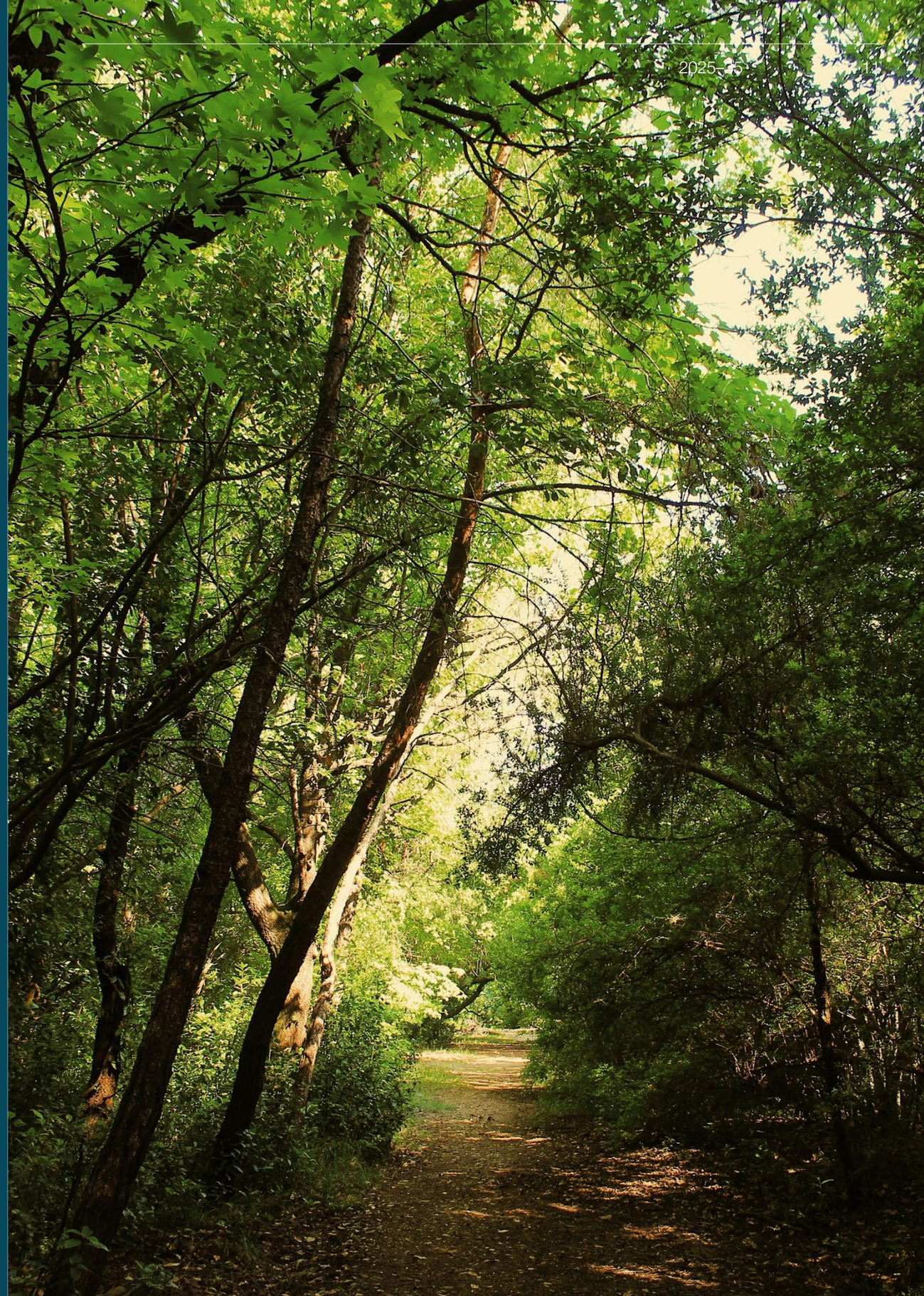
Create

This section identifies how the Thames Chase Plan will create Thames Chase and manage woodlands and habitats created to date. It emphasises the importance of working together to achieve more.

2

- Vision and Objectives
- 6 Programmes
- Annual Delivery Plan
- Local and County Boundaries
- Annual Monitoring Report

Figure 1: Guide to the Plan



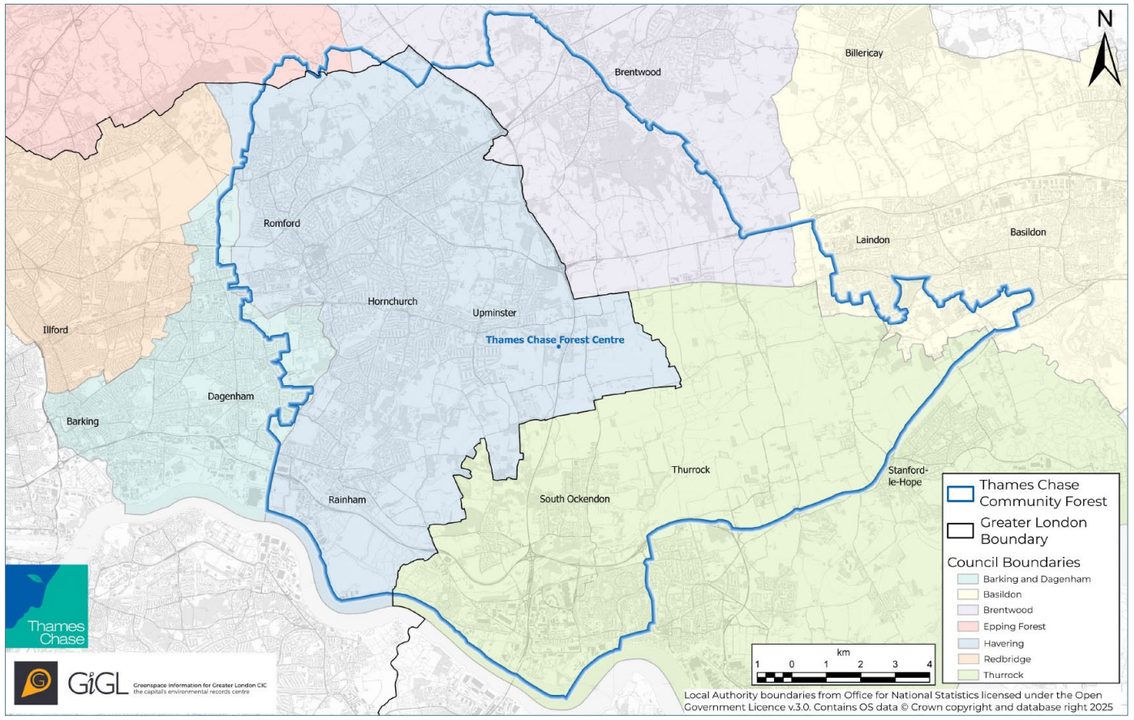
Connect

Section 1

This section provides essential information about Thames Chase. It actively encourages you to connect with and benefit from it.

1.1 Thames Chase

Thames Chase



Map 1: Thames Chase (98 square miles)

Thames Chase covers 98 square miles and the boundary is shown in blue outline in Map 1 above. It spans the edge of east London and south-west Essex and it is estimated that at least 650,000 people live in and around the area. Thames Chase is one of England's fifteen Community Forests (see **Appendix 14**).

The Thames Chase Trust works across and/or abuts the administrative boundaries of seven local authorities, Essex County Council, and the Greater London Authority (See Map 1). At the time of writing, the Essex Authorities are in the process of Local Government Reorganisation and the creation of an Essex Mayor is programmed for 2026 and the new Unitary Authorities in 2027.

Throughout Thames Chase, development pressure continues with new housing developments, light industry, mineral extraction, widening of the M25, and the granting of development consent to build the Lower Thames Crossing.

^ Map produced by Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC on behalf of Thames Chase, June 2025

1.2 Placemaking and Planning

The Thames Chase Plan provides the opportunity for planning authorities and landowners to give the objectives of the Plan a higher profile in land use planning and management.

Development and the planning system have a key role to play in creating Thames Chase. The Thames Chase Plan provides the framework for driving forward an environmentally-led approach to strategic placemaking.

Thames Chase remains as relevant today (if not more given the nature and climate crisis) as it was in 1990. This is clear in how close the objectives of Thames Chase reflect those of partner organisations and in particular, the local authorities. The Thames Chase Plan objectives are:

1. **To protect, improve and expand the woodland character of Thames Chase**
2. **To use Thames Chase to improve local health and wellbeing, volunteering, learning, employment, diversity and equality; and to recognise the historic environment, heritage and culture**
3. **To positively influence the natural integrity of Thames Chase's air, land and water including wildlife**
4. **To integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation responses into Thames Chase**
5. **To develop a connected network of links and accessible, vibrant greenspaces throughout Thames Chase**
6. **To enable effective partnership working from national to local level to maximise the impact of available resources**

Community Forests use trees and woodlands to transform landscapes and transform lives. With a focus on strategic, landscape-scale placemaking, areas are redefined and prospects transformed.

The Thames Chase Plan is a non-statutory document and presents an agreed framework and approach to the ongoing creation of Thames Chase.

> "The Thames Chase Plan provides the framework for driving forward an environmentally-led approach to strategic placemaking."

1.3 Planning Policy Support for the Thames Chase Plan

Development and land use planning decisions will continue to be taken, in accordance with the statutory development plans of the appropriate planning authorities.

There are no proposals in the Thames Chase Plan that can override the policies contained in these statutory plans. However, it can complement these statutory plans by being used as a tool to achieve multiple objectives through the programmes of action and implementation.

Further, the Thames Chase Plan is:

- **a material consideration used to inform the preparation of statutory development plans**
- **a material consideration in determining planning applications for development within the Thames Chase area**
- **a tool to promote and support the environmentally-led approach to strategic, landscape-scale placemaking through the creation of Thames Chase**

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Introduced in the Environment Act 2021, LNRS is a statutory requirement. It is part of Nature Recovery Network (NRN), made up of 48 LNRS's. Together, they form a nationwide network full of opportunities for nature recovery. The two covered across Thames Chase are the Essex LNRS and the LNRS for London.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Community Forests

The NPPF was last updated in 2024. This is an overarching document which sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these policies should be applied.

The NPPF recognises the importance of trees in new developments. Paragraph 131states:

'Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments...'.

The NPPF specifically acknowledges the role of Community Forests. Paragraph 152 states:

'...Community Forests offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns and cities, by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife...' and confirms that:

'...an approved Community Forest Plan may be a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications.'

The new Thames Chase Plan contains 6 Programmes that are in alignment with the core aims of the NPPF (**See Sections 2.3–2.8**):



Forestry and Landscape



People



Nature



Climate



Access and Connectivity



Resources



1.4 National Policy Support

The Thames Chase Plan and Thames Chase are closely aligned with national policies, planning and placemaking. Figure 2 below identifies the importance and relevance of the Plan and many of these.



Figure 2: National Policy Support for the Thames Chase Plan

1.5 Local Policy Support

The Thames Chase Plan and Thames Chase are closely aligned with local policies, planning and placemaking. Figure 3 below identifies the importance and relevance of the Plan and many of these.



Figure 3: Local Policy Support for the Thames Chase Plan

1.6 Partnerships and Governance

The realisation of Thames Chase depends upon the active support of a wide range of organisations. It is a partnership of national statutory agencies, local government, voluntary bodies and the private sector. There is more detail on Partnerships and Governance in the Appendices.

Partnerships

National Partners

Forestry Commission / Forestry England / DEFRA / England's Community Forests / Natural England / Environment Agency / National Highways / National Lottery Heritage Fund / Historic England

Local and County Authorities

Basildon Council / Brentwood Borough Council / Essex County Council / London Borough of Barking and Dagenham / London Borough of Havering / Thurrock Council / Greater London Authority / Essex Mayoral Strategic Authority / Epping Forest District Council / London Borough of Redbridge

Non Government Organisations

The Woodland Trust / The National Trust / RSPB / CPRE London / Thames21 / Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP) / Essex Wildlife Trust / London Wildlife Trust / The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) / Sustrans / Trees for Cities / Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA)

Local Supporters

Community 'Friends of' Groups / Havering Wildlife Project / Outdoor recreation groups / Sports clubs / Health and wellbeing groups / Local businesses / Farmers and landowners / Schools, colleges, universities and education organisations / Restoration companies and groups

Figure 4: Partnerships and Governance



1.7 Thames Chase Forest Centre Complex

The Forest Centre Complex

Mission

The Forest Centre is designed to tell the story of the developing 98 square miles of Thames Chase. It is the engine room of the Community Forest's creation as it houses the Thames Chase and Forestry England teams, whose mission it is to create Thames Chase over the life of the Thames Chase Plan.

Communications and demonstration site

Facilities include car parking, Visitor Centre, interpretation and information, shop, cafe, historic barn, education room, Peter Wilkinson House (office base for the Trust's staff team and Forestry England), community tree nursery, and play area.

Events and activities hub

Used year-round for events, activities, and meetings. It is the 'shop-window' for the Thames Chase project and offers information and interpretation about the landscape.

A key forest recreation site

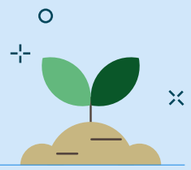
Provides the perfect meeting place for friends and families. Surrounded by greenspace and woodland (owned and managed by Forestry England) offering facilities for walking, cycling and relaxing in the outdoors.

1.8 Achievements

Since the global financial crisis of 2008, Thames Chase has come through a remarkable period in its history, rising from near collapse, through a lengthy period of recovery and rebuilding, all the way back up to the refreshed project we know and see today. During this era of fluctuation (for many partners too), Thames Chase was not able to gather data in the same way. This new Thames Chase Plan seeks to address this.

The known data (building on the 2014 Thames Chase Plan) is:

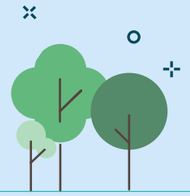
1.8m
Trees Planted since 1990



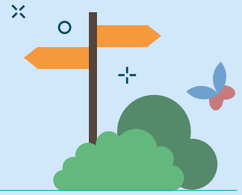
32,050
Volunteer days since 2005



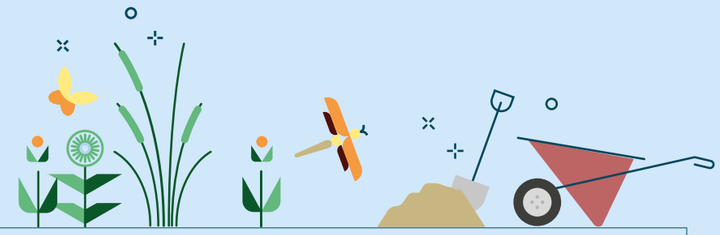
73.5%
Increase in woodlands through new planting since 1990



45.3km
Km of hedgerows created or restored since 1990



883
Hectares of non-woodland habitat created or restored since 1990



We will endeavour to continue capturing historic data where possible but, the focus now, using the new Thames Chase Plan, is the future and we will be collecting Annual Monitoring Data against the following:

- Number of trees planted
- Hectares of woodland created
- Hectares of woodland in active management
- Km of hedgerows created
- Km of hedgerows in active management
- Number of volunteers days
- Number of volunteers
- Number of events and activities
- Hectares of non-woodland habitat created
- Hectares of non-woodland habitat in active management
- Km of rivers and waterways improved
- Km of access routes created
- Annual investment in Thames Chase (£)

Figure 5: Achievements

1.9 Your Connection with Thames Chase

There are many ways in which you can connect with Thames Chase. Figure 6 below identifies the importance of the relationship between Thames Chase and the wealth of partners, businesses, and community groups that have the opportunity to connect with and benefit from it. If you would like to become involved with the work of Thames Chase, you can find out more via our website **www.thameschase.org.uk**



Figure 6: How You Can Connect with Thames Chase



2

Create

Section 2

This section identifies how the Thames Chase Plan will create Thames Chase and manage woodlands and habitats created to date. It emphasises the importance of working together to achieve more.

2.1 How the Thames Chase Plan will be Delivered

This section identifies how the Thames Chase Plan will **'transform landscapes and transform lives'** across Thames Chase. This will be achieved by implementing the Vision and Objectives, which will drive the six Programmes to create the Annual Delivery Plan across the local and county administrative boundaries within and around the Thames Chase boundary. (**See Sections 2.3–2.11**).



Figure 7: How the Thames Chase Plan will be Delivered

2.2 Vision, Programmes and Objectives

Vision

'By 2050, Thames Chase will be recognised as an inspirational example of landscape regeneration where enhanced, connected woodland and green space has made a clear difference to wildlife and peoples' lives'.

Programmes and Objectives

Forestry and Landscape

Objective:

To protect, improve and expand the woodland character of Thames Chase.

People

Objective:

To use Thames Chase to improve local health and wellbeing, volunteering, learning, employment, diversity and equality; and to recognise the historic environment, heritage and culture.

Nature

Objective:

To positively influence the natural integrity of Thames Chase's air, land and water including wildlife.

Climate

Objective:

To integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation responses into Thames Chase.

Access and Connectivity

Objective:

To develop a connected network of links and accessible, vibrant greenspaces throughout Thames Chase.

Resources

Objective:

To enable effective partnership working from national to local level to maximise the impact of available resources.

In accordance with **Section 2.2**, the following six Programmes specifically align with each of the six Thames Chase Plan Objectives. Each Programme contains a brief introduction, followed by a series of Core Actions which identify what the Thames Chase Plan will do, who the Core Partners and Funders might be, and which of the thirteen monitoring indicators will be applied.

The Core Actions will help with the creation of the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) which will be applied across the local and county administrative boundaries across the Thames Chase area.

2.3. Programme 1 **Forestry and Landscape**

Introduction

Thames Chase is a Community Forest and tree planting is central to everything we do. We use trees as the medium to connect communities with their landscape, historic environment, to improve habitat connectivity, capture carbon, secure investment, restore degraded and fragmented landscapes, and address the nature and climate emergencies. **This supports the Thames Chase Plan objective of protecting, improving, and expanding the woodland character of Thames Chase.**

The aim is for Thames Chase to have reached 20% tree cover by 2050 and 30% by 2060. Achieving this will require a combination of large-scale woodland planting and local tree planting initiatives. Current tree cover is estimated to be around 12%.

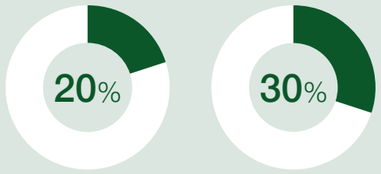
The government's Nature for Climate Fund is crucial to achieving this target. It is providing the funding to deliver the England's Community Forests Trees for Climate programme for which Thames Chase is a delivery partner (one of England's fifteen Community Forests). In the first five years of the programme we have planted 246,000 trees, across 100 hectares, engaging 2,644 people. This is supporting the Thames Chase aim of reaching 20% tree cover by 2050.

In addition to new planting, Thames Chase contains many areas of established woodlands. There is a need for active management of existing and new woodlands, across boundaries which will also include supporting partners' creation and management objectives beyond Thames Chase, with a focus on landscape cohesion.

The objectives for woodland creation and management within Thames Chase are set with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) and multi-purpose forestry in mind. Multi-purpose forestry is about maximising the value from woodlands, based on seeking social, environmental and economic returns.

Thames Chase was initially set up in response to decades of landscape fragmentation. Conserving and enhancing the Thames Chase landscape and the natural environment will improve its ability to serve both people and wildlife as a functioning working landscape.

Whilst trees are essential to the creation of Thames Chase, we actively seek to create a mosaic of habitats across the landscape. Open space and habitat diversity is important in woodland design and we aim to include grasslands, ponds, ditches, hedgerows, and scrub too.



The aim is for Thames Chase to have reached 20% tree cover by 2050 and 30% by 2060.

Forestry and Landscape Core Actions, Funding, Partners and Indicators

Core Actions

Our Core Actions for the Forestry and Landscape Programme are that we will work with partners, funders, landowners, and local communities:

F1: to advise partners for woodland creation and management, identifying and prioritising areas of greatest need

F2: to increase tree planting through a diversity of planting schemes. We will maximise the opportunities provided through the Trees for Climate programme

F3: to implement UKFS compliant multi-purpose forestry as our means of woodland creation and establishment, seeking social, cultural heritage, environmental and economic returns from Thames Chase

F4: to seek to convert the substantial brownfields (Gravel Extraction and Landfill Sites) in the south of Thames Chase to new accessible wooded sites

F5: to create a rich mosaic of wooded habitats including farms, leisure enterprises, nature areas, and public open space that will form a well-wooded landscape for wildlife, work, recreation and education within and on the edges of our towns and cities. We will encourage agroforestry, productive landscapes including food production, orchards, and biomass

F6: to deliver Trees Outside Woodlands projects including the historic environment/heritage landscape, street trees, hedgerow trees, parks and garden trees, and small wood features in both agricultural and urban landscapes.

F7: to build a programme of active woodland establishment across Thames Chase, employing best practice to achieve tree survival rates of at least 95%

F8: to sustainably establish and manage woodlands – young, mature and ancient. This is vital to ensuring their health, resilience, recreation value, ability to capture and store carbon, and their biodiversity value. We will work with partners to monitor and manage threats, including climate, invasive species, pests and diseases, and be at the forefront of discussions

Core Funding

Our potential Core Funding sources that will have the biggest influence on the Forestry and Landscape Programme will be:

- **Trees for Climate** – Defra
- **England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO)** – Forestry Commission
- **More Woods, Free Tree Scheme and Agroforestry** – The Woodland Trust
- **Free trees and corporate partnerships** – The Conservation Volunteers
- **Tree sponsorship** – One Tree Planted
- **Woodland Creation Planning Grant (WCPG)**
- **Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)**
- **Landscape Recovery (LR)**
- **Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT)**

Core Partners

Our potential Core Partners that will have the biggest influence on the Forestry and Landscape Programme will be:

- **Forestry England**
- **Forestry Commission**
- **Defra**
- **England's Community Forests**
- **Farmers and Landowners**
- **The Woodland Trust**
- **Trees for Cities**
- **CPRE London/The London Tree Ring**
- **The London Urban Forest Partnership**
- **Local and Mayoral Authorities**
- **The Conservation Volunteers**
- **One Tree Planted**
- **Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL)**

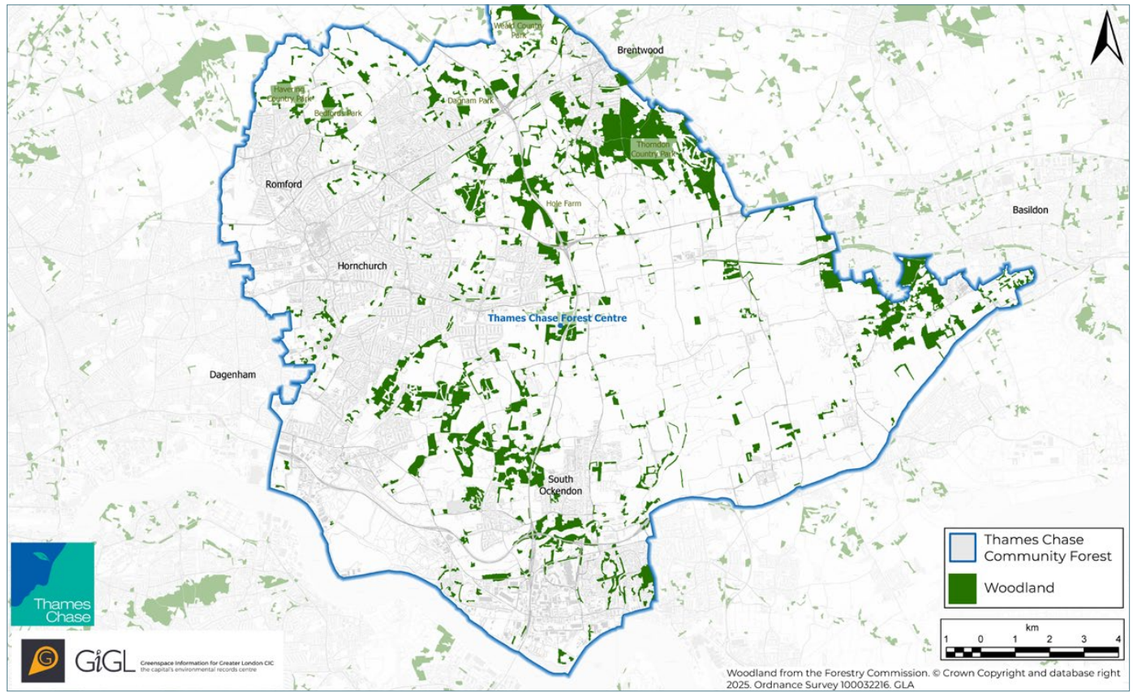
Core Indicators

We will monitor progress by using the following indicators from **Section 2.11**:

Thames Chase Plan (TCP) Indicator	Indicator No.
Number of trees planted	1
Hectares of woodland created	2
Hectares of woodland in active management	3
Km of hedgerows created	4
Km of hedgerows in active management	5

Map produced by Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC on behalf of Thames Chase, June 2025

Woodlands within Thames Chase



Map 2: Woodlands within Thames Chase Boundary (98 square miles)

2.4. Programme 2 **People**

Introduction

Since its inception, the Thames Chase project has been about people, actively seeking their support, involvement and enjoyment of Thames Chase. We are truly seeking to create a Community Forest for all and in doing so, engage and embrace the rich diversity of communities both across the area and those visiting to enjoy all that Thames Chase has to offer.

Whether this be through volunteering, recreation, health and wellbeing, education, heritage, or the arts. The developing Community Forest is a resource for local people to shape and enjoy. **To use Thames Chase to improve local health and wellbeing, volunteering, learning, employment, diversity and equality; and to recognise the historic environment, heritage and culture.**

Throughout the Thames Chase Plan, people are pivotal. The community-led Thames Chase Trust exemplifies the success of the project over the past 35 years. Further, volunteers from the local communities have helped to shape Thames Chase by actively engaging in conservation, health and wellbeing, education, and events, projects and programmes. The existence of the Forest Centre complex owes a huge amount to the dedication and investment of local volunteers across many years.

The opportunity remains for Thames Chase to benefit people's physical and mental health and wellbeing. The free health benefits of the natural environment are well documented and Thames Chase can help to save the healthcare system significant money by preventing higher-cost health interventions through improved local fitness and mental wellbeing. Social prescribing and Nature for Health are good examples.

The Thames Chase landscape also holds many clues to the historic interaction of people with their environment. The heritage of the landscape is a complex one, influenced by geology and human geography. The geology of the area has influenced its use for agriculture, minerals and waste and the importance of the River Thames and establishment of London on its doorstep has shaped the landscape since Roman times.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, large landscaped parks were developed in the area e.g. Thorndon and Belhus Parks. Remnants of these estates remain across Thames Chase.

The Thames Chase project has stimulated jobs in forestry, countryside recreation, hospitality, and the creation of Green and Blue Infrastructure. The creation of Thames Chase has uplifted house and commercial properties in and around the Community Forest.

> "We are truly seeking to create a Community Forest for all."

People Core Actions, Funding, Partners and Indicators

Core Actions

Our Core Actions for the People Programme are that we will work with partners, funders, landowners, and local communities:

P1: to promote Thames Chase and other community volunteer groups through our website and social media

P2: to fully develop the health benefits which result from Thames Chase and participation in it and other community groups. This will help to improve people's health and wellbeing (mental and physical) through an active health walks programme encouraging participation in volunteering and events and activities, social prescribing, and Nature for Health

P3: to provide opportunities for education, training, knowledge and skills sharing, and employment. Consider a programme to engage and secure the next generation of Community Foresters

P4: to celebrate the historic environment, art, heritage and culture of Thames Chase. This will include the Arts Exhibition at the Forest Centre, connecting communities to the heritage of the landscape (natural and built) through the programme of Heritage Walks, and celebrating the diverse cultures of our communities acknowledging pride of place, and the importance of connection by creating a Community Forest for all

P5: to further establish the Forest Centre complex as the information and recreation hub for Thames Chase, with an accessible path network for cycling and walking, self-guided easy access trails and interpretation

P6: to encourage diversity, equality, participation and engagement, truly creating a Community Forest for all

Core Funding

Our potential Core Funding sources that will have the biggest influence on the People Programme will be:

- **Corporate sponsorship funding** – Corporate partners
- **Funding via education and training budgets** – Schools, colleges and universities
- **Health Trusts**
- **Historic England**
- **National Lottery Heritage Fund**
- **National Lottery Arts Fund**

Core Partners

Our potential Core Partners that will have the biggest influence on the People Programme will be:

- **The Conservation Volunteers**
- **Local communities**
- **CPRE London**
- **Corporate partners**
- **Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL)**
- **Forestry England**
- **Schools, colleges and universities**
- **Outdoor Activities Centres**
- **Health Trusts**
- **Historic England**
- **Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA)**
- **National Lottery Heritage Fund**
- **National Lottery Arts Fund**

Core Indicators

We will monitor progress by using the following indicators from **Section 2.11**:

Thames Chase Plan (TCP) Indicator	Indicator No.
Number of volunteers days	6
Number of volunteers	7
Number of events and activities	8



2.5. Programme 3 **Nature**

Introduction

It is important to note that the Nature Programme aligns very closely with the Climate Programme. The natural and historic environment of Thames Chase is an essential component of the area and protecting and enhancing the landscape and its habitats is a priority for the new Thames Chase Plan.

The new Thames Chase Plan enables effective partnership working across boundaries and supports vital initiatives such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategies for London and Essex. **Delivering these will help to deliver the Thames Chase Plan objective of positively influencing the natural integrity of Thames Chase's air, land and water including wildlife.**

The Nature Programme will help to clean our air and water and establish plants and animals which are thriving. It will create a cleaner, greener landscape for us all and seek to secure Nature Based Solutions. These Solutions are inspired by and use nature to address socio-environmental issues including biodiversity loss, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and water and food security. Examples include reforestation (planting trees where forests have been lost) and afforestation (planting trees where there are no forests), green infrastructure in urban areas, sustainable agriculture, and restoring waterways and wetlands.

Using the historic environment to inform nature recovery measures will result in more effective responses to the climate and nature emergencies, while helping to conserve our cultural heritage.

The Nature Programme will work with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Nutrient Neutrality (NN). BNG focuses on tangible enhancements to biodiversity to ensure that a development leaves the natural environment in a better state than it was before the development. NN is a legal standard set by the government to address the impact of development on the environment and watercourses. It requires that development projects do not have a detrimental impact on water quality.

The new Thames Chase Plan seeks to plant more trees, manage land more sustainably, and create new habitats. This will help to arrest the decline in native species and improve our biodiversity. At the heart of everything we do in a 'Community' Forest is people and our work will connect more people with the environment and promote greater wellbeing.

In addition to creating new woodland, hedgerows and urban tree planting schemes, Thames Chase is also creating non-wooded natural areas. These new areas for nature have enabled extensive expansion for local native species of plants, insects and animals. This work will continue to offset the nature crisis and biodiversity loss in London and Essex. It will help to recover nature and enhance the landscape.

Working in this way will also protect and enhance the character and heritage of the Thames Chase landscape, providing an improved environment for people and nature.

Nature Core Actions, Funding, Partners and Indicators

Core Actions

Our Core Actions for the Nature Programme are that we will work with partners, funders, landowners, and local communities:

N1: to deliver against Local Nature Recovery Strategies. These ensure Thames Chase plays its role in landscape recovery for London and Essex through the respective Local Nature Recovery Strategies and associated multi-agency partnerships. We will work to make more space for nature and seek to halt its decline. We will support the proposal set out in the Tree and Woodland sections of the Local Nature Recovery Strategies

N2: to ensure that habitats are connected across Thames Chase and adjoining landscapes e.g. LNRS for London priorities for large-scale rewilding and green corridors

N3: to encourage wildlife-friendly farming and help to increase habitats and habitat connectivity

N4: to secure Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality across Thames Chase

N5: to plant more trees and hedgerows through the Trees for Climate programme to help tackle the nature emergency

N6: to secure Nature Based Solutions across Thames Chase

N7: to improve the biodiversity and riparian landscapes of the rivers, waterways and wetlands across Thames Chase for the benefit of nature, also recognising and integrating the landscape of the River Thames into Thames Chase, in doing so, helping to enhance the mosaic of habitats across the landscape and deliver LNRS priorities for waterbodies and waterways

N8: to deliver catchment-scale river restoration and improved water quality

Core Funding

Our potential Core Funding sources that will have the biggest influence on the Nature Programme will be:

- **Landscape Recovery (LR)**
- **Local Nature Recovery Strategies** – GLA and the Essex Mayoral Authority
- **Biodiversity Net Gain** – Developers and Planning Authorities
- **Nutrient Neutrality** – Developers and Water Companies
- **Free trees and corporate partnerships** – The Conservation Volunteers

Core Indicators

We will monitor progress by using the following indicators from **Section 2.11**:

Thames Chase Plan (TCP) Indicator	Indicator No.
Hectares of non woodland habitat created	9
Hectares of non-woodland habitat in active management	10
Km of rivers and waterways improved	11

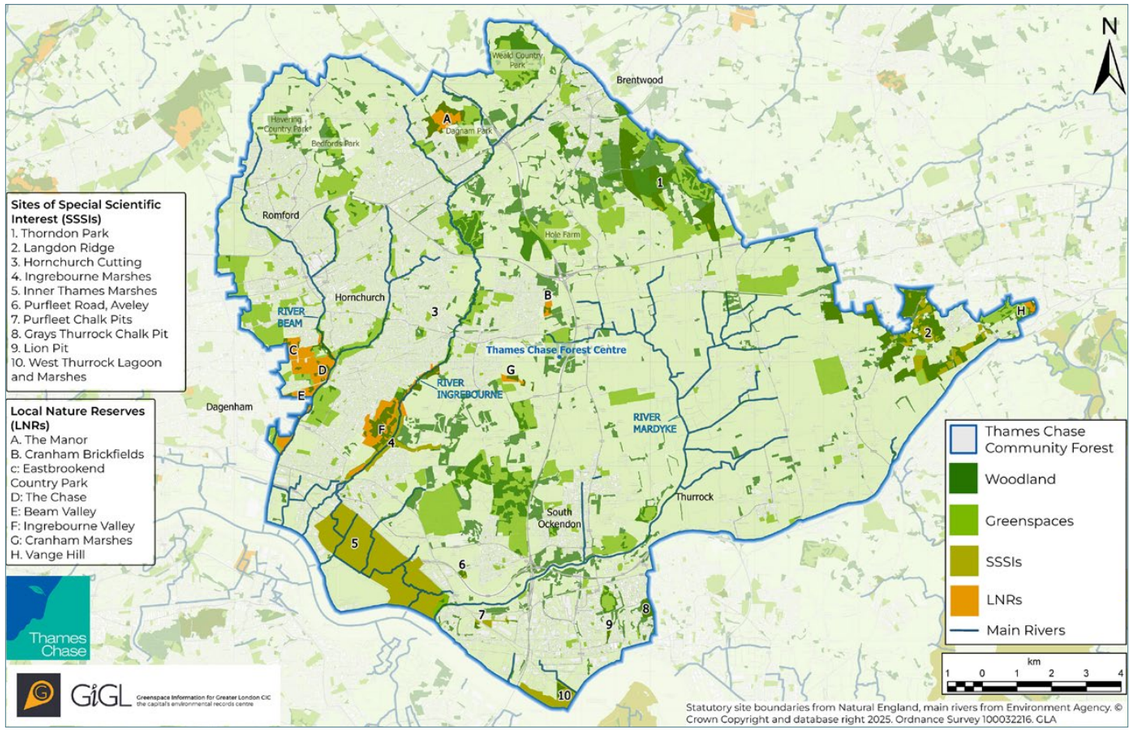
Core Partners

Our potential Core Partners that will have the biggest influence on the Nature Programme will be:

- **Local and Mayoral Authorities**
- **Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Essex Mayoral Authority**
- **Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL)**
- **Essex Wildlife Trust**
- **London Wildlife Trust**
- **Natural England**
- **RSPB**
- **Buglife**
- **Thames21**
- **Thames Estuary Partnership**
- **Havering Wildlife Project**
- **Historic England**
- **Farmers and Landowners**
- **Developers and Planning Authorities**
- **Developers and Water Companies**
- **The Conservation Volunteers**
- **Catchment Partnerships**

Map produced by Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC on behalf of Thames Chase, October 2025

Natural spaces within Thames Chase



Map 3: Natural Spaces within Thames Chase Boundary (98 square miles)

2.6. Programme 4 **Climate**

Introduction

It is important to note that the Climate Programme aligns very closely with the Nature Programme. The existence of Thames Chase in this part of east London and south-west Essex gives us a much better chance of responding to the nature and climate emergency and to leave our environment in a better state than we found it.

The creation of wooded and non-wooded nature areas will help Thames Chase adapt to climate change and mitigate against its effects. Natural Green and Blue Infrastructure absorbs carbon, mitigates against climate change, reduces the heating of our urban areas, flooding, and cleans our air and water supplies.

Access to Carbon funding will support the Climate Programme. Carbon funding provides the opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and deliver projects and programmes that seek to clean our atmosphere. Carbon credits are a good example. Tree planting and woodland creation is an effective tool in this process and why the existence of Thames Chase is so vital to the area, its people and wildlife. The Woodland Carbon Code (WCC) is of particular relevance to Thames Chase.

Thames Chase provides the opportunity to adapt to the effects of a changing climate by improving our natural environment. **This supports the Thames Chase Plan objective of integrating climate change adaptation and mitigation responses into Thames Chase.**

Improving the climate of Thames Chase is a priority in this Thames Chase Plan and this will involve working with others to seek to improve the quality of our air, water, and land.

Thames Chase has a role to play in educating people about the environment and essential topics such as reducing waste, recycling, and encouraging more thoughtful use of resources.

Tree planting has many benefits, not only helping to address those issues listed above but also to play a role, as part of a diverse range of measures, in protecting communities from flooding, creating habitats to reduce flood risk, and helping to reduce carbon dioxide levels in our atmosphere.

> “The creation of wooded and non-wooded nature areas will help Thames Chase adapt to climate change and mitigate against its effects.”

Climate Core Actions, Funding, Partners and Indicators

Core Actions

Our Core Actions for the Climate Programme are that we will work with partners, funders, landowners, and local communities:

C1: to reduce river pollution and water scarcity and to use Nature Based Solutions and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to reduce flooding

C2: to deliver projects and programmes that lock-up carbon and improve water and air quality

C3: to address the Urban Heat Island effect
Tree planting and urban nature areas are proven to cool urban areas

C4: to plant more trees and hedgerows to help tackle the climate emergency
Working with partners to plant and care for climate and drought resilient species, utilising the Community Tree Nursery network

C5: to educate people about the environment with topics such as history, heritage and culture, reducing waste, recycling, and more thoughtful use of resources

Core Funding

Our potential Core Funding sources that will have the biggest influence on the Climate Programme will be:

- **River improvements** – Environment Agency
- **Clean Water Funding** – Water Companies
- **Nature Based Solutions and SuDS** – Lead Local Flood Authorities
- **Highways street trees and SuDS planting** – Local and County Authorities
- **Carbon and Carbon Code** – Developers and Planning Authorities

Core Partners

Our potential Core Partners that will have the biggest influence on the Climate Programme will be:

- **Catchment Partnerships, including the Environment Agency and Water Companies to reduce river pollution and water scarcity**
- **Lead Local Flood Authorities to use Nature Based Solutions and SuDS to reduce flooding**
- **Thames 21**
- **Greater London Authority and the Essex Mayoral Authority**
- **Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL)**
- **Historic England**
- **Farmers and Landowners**
- **Local and Mayoral Authorities**
- **Developers and Planning Authorities**

Core Indicators

We will monitor progress by using the following indicators from **Section 2.11**:

Thames Chase Plan (TCP) Indicator	Indicator No.
Number of trees planted	1
Km of hedgerows created	4
Hectares of non-woodland habitat created	9
Km of rivers and waterways improved	11

2.7 Programme 5 Access and Connectivity

Introduction

Whilst continuing to create Thames Chase is a priority task, it is equally important that local communities and visitors have access to the existing and new woodland and nature sites.

Since the inception of Thames Chase, the aim has always been to provide for informal access to the area on foot, cycle and horse. The public rights of way network remains key to this and building effective partnerships with farmers and landowners is essential. **This supports the Thames Chase Plan objective of developing a connected network of links and accessible, vibrant greenspaces throughout Thames Chase.**

The success of the Thames Chase project in creating new Community Woodlands and protecting and expanding greenspace and public open space across the landscape, means that huge areas of previously disconnected parcels of land are now inter-connected and provide safer off-road routes for people on foot, cycle and horse. Further, in addition to connecting communities, the green network of sites brings improved habitat connectivity which benefits nature and climate too.

Thames Chase also provides connectivity to long distance routes including the National Cycle Network (NCN), London Outer Orbital Path (LOOP), the Thames Path, and the England Coast Path and there is opportunity to connect these to the Thames Chase Forest Circle.

Access and Connectivity can also be enhanced by establishing strategic gateways and hubs that serve the primary road network, urban areas, and link with public transport. These can serve to better connect visitors and communities to Thames Chase and provide for public recreation with greenspace, information points, picnic areas, or perhaps a visitor centre with catering, toilets and interpretation.

In addition to acknowledging connectivity between sites across Thames Chase, we also recognise that there is connectivity within sites too, in many cases, providing Access for All in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Thames Chase has always sought to reduce traffic by making some ‘quiet roads’ safer to use as Greenway links, whilst maintaining private access rights. Public transport services could connect with gateways, hubs and the Greenways network for a fully integrated system.

> “Since the inception of Thames Chase, the aim has always been to provide for informal access to the area on foot, cycle and horse.”

Access and Connectivity Core Actions, Funding, Partners and Indicators

Core Actions

Our Core Actions for the Access and Connectivity Programme are that we will work with partners, funders, landowners, and local communities:

A1: to improve geographic links between Thames Chase and the historic forests of Hainault Forest (managed by The Woodland Trust, owned by Essex County Council and in London Borough of Redbridge/Essex CC) Epping Forest (The City of London Corporation and Epping Forest District Council). This will improve connectivity, community engagement, and habitat creation and management

A2: to improve the Forest Circle (including connecting it to the Thames Path, England Coast Path and new urban and rural parts of Thames Chase); creating Tree Lined Greenways; and strengthening pan-forest links to neighbouring boroughs

A3: to create more and actively promote the network of access and connectivity opportunities across the Thames Chase area, including Greenways, Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and to use green and blue spaces and Community Woodlands to support this

A4: to connect strategic routes to Thames Chase e.g. Thames Path, LOOP, Sustrans National Cycle Routes, England Coast Path

A5: to increase the information about accessing Thames Chase and developing connections and relationships between the Thames Chase Forest Centre and other key visitor hubs and centres across Thames Chase

A6: to improve the access and visitor signage to Thames Chase sites

A7: to improve the setting and integration of towns into Thames Chase, with a focus on tree planting, recreation, and improving access

A8: to establish a bold vision for the future of the Beam Valley, Ingrebourne Valley and Mardyke Valley. This will seek to achieve nature conservation, access, landscape and recreation objectives, by coordinating the management of the rivers as part of their corresponding Catchment Plan, integrating the management of adjacent land and woodland, and improving collaboration between delivery partners

Core Funding

Our potential Core Funding sources that will have the biggest influence on the Access and Connectivity Programme will be:

- **Public Rights of Way** – Local and County Authorities
- **Catchment Partnerships (including the Environment Agency)**
- **Sustrans**
- **Sports England**
- **National Lottery Heritage Fund**
- **Thames Estuary Partnership**

Core Partners

Our potential Core Partners that will have the biggest influence on the Access and Connectivity Programme will be:

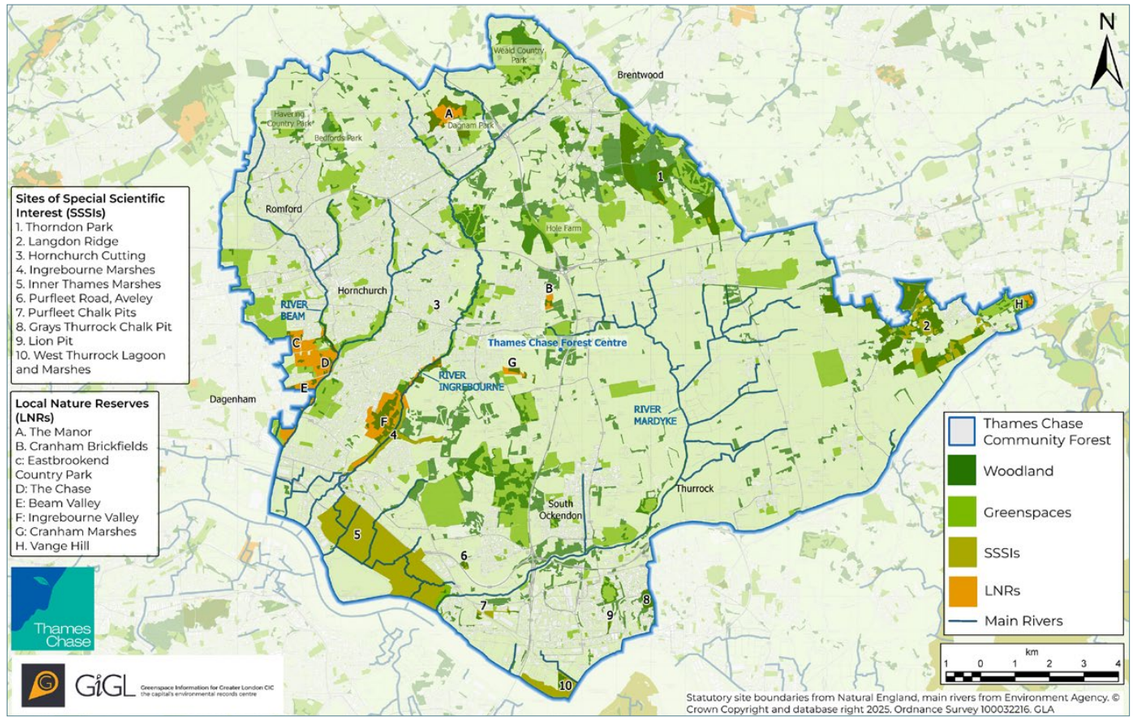
- **Local and Mayoral Authorities**
- **Visitor Centre Managers**
- **Forestry England**
- **Farmers and Landowners**
- **CPRE London**
- **Catchment Partnerships**
- **Sustrans**
- **Network Rail**
- **National Highways**
- **Sports England**
- **National Lottery Heritage Fund**
- **Public Rights of Way Officers**
- **Thames Estuary Partnership**
- **Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL)**

Core Indicators

We will monitor progress by using the following indicators from **Section 2.11**:

Thames Chase Plan (TCP) Indicator	Indicator No.
Km of access routes created	12

Rivers, Greenspaces and Connectivity within Thames Chase



Map produced by Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC on behalf of Thames Chase, October 2025

Map 4: Rivers, Greenspaces and Connectivity within Thames Chase



2.8 Programme 6 **Resources**

Introduction

Thames Chase and its partners have a long and successful track record in working together to unlock resources across the other five Programmes of Delivery. Often, Thames Chase has taken the lead. This is the case for the current Trees for Climate programme which is funded through Defra and which has substantially funded the team and contributed to transforming the organisation. In other cases, partners have led in providing resource such as The Woodland Trust and The Conservation Volunteers, which has provided free trees, access to corporate partnerships, and to new volunteers.

This new Thames Chase Plan builds on these achievements, increasing partnership working and attracting more resources. **This supports the Thames Chase Plan objective of enabling effective partnership working from national to local level to maximise the impact of available resources.**

Promotion is important in assembling resources. The Forest Centre complex has a key role to play in this whereby visitors to the Centre are made aware of the wider Thames Chase Community Forest, and engaged volunteers believe in the concept of Thames Chase and are committed to seeing it realised. Working in partnership with others builds collaboration and support and this can help to ensure that the relevance of Thames Chase is continually promoted.

The six Programmes of Delivery are clear and provide opportunity to work in partnership and secure resources. This is outlined in each corresponding section of Core Actions. Inward investment is possible through a diverse range of avenues including Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Corporate Partnerships, Grant Funding, the Forest Centre complex, Biodiversity Net Gain, Nutrient Neutrality, Woodland Carbon Code, Section 106 (s106) which is a legal agreement between a local planning authority and a developer, and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CiL) which is a charge that can be levied by the Greater London Authority and local authorities on new development in their area.

> “Working in partnership with others builds collaboration and support and this can help to ensure that the relevance of Thames Chase is continually promoted.”

Resources Core Actions, Funding, Partners and Indicators

Core Actions

Our Core Actions for the Resources Programme are that we will work with partners, funders, landowners, and local communities:

R1: to create effective partnerships helping to connect individuals and organisations to deliver and to maximise available resources. Continue to seek input from Essex and London Mayors

R2: to identify the regular big fundraising opportunities to build on the success of the Trees for Climate programme

R3: to manage Biodiversity Net Gain, Nutrient Neutrality, Woodland Carbon Code, s106 and CiL across Thames Chase

R4: to deliver the “strategic opportunities” for nature and woodland, meadow and river habitats in the Local Nature Recovery Strategies

R5: to create a funded programme of innovation and research across Thames Chase

R6: to embed the Thames Chase Plan in partners’ key strategies, plans and policies. Recent examples include Local Plans, Parks and Open Space Strategies, the London Urban Forest Plan, and the London Green Infrastructure Framework

R7: to explore opportunities for acquiring land across Thames Chase

R8: to increase the number of funded Trees for Climate, Countryside Stewardship, EWCO, WCPG and Agroforestry tree and hedgerow planting schemes in Thames Chase

Core Funding

Our potential Core Funding sources that will have the biggest influence on the Resources Programme will be:

- **Trees for Climate** – Defra
- **EWCO, WCPG, Countryside Stewardship, Woodland Carbon Code** – Forestry Commission
- **Forestry England**
- **Natural England**
- **Local Nature Recovery Strategy Funding** – Greater London Authority and the Essex Mayoral Authority
- **MoreWoods, Free Tree Scheme, Agroforestry** – The Woodland Trust
- **Sponsorship and carbon sequestration** – Corporate partners
- **Free trees and corporate partnerships** – The Conservation Volunteers
- **Annual contributions plus individual project and programme funding e.g. highways street trees, SuDS, PRoW** – Local and County Authorities
- **Catchment Partnerships** (including River Improvements – Environment Agency and Clean Water Funding – Water Companies)
- **Thames21**

- **Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)**
- **Landscape Recovery (LR)**
- **Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT)**
- **Thames Estuary Partnership**
- **Sustrans**
- **Network Rail**
- **National Highways**
- **Tree sponsorship** – One Tree Planted
- **BNG, Carbon** – Developers and Planning Authorities
- **Nutrient Neutrality** – Developers and Water Companies
- **Nature Based Solutions and SuDS** – Lead Local Flood Authorities
- **Sports England**
- **Funding via education and training budgets** – Schools, colleges and universities
- **Health Trusts**
- **National Lottery Heritage Fund**
- **National Lottery Arts Fund**
- **National Infrastructure Special Project (NISP) Mitigation Schemes**

Core Partners

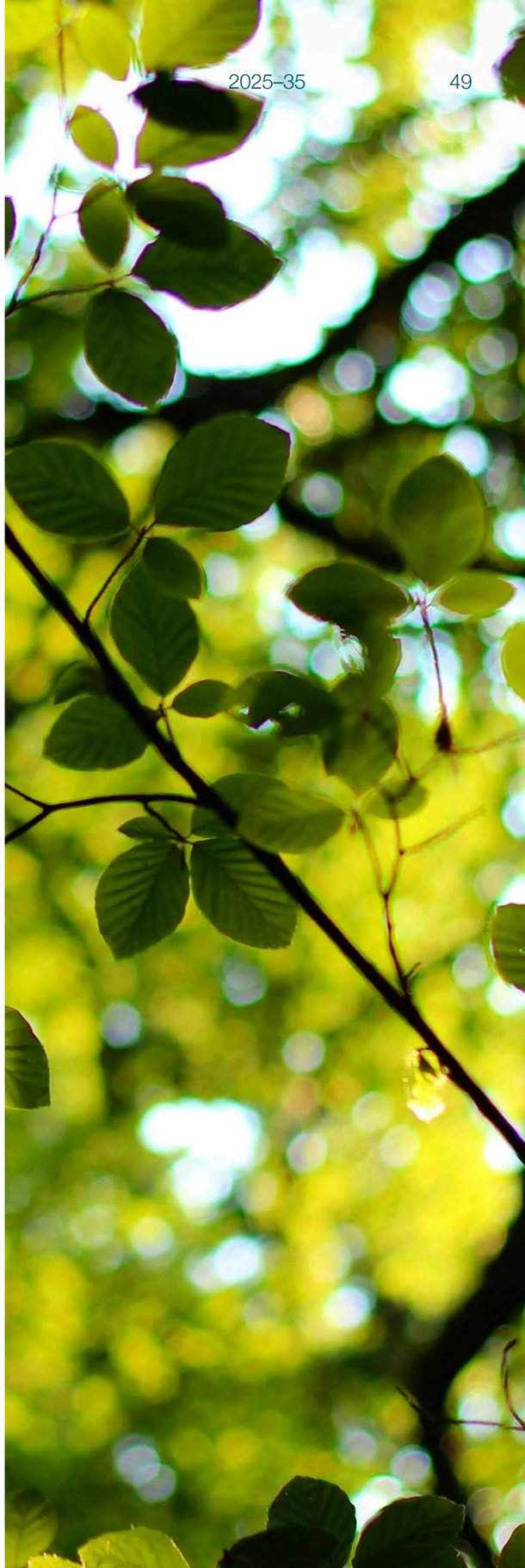
Our potential Core Partners that will have the biggest influence on the Resources Programme will be:

- **Defra**
- **Forestry Commission**
- **Forestry England**
- **Natural England**
- **Corporate partners**
- **Greater London Authority and the Essex Mayoral Authority**
- **Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL)**
- **The Woodland Trust**
- **The Conservation Volunteers**
- **CPRE London/The London Tree Ring**
- **Local and Mayoral Authorities**
- **Farmers and Landowners**
- **England's Community Forests**
- **Catchment Partnerships**
- **Essex Wildlife Trust**
- **London Wildlife Trust**
- **RSPB**
- **Buglife**
- **Thames21**
- **Thames Estuary Partnership**
- **Sustrans**
- **Network Rail**
- **National Highways**
- **Trees for Cities**
- **One Tree Planted**
- **Developers and Planning Authorities**
- **Developers and Water Companies**
- **Lead Local Flood Authorities**
- **Visitor Centre Managers**
- **Sports England**
- **Local communities**
- **Schools, colleges and universities**
- **Outdoor Activities Centres**
- **Health Trusts**
- **Historic England**
- **National Lottery Heritage Fund**
- **National Lottery Arts Fund**
- **Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA)**

Core Indicators

We will monitor progress by using the following indicators from **Section 2.11**:

Thames Chase Plan (TCP) Indicator	Indicator No.
Annual investment in Thames Chase (£)	13



2.9 Annual Delivery Plan (ADP)

The Thames Chase Plan provides the platform for delivery and creation of Thames Chase.

The Partnerships drive and implement delivery, and this is captured in an Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) of projects and initiatives, structured around the six Programmes that are in alignment with the six Objectives of the new Thames Chase Plan:

1. **Forestry and Landscape** (Thames Chase Plan Objective 1)
2. **People** (Thames Chase Plan Objective 2)
3. **Nature** (Thames Chase Plan Objective 3)
4. **Climate** (Thames Chase Plan Objective 4)
5. **Access and Connectivity** (Thames Chase Plan Objective 5)
6. **Resources** (Thames Chase Plan Objective 6)

Each Programme has a series of Core Actions which identify what the Thames Chase Plan will do and these will influence the creation of the ADP to be delivered across the local and county administrative boundaries. The ADP is created at the start of each financial year and seeks to identify the strongest priority projects and programmes for delivery over the coming year.

The ADP can also contain projects or programmes that are in the planning or development phase which might be taken forward the following year, or have the potential to be multi-year larger schemes and programmes. It will be a 'Live' document, which will allow for greater flexibility and for the Plan to be more responsive and adaptive to need and opportunity each year. It will include key project detail such as:

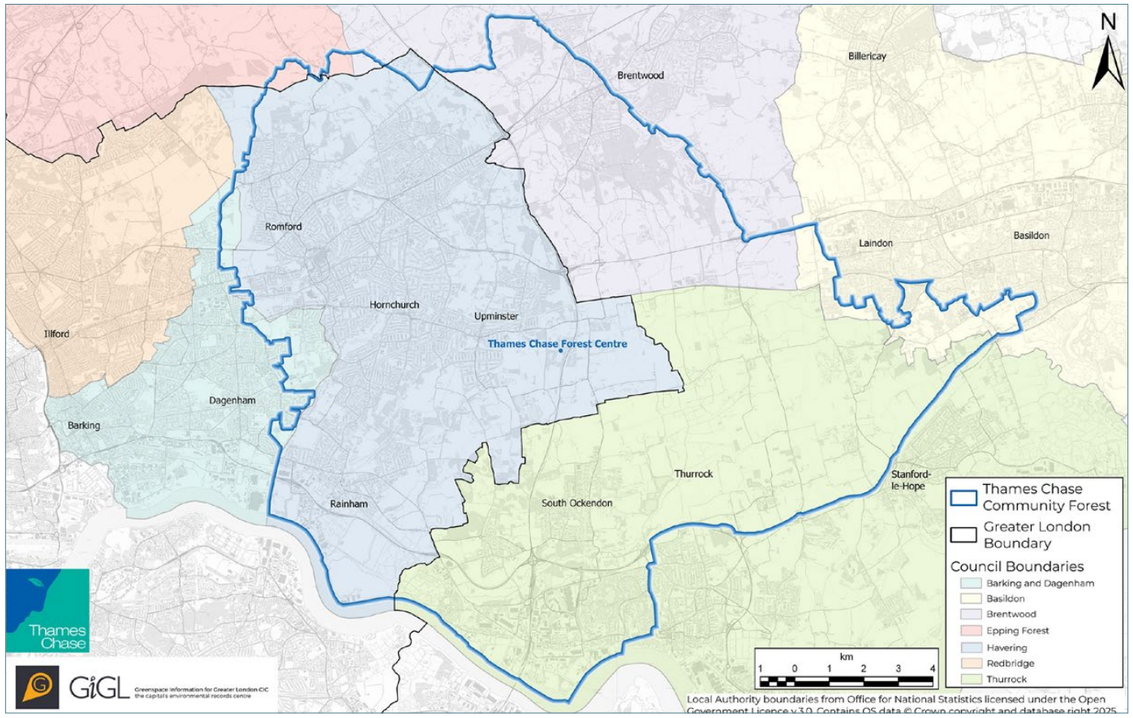
- **Location**
- **Description**
- **Size**
- **Timescale**
- **Cost**
- **Thames Chase Plan Programme Fit**
- **Lead and supporting partners**
- **Monitoring data**

The ADP will be monitored by the Thames Chase Trust Programmes Team, in close communication with the Thames Chase Strategic Partnership Board, and reported back to the Thames Chase Board of Trustees by the Director and/or Deputy Director.

Sections 2.3 to 2.8 identify a series of programme-specific Core Actions. These can be used to develop the ADP. Included at the end of each programme is a list of potential core partners, potential core funding sources, and the specific indicators to be applied that will feed into the Annual Monitoring Report.

2.10 Local and County Administrative Boundaries

Thames Chase



Map 5: Local and County Administrative Boundaries

The Annual Delivery Plan will be delivered across local and county administrative boundaries. At the time of writing, the Essex Authorities are in the process of Local Government Reorganisation and the creation of an Essex Mayor is programmed for 2026 and the new Unitary Authorities in 2027.

^ Map produced by Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC on behalf of Thames Chase, June 2025

2.11 Annual Monitoring Report and Indicators

The Thames Chase Plan provides the platform for delivery and creation of Thames Chase.

The Thames Chase Trust will produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) each year, recognising progress made in delivering the Thames Chase Plan. The report will be created by the Director and/or Deputy Director and approved by the Board of Trustees.

The gathering of data will be supported by working with key partners such as GiGL. For this reason, GiGL is listed as a Core Partner in many of the Programmes.

Whilst the AMR process for the Thames Chase Plan is specific to the Plan, it can also be used to support the Annual Report created by the Trust which focuses on the organisation as a whole.

The AMR can also provide evidence to funding partners that a return on investment is being achieved; to support new funding applications; for displays in the Visitor Centre; for use in newsletters and social media; and to encourage engagement with new sectors such as corporate partners. Further, working with partners, the AMR process can also embrace new technologies such as the use of static audio recording in wildlife monitoring.

The AMR will report on the following 13 Thames Chase Plan Indicators which are directly linked to the 6 Programmes (1 Forestry and Landscape, 2 People, 3 Nature, 4 Climate, 5 Access and Connectivity, 6 Resources):



Thames Chase Plan Indicator No.	Thames Chase Plan (TCP) Indicator	Thames Chase Plan Programme No.
1	Number of trees planted	1 4
2	Hectares of woodland created	1
3	Hectares of woodland in active management	1
4	Km of hedgerows created	1 4
5	Km of hedgerows in active management	1
6	Number of volunteers days	2
7	Number of volunteers	2
8	Number of events and activities	2
9	Hectares of non-woodland habitat created	3 4
10	Hectares of non-woodland habitat in active management	3
11	Km of rivers and waterways improved	3 4
12	Km of access routes created	5
13	Annual investment in Thames Chase (£)	6

Figure 8: Thames Chase Plan Indicators

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Appendix 1
What is a Community Forest?

The following text combines descriptions contained in the original Forests for the Community literature in the late 1980's and the most recent detail on the England's Community Forests website.

Community Forests – A change for the better
Community Forests are places on the edges of towns and cities located where the need is greatest and where most people live, work and travel, and where major environmental improvements will create well-wooded landscapes. Community Forests connect urban populations with the wider landscape and improve wellbeing, help tackle climate change and create places for nature. They are shaped by multi-agency partnerships, landowners, farmers and local communities for their own work and enjoyment and that of their children and grandchildren.

There are many benefits of Community Forests:

Environmental

- Protect existing habitats and create new ones
- Improve soil quality
- Increase flood mitigation
- Boost carbon sequestration
- Enhance biodiversity
- Cool and clean our air
- Improve landscape connectivity

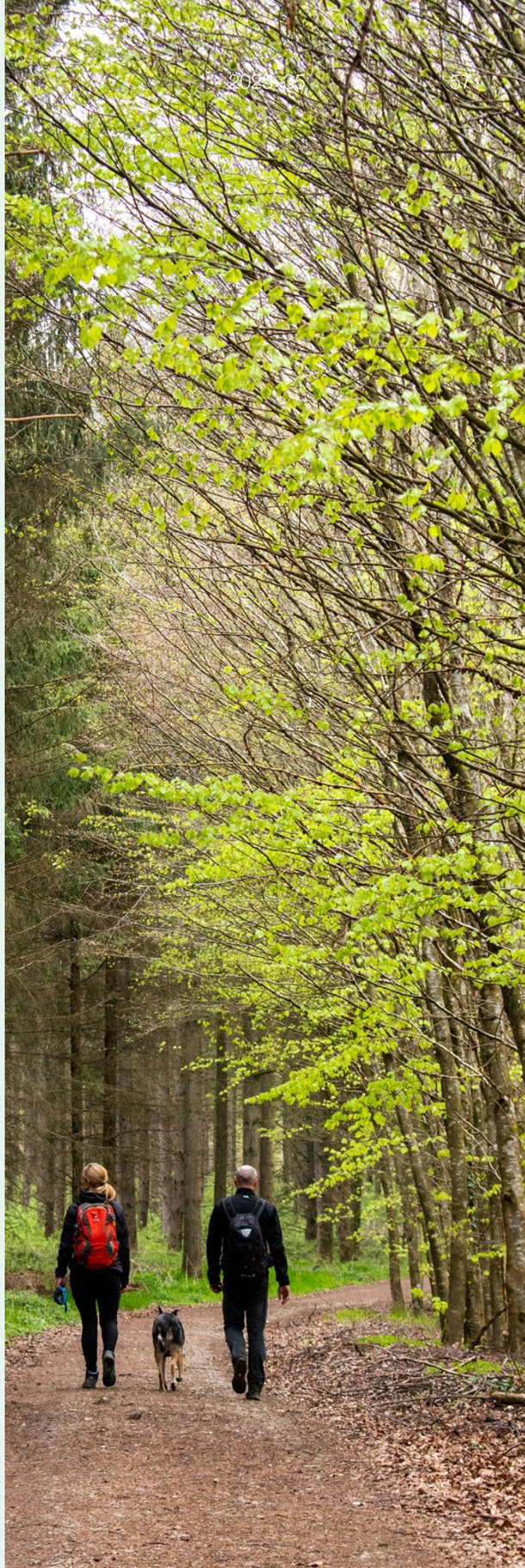
Social

- Improved aesthetics and grow a sense of place
- Increase opportunities for sports, arts, culture, recreation and leisure
- Deliver benefits to physical and mental wellbeing
- Provide opportunities for environmental education
- Encourage community engagement, volunteering, and access to nature
- Improve public places, encouraging access to outdoor spaces and parks

Economic

- Improve the prospects of the area and attract inward investment
- Drive to a leisure economy
- Create jobs
- Supply timber and other woodland products
- Increase the value of properties and businesses
- Trees Outside Woodland (TOW) make links to parks and open spaces
- encouraging sustainable transport

> "Community Forests connect urban populations with the wider landscape and improve wellbeing, help tackle climate change and create places for nature."



Appendix 2
The Benefits of Trees and Woodlands

Research has shown how trees provide a wide range of benefits to people, nature, climate, and environment.

In 2019, the UK Parliament declared ‘an environmental and climate emergency’. Trees and woodlands are amongst the most powerful natural assets we have in addressing both the biodiversity crisis and climate emergency.

Trees and woodlands provide many benefits, including:

People

- Improve mental health, reducing stress levels and promoting wellbeing
- Act as a barrier to the visual and noise impacts of the built environment, with the complexity and diversity of woodland promoting fascination and distraction from mental discomfort
- Benefit physical health, with lower indices of mortality, respiratory problems and health costs arising from air pollution in areas with a high proportion of woodland
- Lower indices of obesity and heart failure in areas with a high proportion of woodland, which may not be the case for other types of greenspaces
- Reduce harmful exposure to ultraviolet rays and heat-related illnesses
- Positively impact on levels of physical activity in urban areas, particularly for active travel and children’s play
- Benefit children’s cognitive and emotional learning through forest schools, with trees promoting a range of play-based behaviours
- Bring more character, attract more visits and drive higher customer expenditure in shopping areas
- Generally increase property values where street trees are present
- Provide a range of cultural and aesthetic values, including archaeological and heritage features and inspiring artists
- Support livestock welfare through agroforestry by providing shelter

Social

- Support nature, with mature woodland and woodland remnants on farms shown to be particularly important for biodiversity
- Benefit pollinators and natural predators in arable farms
- Benefit aquatic biodiversity by reducing river temperatures

- Lower the risks of surface water flooding and run-off in urban and rural areas, helping to prevent flooding and improve water quality
- Improve soil health by reducing soil erosion and compaction
- Sequester substantial amounts of carbon in biomass and soils, and in urban trees
- Reduce urban air pollution by absorbing gases, capturing particulates and altering ambient airflow
- Mitigate the urban heat island effect
- Reduce energy consumption for heating and cooling buildings by providing shade, reducing wind exposure, and through the cooling effects of water evaporation



Appendix 3
About the Thames Chase Plan

What is the Thames Chase Plan?
The Thames Chase Plan is the Thames Chase Trust's overarching strategy for the Thames Chase Project and provides a mechanism for bringing together the vision and objectives and providing a framework for turning this into reality through partnership working. This is the Project's fourth Plan, with three previous versions being published in 1993, 2000, and 2014. We aim to refresh our Forest Plan every ten years.

The Forest Plan directs and drives delivery; the Partnerships steer and implement delivery; and this is captured in an Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) of projects and initiatives. Creation and monitoring of the ADP is managed by the Thames Chase Trust Programmes Team and delivery is achieved by the Trust, partners and stakeholders (identified in the ADP as 'Lead' or 'Partner' in each specific project). Each one of England's 15 Community Forests has an approved Forest Plan.

Who is the Thames Chase Plan for?
The Thames Chase Plan is principally a strategic document, however, the audience is diverse. The Plan is ultimately for anyone with an interest or stake in Thames Chase. It should serve to promote, raise awareness, connect and engage, facilitating the formation of positive working relationships and partnerships. The Plan should be a conduit to connect with Thames Chase.

It can be used by individuals wishing to learn more about their local Community Forest; by members of the local community exploring ways in which to engage with the Forest; by strategic partners and funders who engage with the Thames Chase Trust to enable delivery of Thames Chase; by Planning Officers needing to understand the relationship between the Plan, their Local Plans and the National Planning Policy Framework; and by Corporate and Statutory partners.

Who is responsible for the delivery of the Thames Chase Plan and who owns it?
The overall responsibility rests with the Thames Chase Trust as the owner of the Plan (although anyone that engages with Thames Chase, and in turn the Plan, has a stake in it). The Trust approves the final version, and this is taken to the Thames Chase Strategic Partnership Board, in its role as Advisory Group for the Plan, to begin the process of creating the Annual Delivery Plan.

> "The Thames Chase Plan should serve to promote, raise awareness, connect and engage, facilitating the formation of positive working relationships and partnerships."

Appendix 4
History of the Thames Chase Landscape

The Thames Chase area comprises various geological zones. The Boulder Clay Plateau forms a pronounced ridge, running in a north-easterly direction towards Colchester. Below the plateau, the land slopes to the Clay Plains, where London Clays form an extensive plain. Further south and west, the sands, gravels, and brickearth of the Thames Terraces were deposited by a prehistoric River Thames.

Throughout Thames Chase, the soils are predominantly acid, and reasonably fertile. They are drained by three main river systems – the Beam, Ingrebourne, and Mardyke – flowing southwards across gently sloping land, mostly less than 20 metres above sea level.

Analysis of ancient pollen samples has revealed how Thames Chase probably looked 5000 years ago. Then, the wooded ridges were dominated by small-leaved lime, with oak, hazel, elm, pine, beech, ash, and hornbeam; and lower wetter areas perhaps by carr woodland of sallow and alder.

Much of the better land was probably cleared of trees by the Iron Age (100BC–40AD). In its place a 'planned landscape' of fields provided for the agricultural needs of early people. The extensive pattern of their boundaries is the most important historic feature of the area.

Since the turn of the last century, the fortunes of agriculture have not been the only influences on the land. The fragmentation of farm holdings that followed the agricultural decline of the 1890's accelerated the appearance of smallholdings, as well as piecemeal building development. Development pressure continues with new housing developments, light industry, mineral extraction, widening of the M25, and the granting of development consent to build the Lower Thames Crossing, which will cut through the Thames Chase landscape. The Thames Chase Trust will need to prepare, and where possible mitigate for, such developments in Thames Chase. The need for unity and strength in partnership is ever more important in this phase of the creation of Thames Chase.

More information on the history and character of the Thames Chase landscape can be found in the 2014 Thames Chase Plan **www.thameschase.org.uk.**

Appendix 5
Development of the Thames Chase Area

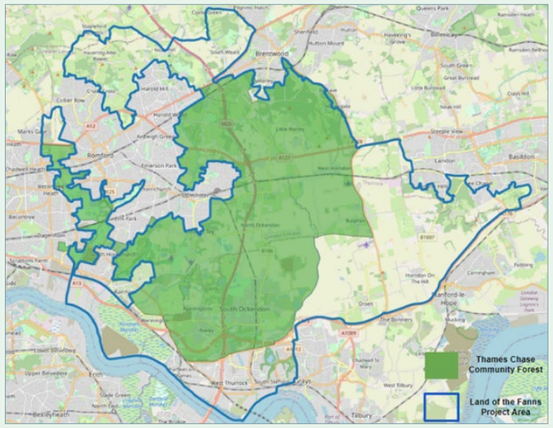
Thames Chase has, in partnership, developed greatly during its first 35 years. When it was launched in the summer of 1990, it covered an area of 38 square miles. This was soon to be increased to 40 square miles and it remained on this footprint for many years.

Thames Chase remains just as relevant today. In 1990 we pioneered Community Forestry in this landscape and in 2025, with the continued support of our many stakeholders, we are still here, delivering against international, national and local agendas.

The Thames Chase Trust was established as a charity in 2006 (Charity No.1115627) in support of Thames Chase. The financial crisis in 2008 jeopardised the Thames Chase project and through the dedication and hard work of partners and the formation of the Thames Chase Trust, we managed to survive.

In 2016 the Trust was successful in its bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to secure £1.3m funding to create the Land of the Fanns Landscape Partnership Scheme. This scheme was designed to give the Thames Chase landscape a much needed boost, to reconnect communities with their landscape, and support the work of the Trust. The scheme ran between 2017 and 2022 and was a great success, with total investment of over £2m of grant funding in support of a varied programme of projects. The Thames Chase Trust is the Legacy Body for the scheme.

Although the Land of the Fanns project footprint overlaid the Thames Chase area, it operated beyond the Thames Chase boundary on a footprint of 70 square miles. In accordance with its Legacy Body role, Thames Chase adopted this footprint and which has been adapted further, in agreement with the Thames Chase Strategic Partnership Board, to create the 98 square mile boundary that we know today. (See **Map 1**).



Map 6: Previous Thames Chase Area in Relation to Land of the Fanns Project Area

Appendix 6
How is Thames Chase managed?

The Thames Chase Trust is the responsible charitable body for Thames Chase.

It exists to promote, for the benefit of the public generally, any charitable purpose within the east London, south-west Essex, and Thames Gateway areas of Thames Chase, connected with the enhancement and improvement, maintenance and protection of the environment and landscape, particularly around:

- trees and woodlands
- agriculture, industry and commerce (particularly for woodland and forestry)
- improving derelict land
- providing facilities for recreation and leisure, particularly for woodland
- developing facilities for convenient routes and modes of transport for cycling, walking and horse riding and access to visitor facilities
- educating the public in environmental matters promoting the arts within woodland and natural environments
- promoting the ecology and use of the natural environment
- promoting the conservation, enhancement and improvement of the environment and to educate the public in the importance of sustainable development (that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs)

The continued development of Thames Chase is driven by the Trust's overarching strategy: **The Thames Chase Plan.**

The Thames Chase Plan is used to promote the aims and objectives of the Trust and Thames Chase, to engage stakeholders, and to encourage and facilitate delivery and implementation.

Partnership working is essential in creating Thames Chase. The Trust's staff team works with a diverse range of volunteers from across Thames Chase's communities, covering conservation, education, events, and the Forest Centre.

Further, positive relationships have been developed with strategic partners (engaged through the Thames Chase Strategic Partnership Board) and new partners such as organisations from the corporate sector and the national England's Community Forest network.

An Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) guides project and programme delivery year-on-year and an Annual Monitoring Report records progress.

Appendix 7
Placemaking and Planning

The Thames Chase Plan and Thames Chase are closely aligned with National policies, planning and placemaking.

The government's 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP)
The 25YEP explicitly supports Community Forests. It states: 'they can play a leading role in urban tree planting, to bring trees and green infrastructure to towns and cities across England. The 25YEP 'puts the environment at the heart of planning and development, to create better places to live and work', and seeks 'high environmental standards for all new builds' and 'wants to establish strategic, flexible and locally tailored approaches that recognise the relationship between the quality of the environment and development'.

The National Design Guide (NDG)
The NDG is the government's practical guidance on how to create well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring, and successful. It emphasies the important contribution that nature makes to the quality of a place and to the quality of life. Paragraph 90 states: 'Nature contributes to the quality of a place, and to people's quality of life, and it is a critical component of well-designed places. Natural features are integrated into well-designed development.' The NDG also confirms the vital role that trees play in new developments.

Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework (NEGIF)
The NEGIF was launched in 2023, delivering on a commitment in the 25YEP to support the greening of towns and cities and connections with the surrounding landscape. The Community Forest programme accords with this aspiration. The Framework describes green infrastructure standards (including access and urban tree canopy cover) and provides advice, including on trees and woodland.

The Environment Act 2021
As part of the Act, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory in England in 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990. The purpose is to ensure that developments result in 10% net gain for biodiversity. New trees and woodland established to contribute to the creation of Thames Chase can play a role in helping developers to meet their obligations under the BNG regulations.

The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023
The Environmental Improvement Plan is the first revision of the 25 Year Environment Plan. It sets out the target to 'increase tree canopy and woodland cover from 14.5% to 16.5% of total land area in England by 2050, with a new interim target to increase this by 0.26% (equivalent to 34,000 hectares) by 31 January 2028, in line with the trajectory required to achieve the long-term target.'

The England Trees Action Plan 2021–2024 (ETAP)
The ETAP outlines the government's vision for our treescape in 2050 and beyond, and provides a strategic framework for implementing the Nature for Climate Fund. The plan supports tree establishment through Trees for Climate funding, provided to England's Community Forests to create new woodland which is "planted and managed by, and for the benefit of, local communities, based on long-established Forest Plans, recognised by our National Planning Policy Framework".

The UK Forestry Standard 2024 (UKFS)
The UKFS defines the government approach to sustainable forestry and is applied to all woodland creation and management across the UK. It provides requirements and guidelines for sustainable forestry in terms of its contributions to biodiversity, climate, heritage, landscape, people, soil and water. The UKFS also sets out a basis for regulation and monitoring of these standards. Community Forests use the UKFS to ensure their woodland creation and Forest Plans meet legal requirements and wherever possible best practice requirements, such as community involvement in the planning process.

The Forestry Commission Strategy 2023–2028 (FCS)
The FCS states that "Trees need to be front-and-centre of responding to today's biggest challenges. Trees provide a uniquely versatile and proven solution to a range of today's problems, from reducing carbon in the atmosphere and creating habitats for biodiversity, through to supporting rural economies, providing timber and relieving the burdens on our health services". The FCS contains three clear goals: 1. More trees, more diverse species, growing and thriving; 2. Better managed woods and forests that are protected and improving; 3. Bigger benefits for nature, climate, people and the economy.

Appendix 8
Partnerships and Governance

The role of the Thames Chase Strategic Partnership Board (TCSPB)
To deliver the Thames Chase Plan by working in partnership to share knowledge, maximise resources, and deliver together. The TCSPB is the Advisory Group for the Thames Chase Plan and works closely with the Thames Chase Trust Programmes Team to create and deliver the Annual Delivery Plan.

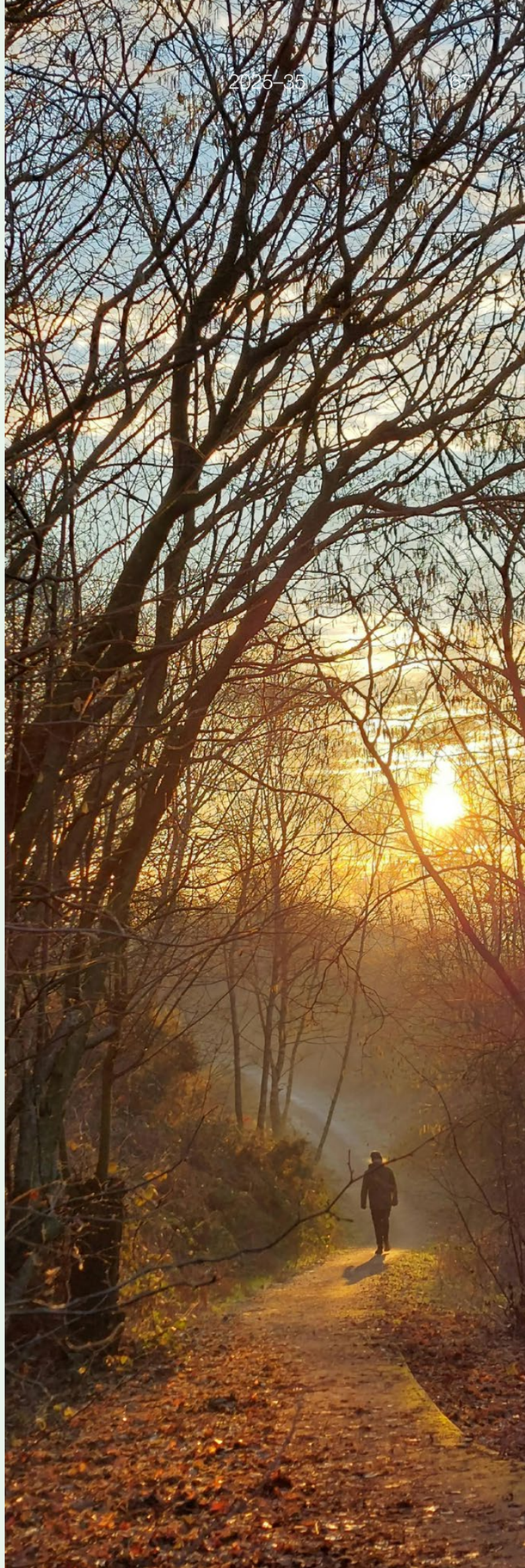
The current Thames Chase Strategic Partnership Board member organisations are:

- Basildon Council
- Brentwood Borough Council
- CPRE London
- Essex Wildlife Trust
- Essex County Council
- Essex LNRS
- Forestry Commission
- Forestry England
- Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL)
- Greater London Authority
- Historic England
- London LNRS
- London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
- London Borough of Havering
- London Wildlife Trust
- Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA)
- National Trust
- RSPB
- Thames21
- Thames Chase Trust
- Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP)
- Thurrock Council
- The Woodland Trust

The role of the Thames Chase Volunteers Forum (TCVF)
The TCVF exists to provide a single point of contact between the Trust's volunteers and staff teams. Further, it provides an opportunity to network and enables volunteer teams from across the Conservation, Education, Events, and Forest Centre teams to meet in one place.

The importance of the wider network of partnerships and initiatives:
In addition to engaging strategic partners through the TCSPB and operational partners, individuals and groups from the communities across Thames Chase, the Thames Chase Trust also engages with a wider network of meetings and initiatives including:

- London Urban Forest Partnership
- London Green Infrastructure Partnership
- Roding, Beam & Ingrebourne Catchment Partnership
- South Essex Catchment Partnership
- River Projects in London Group (RPiL)
- Essex Local Nature Partnership/Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- London Local Nature Partnership/Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- London Tree Ring Steering Group
- England's Community Forests Partnerships Working Group
- England's Community Forests Strategy Group
- London Rewilding Action Group
- London SINC Review Working Group
- England's Community Forests Trees for Climate Programme Board
- England's Community Forests BNG and WCC Working Group
- England's Community Forests Green Finance Working Group
- Havering Wildlife Project
- Nature for Climate Delivery Partners Group



Appendix 9
The Objects of the Thames Chase Trust

The objects of the Charity are to promote for the benefit of the public generally any charitable purpose within the east London, south-west Essex and Thames Gateway areas of Thames Chase, connected with the enhancement and improvement, maintenance and protection of the environment and landscape and in particular to:

- promote, provide and enhance woodland for the benefit of the public
- promote the general improvement of agriculture and industry and commerce, particularly in relation to woodland or forestry products
- promote and provide for the improvement of derelict land or harmful sites
- provide or help to provide for the general public facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure time occupation particularly involving the enjoyment of land and woodland as a public amenity (and in furtherance to help provide safe and convenient routes and modes of transport for the public, for safe cycling, and for the development of facilities including nature trails, reserves and sanctuaries, horse and cycle and footways, parkland and visitor facilities and car parks)
- promote community participation in healthy recreation by providing facilities for playing particular sports
- educate the public in environmental matters, in ecology and provide better appreciation of the environment and ways of better serving, protecting and improving the same and education and training in all matters relating to the environment and its interaction with the social and economic wellbeing of the community
- promote the arts within the woodland and natural environments
- promote for the benefit of the public the ecology and use of the natural environment and all species living in it
- promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, enhancement and improvement of the environment and to educate the public in the importance of sustainable development in relation to all activities of the Charity. Sustainable development should meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and regard shall be had to the following factors, to social progress, which recognises the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; prudent use of natural resources and maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment
- endeavour to engage the participation of all sectors of the community in its activities



Appendix 10
Achievements — Case Study 1: Coxtie Green

Young livestock benefit enormously from in-field shelter. It protects them from the wind, the rain and intense sun. At Coxtie Green Farm, Maria and Mike Pereira are using tree planting to fulfill this need, whilst also boosting the variety of habitats found on their property.

Already in touch with the environment on their farm, which hosts a series of ponds, mature oak trees and historic hedgerows, the new tree planting has further enhanced the landscape and reconnected fragmented habitats. In addition to this, significant amounts of the planting will eventually be harvested, providing timber and an additional source of income for the landowners.

Trees for Climate was able to support this planting immensely. Over 3ha of new hedgerows with trees, woodland and eventual coppice was planted in winter 2024/25, amounting to 3,500 trees. This funding included contractor costs, planting and protecting the trees, as well as fencing, and will result in a stronger and more resilient landscape.

> “Over 3ha of new hedgerows with trees, woodland and eventual coppice was planted in winter 2024/25.”







Appendix 11
Achievements — Case Study 2: Castle Green

Partnership working is at the very core of what a Community Forest is. Underlying all their greatest achievements is a network of dedicated individuals and organisations who desire to improve the quality of the local environment, for people and wildlife. In the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, two large scale community planting projects have taken place which exemplify this network.

In winter 2024/2025, over 24,000 trees have been planted at Castle Green and Goresbrook Park, with dozens of members of the community attending multiple planting days, in all weathers. The hyper dense planting style, known as the Miyawaki Method, creates concentrated areas of woodland in our urban parks. These are of enormous benefit to wildlife, as well as creating “pop up forests” for visual impact for local users, improving mental health and wellbeing across the Borough.

The Trees for Climate grant was able to support the planting with both funding and staff time; creating maps, undertaking Environmental Impact Assessments and leading community planting days.

> “In winter 2024/2025, over 24,000 trees have been planted at Castle Green and Goresbrook Park.”





Appendix 12
Achievements — Case Study 3: Curtis Farm

Integrating farming and nature has system-wide benefits, both to nature and to the farm system on the land. George Young has embraced this approach since 2013, switching his farm from a fairly conventional cropping system to a cattle farm, with an approach which incorporates nature into his farm. And tree planting has been part of this change. He has planted thousands of fruit and nut trees already and is replanting historic hedgerows across his farm to restore old boundaries and create new ones.



Trees for Climate was more than able to support George with his plans, with the financing of over 4ha of woodland planting for winter 2024/25. These woodlands will provide a great benefit to wildlife, creating connecting corridors across the landscape, as well as helping to screen fields from a nearby road, reducing air and noise pollution for George's livestock.



> “These woodlands will provide a great benefit to wildlife, creating connecting corridors across the landscape.”

Appendix 13
Achievements — Case Study 4: Ardleigh Green School

On a cold and bright day in December, Thames Chase volunteers worked alongside the children and staff of Ardleigh Green School to plant 8 standard trees and a vibrant willow hedge to enhance their school grounds for wildlife and outdoor learning. This has been made possible by the Trees for Climate grant.

The children who were all very keen to get involved, helped with the whole process from digging the holes to planting the trees in the ground. The process included lots of fantastic learning and using practical skills too. It was important to ensure the hole was the right size to fit each tree's roots, compost was added before planting to add additional nutrients to the soil. The children helped to lower the trees into the ground, covering the roots with soil, a stake to support the tree and finally mulch to help the tree retain moisture. The species planted included Hornbeam, Silver Birch, and Alder.

The willow hedge was planted with Key Stage 1 children and creates a natural, living boundary to their Forest School area. The trees planted have created new areas of the school grounds to be used for Forest School and outdoor learning, further enhancing the holistic approach to outdoor learning adopted by the school.





Appendix 14
What are England's Community Forests?

England's Community Forests (ECF) is the leading woodland creation initiative in the country.

It is a diverse and growing network of 15 unique Community Forests, each working in partnership with their local communities, landowners and businesses to help nature recover and regenerate the landscapes in and around our largest towns and cities. ECF's work together to support each other and amplify their voice nationally.

ECF roots go back over 30 years, with Community Forests now forming the biggest environmental regeneration initiative in England. They are recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework and are highlighted as part of the Government's 25 Year Plan for the Environment, playing a key role in shaping woodland creation and nature recovery policy both nationally and locally.

ECF's provide free advice and support to landowners and land managers to help plan, fund, and plant new woodlands of all sizes in both rural and urban settings, drawing on local expertise and people power. Their long-term commitment to the areas in which we work is ensuring that trees and woodlands are at the very heart of communities up and down the country, unlocking countless benefits for people and planet.

The aims of England's Community Forests are:

- **Supporting regeneration and growth:** Making towns and cities more attractive places in which to live, work and do business; attracting new investment and creating jobs.
- **Supporting local communities:** Harnessing the enthusiasm, commitment, and knowledge of local people; helping them improve their local area and enhancing health and wellbeing.
- **Creating better places:** Enriching and enhancing biodiversity and the environment, creating new facilities for recreation and leisure and making our towns and cities more sustainable and resilient to a changing climate.

England's Community Forests work in and around our towns and cities where most people live, work and travel and where the need is greatest. They connect urban populations with the wider landscape to improve wellbeing, help tackle climate change and create places for nature.

Proud to be part of

England's Community Forests



Map 7: England's Community Forests

Appendix 15
Acknowledgements

This Plan has been produced in partnership and consultation with many stakeholders in Thames Chase.

Thames Chase Trust would like to thank:

- Basildon Council*
- Brentwood Borough Council*
- CPRE London*
- Essex County Council*
- Essex Local Nature Partnership/Local Nature Recovery Strategy*
- Essex Wildlife Trust*
- Forestry Commission*
- Forestry England*
- Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL)*
- Greater London Authority*
- Historic England*
- London Borough of Barking and Dagenham*
- London Borough of Havering*
- London Local Nature Partnership/Local Nature Recovery Strategy*
- London Wildlife Trust*
- Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA)*
- National Trust*
- RSPB*
- Thames21*
- Thurrock Council*
- Thames Estuary Partnership*
- The Woodland Trust*
- Thames Chase Board of Trustees
- Thames Chase Volunteers' Forum
- Thames Chase Staff Team
- England's Community Forest Network
- DEFRA
- Scott B Sullivan Associates

*Thames Chase Strategic Partnership Board (TCSPB) Member. The TCSPB is the Advisory Group for the Thames Chase Plan.

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Proud to be part of

England's Community Forests

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