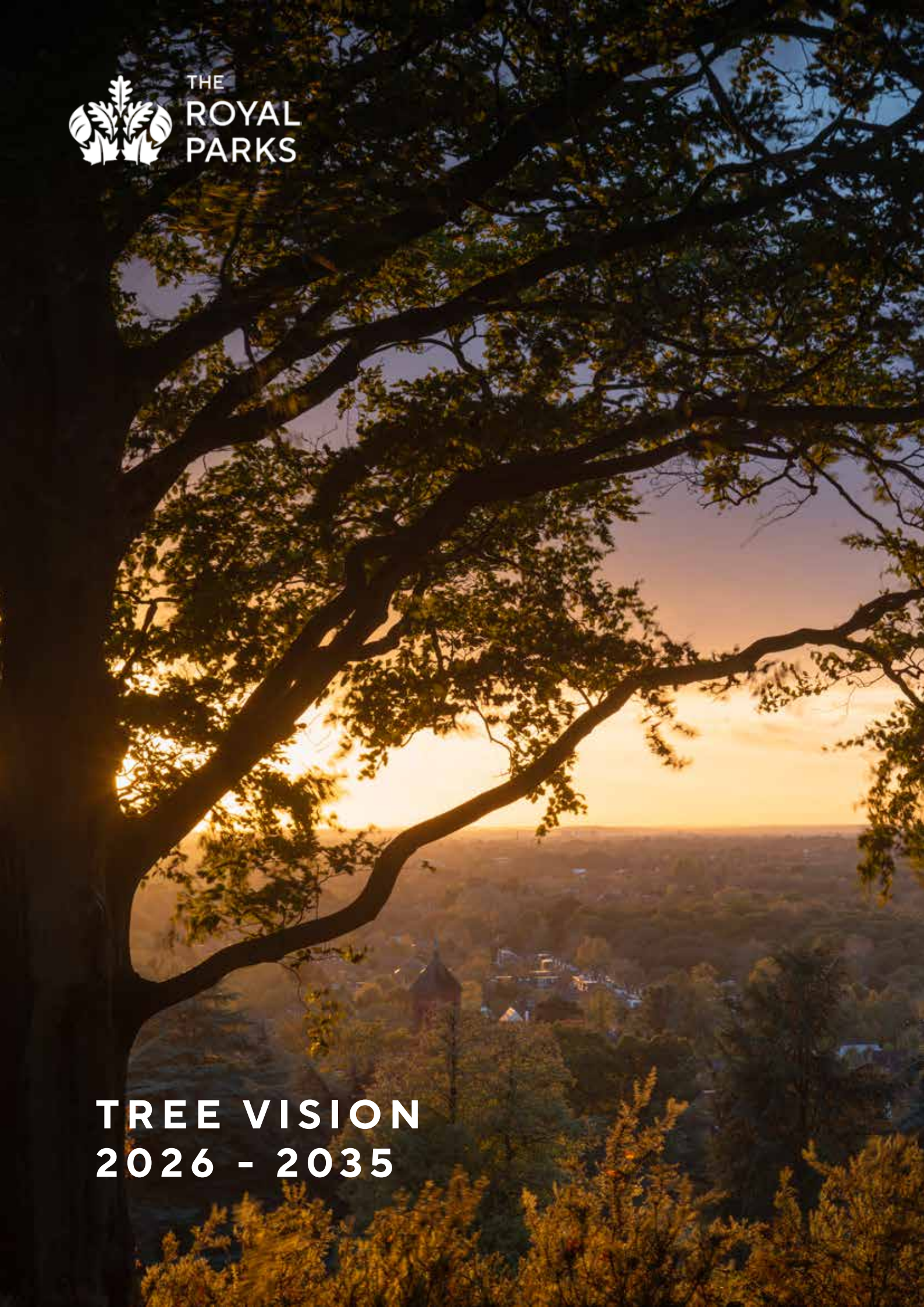
THE ROYAL PARKS



TREE VISION 2026 - 2035

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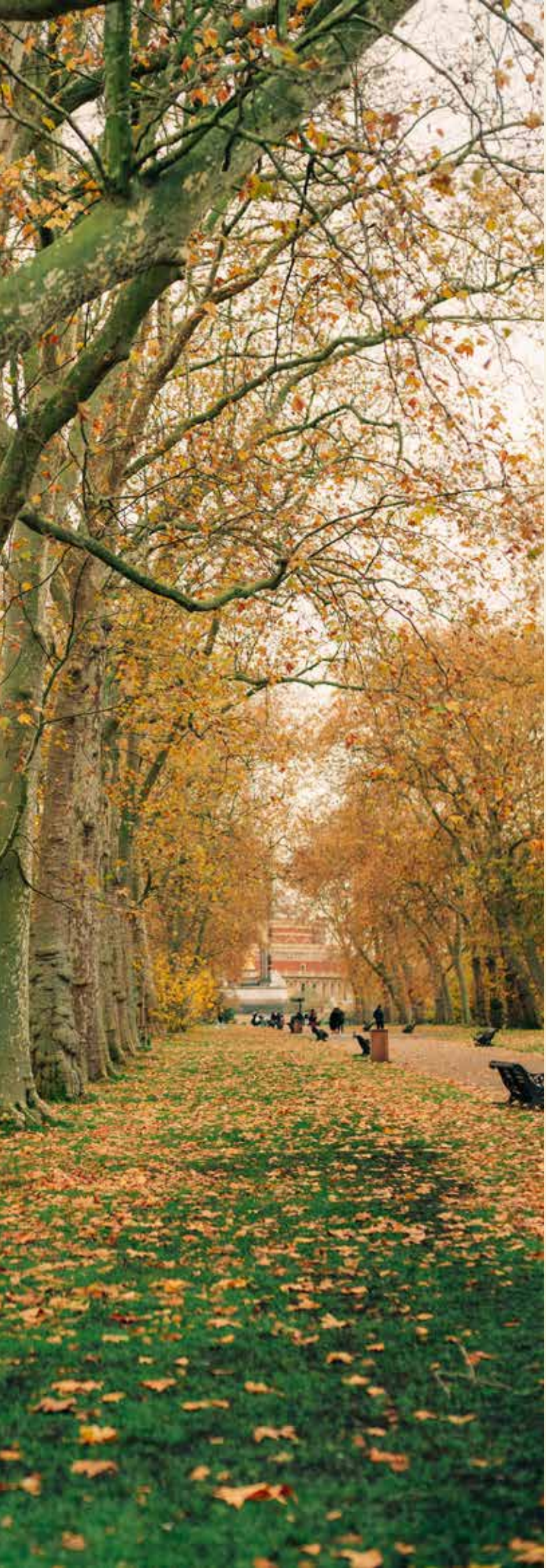


OUR VISION, PURPOSE & VALUES

OUR VISION

The Royal Parks' (TRP) vision is to provide free access to beautiful, natural and historic parks, which improve our quality of life, health and well-being – this is particularly important in a city environment.

OUR PURPOSE

The Royal Parks is the charity which manages, protects and improves the parks in an exemplary and sustainable manner so that everyone, now and in the future, has the opportunity to enjoy their natural and historic environments.

OUR VALUES

We are: Responsible, Excellent, Inclusive, Open, and Respectful.

CHARITABLE OBJECTS

Our charitable objects set out the main purpose of the charity, and what we aim to achieve. These are:

- To protect, conserve, maintain and care for the Royal Parks, including their natural and designed landscapes and built environment
- To promote the use and enjoyment of the Royal Parks for public recreation, health and wellbeing
- To maintain and develop the biodiversity of the Royal Parks
- To support the advancement of education by promoting public understanding of the history, culture, heritage, and natural environment of the Royal Parks
- To promote national heritage including by hosting and facilitating ceremonies of state

1.0 TREE VISION FOR 2035: AND BEYOND

The Royal Parks protects and conserves trees and woodland in our parks across London. To meet the challenges we face, our long-term aim is to diversify our tree population and improve the resilience of the existing trees in our landscapes, providing wide-reaching benefits to our visitors in the centuries to come.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

From the moment you enter one of the Royal Parks, trees inspire a sense of awe and surprise. They bring a sense of calm and wellbeing as well as lifting our spirits. Trees frame the unique landscapes of our parks and provide many benefits to our tens of millions of visitors each year by cleaning the air that we breathe, by giving us shade, as well as providing a home to countless species of wildlife. All parks contain a wide variety of native and non-native trees.

London's eight Royal Parks are a group of historic parks first dating from 1433. The Royal parks were created for leisure and hunting in the grounds of Royal Palaces in London. Since 1851 the Royal family have opened them for the public to enjoy. TRP also manage Brompton Cemetery and Victoria Tower Gardens.

Over a hundred thousand trees grow across 2038 ha. (5036 acres) of parkland and woodland. Ranging from the ancient oak trees in Richmond Park, pre-dating even the oldest of our parks, through to the magnificent plane avenues that characterise the central London parks. Trees planted today will, with care, become the veteran trees of the future. Few land managers are lucky enough to be able to consider policies and make decisions now that will have consequences in centuries to come.

In a time of climate change and more extreme weather patterns it becomes ever more important to maintain tree canopy cover across our parks and also recognise that bigger is usually better. In our expansive landscapes we have the ability to plant trees, that when mature, provide the large canopy volumes which are so important for shade and cleaning the air.

This document sets out TRP's strategic framework and guidance for managing the trees in the Royal Parks. Complementing the 2025 Sustainability Strategy and the 2020 Biodiversity Framework, it recognises that trees are part of the wider components of the landscape which includes grassland, shrub and scrub layers and woodlands. We recognise that each park landscape is unique. Each has a park management plan (PMP), and we are developing individual park tree plans to address the many issues and challenges that are unique to each park.

Trees deliver a wide range of benefits but also face threats such as those from climate change, pests and diseases, and the strategic framework recognises that trees can present risks.

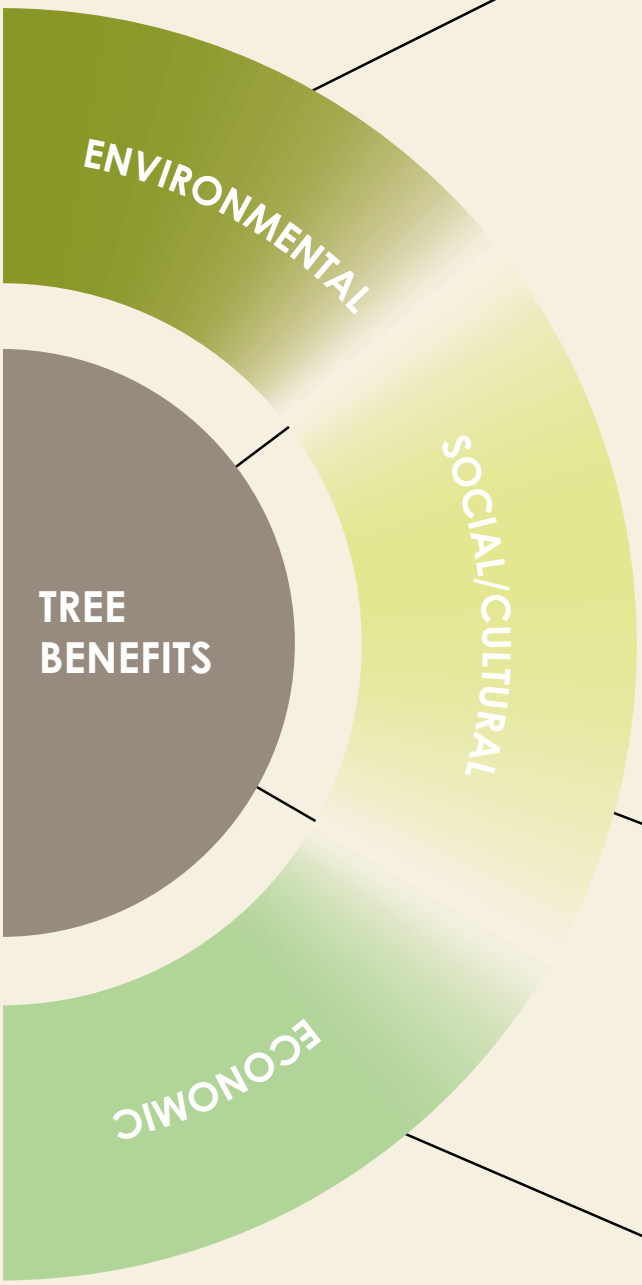
It will identify the key challenges faced and propose solutions and guiding principles to be drawn on when tree plans for individual parks are drafted.

We recognise that the trees we plant today will be most beneficial to future generations when the following maxim is followed: "The Right Tree in the Right Place." We will strive to ensure that the trees we need to establish for the future are carefully chosen by our skilled teams to ensure that these benefits are maximised.

Once this vision is approved in principle, then work will commence to prioritise the actions needed to deliver the outcomes identified in section 4 over the initial 10-year life of the vision.

Sources: TRP and London Urban Forest Resilience Project Report 2024 pp11.

Summary of the key benefits of, and challenges for trees in the Royal Parks: [1]



Collections of trees contribute to plant conservation and diversity.
Provide summer shade and absorb UV radiation.
Evaporative cooling reduces air temperatures in the summer.
Provide winter shelter.
Intercept rainfall, attenuate stormwater and reduce surface flooding.
Filter air and absorb pollutants – improving air quality.
Absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen.
Carbon storage.
Soil conservation through water infiltration and reduced soil disturbance.
Reduce erosion.
Reduce noise levels.
Support and increase biodiversity and habitats.
Provision of food through fruit and seed for wildlife and specifically deer.
Screen boundary development and reduce light spill.
Physical links to external sites – species and habitat connectivity.

Contribution to landscape character and distinctive aesthetic.
Contribution to the health and wellbeing to visitors.
Improved recovery rates from illness.
Promote social cohesion, improved concentration and productivity.
Form landscape features as individual specimens, groups and avenues.
Potential to become cultural icons – form links with the past.
Frame internal and external views of the parks.

Positively affect adjacent property values.
Reduce heating and air-conditioning costs as a result of cooling and wind reduction.

CHALLENGES

Shading of adjacent land and property.
Leaf fall in autumn can lead to slips and trips.
Tree roots can lift hard surfaces, leading to uneven pedestrian areas.
Tree roots can affect building foundations leading to subsidence.
Tree seed and pollen can cause health issues for some people.

3.0 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Our oldest trees are around 750 years old and contain irreplaceable habitats creating homes for many other species that have evolved over centuries. They provide a range of ecosystem services.

This vision provides the framework for the long-term planning needed to sustain our trees and landscapes. We need to plan for the creation of new generations of trees, more resilient to the changing climate and sustain them long enough for a proportion to become the veteran trees of the future.

We have considered a wide range of published documents and evidence. As the effects of new threats unfold over time, we will continue to collaborate with UK partners to understand how new evidence and knowledge can be used to further improve the resilience of our trees. We will also identify potential park and garden partners overseas from whom we may learn.

Our strategic priorities for action are:

a) Climate change.

b) Pests, diseases and biosecurity.

c) Historic legacy.

d) Landscape diversity.

e) Ecological enhancement.

f) Arboricultural interest.

g) Public health and safety – risks and benefits.

h) Management arrangements and resources.

The following section sets out each priority, the challenges we face and what we need to do in the future.

4.0 KEY CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

a) Climate change resilience:

Aim: To manage our trees and associated habitats, enhancing resilience and biodiversity, both now and in the future.

Predicted effects of climate change.

There are a range of scenarios for the rate of climate change in the UK during the rest of this century and the south-east of England is expected to see the highest rate of change. This will be exacerbated within London due to the urban heat island effect which can be up to 10°C warmer than surrounding rural areas[1].

We are already experiencing more extreme weather patterns and changes to seasonality, with trees coming into leaf earlier and staying in leaf longer. Average temperatures are rising, and winters are becoming warmer and wetter and summers drier, leading to waterlogging and drought. We are experiencing more frequent storms with high winds at times when trees are still in leaf, which results in increased, often terminal, physical damage to trees and risk to the public.

To adapt to these changes and create more resilient landscapes, we will require a more diverse range of tree taxa[2] selected for their ability to tolerate these forecast weather scenarios and which are suitable for local soil conditions.

Soil conservation.

Trees are reliant on the living soils that anchor and nourish them. Soils must be conserved to protect the invertebrates and mycorrhizal fungi within, that enable trees to grow to their full potential. In the park environment soils can be at risk from erosion and compaction, erosion is caused by ever growing footfall as well as increasingly from high rainfall events. Trees mitigate the risk of flooding by their uptake of water and slowing the flow of runoff. Soil disturbance should be minimised, and physical protection should be considered where the likelihood of exposure and loss is high.

Water conservation.

Changing weather patterns will affect the survival of many of our current trees. Surface rooting trees are vulnerable during summer droughts on the thin soils that largely cover our parks and others cannot survive periods of prolonged waterlogging. The availability of water to irrigate young trees will need to be planned for, with water capture and storage becoming standard practice, along with mulching of root zones to aid water retention.

Outcome a:
To achieve increased climate change resilience, we expect:

- To introduce a wider range of tree taxa to our parks.
- To conserve soils to the best of our ability reducing erosion and compaction.
- To plan for water capture and storage for future tree watering, aiding successful establishment.

[1]Source: Commons Select Committees 2018 – London Urban Forest Plan pp 14.

[2]Taxa: Trees within a taxonomic hierarchy including genus, species, varieties and cultivars.

4.0 KEY CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

b) Pests, diseases and biosecurity:

Aim: To prioritise healthy trees, we will deliver best practice to manage existing pests and diseases, while also reducing the risk of importing new pests and diseases.

Historic light touch regulation has led to an increase in new species, some of which harbour pests or diseases, some of these are regarded as invasive. Many of these, such as oak processionary moth or sweet chestnut blight, are classed as pests and diseases. The damage caused by pests and diseases is exacerbated by the effects of climate change. This is because changing weather patterns cause increased stress on trees which makes them more susceptible to all pests and diseases. TRP will collaborate with partners across government to monitor current and future threats. The list of pests and diseases managed by TRP can be seen opposite. Managing these existing pests is expensive, for example the cost of controlling ***Massaria*** of plane was £204k in 2023/4, but the cost of not managing them could be considerably higher. There are many other potential threats including canker stain of plane which has reached Paris and ***Xylella*** which is present in Italy and Spain, both of which could devastate our landscapes if established in the UK.

Healthy trees grow more vigorously and are likely to live longer and deliver more benefits to the environment. The management of our existing trees is of equal importance to the establishment of new trees. In each park, a few taxa form the majority of trees, but there is significant diversity within each park which gives us an opportunity to evaluate the performance of many taxa which might become more prominent in future planting. We will seek advice, and work with partners to introduce new taxa across our parks and regularly evaluate their performance. We will adopt best biosecurity practices, for example by the purchase of trees from suppliers that meet the 'Plant Healthy' standard, or other nurseries that can demonstrate that they meet an equivalent standard that satisfies our biosecurity policy. Realistically not all new taxa will thrive in the future, but this should not prevent us from experimenting and sharing our experiences with others.

TRP works actively with DEFRA and its agencies' plant health specialists[3] on a range of pests and diseases. We participate in a range of research projects that aim to understand and mitigate the impacts of pests and diseases. DEFRA regularly publishes a list of potential threats that might affect UK trees and TRP regularly reviews this and responds by adopting the best possible biosecurity protocols.

Outcome b:
To prioritise healthy trees, we will deliver best practice to manage existing pests and diseases, while also reducing the risk of importing new pests and diseases.

- To actively manage pests and diseases with the aim of maintaining healthy trees across our parks.
- To increase the diversity in tree taxa to reduce the impact of future pests and diseases.
- To maintain exemplary standards of biosecurity and participate in national and regional initiatives and research that help to mitigate risks.
- To monitor national guidance regarding current and future pests and diseases to identify threats and act accordingly.

[3]APHA - Animal and Plant Health Agency, FERA – Food and Environment Research Agency, FC – the Forestry Commission including FR - Forest Research.

List of current pests and disease affecting The Royal Parks

NAME	SPECIES AFFECTED	PARKS PRESENT
Horse chestnut bleeding canker	*Aesculus hippocastanum*	All
Massaria	*Platanus x hispanica*	All
Oak processionary moth	*Quercus robur/petraea*	All
Acute oak decline	*Quercus robur/petraea*	All
Phytophthora of sweet chestnut	*Castanea sativa*	Greenwich Park
Chestnut blight, *Cryphonectria parasitica*	*Castanea sativa*	Hyde Park, Greenwich Park
Oriental chestnut gall wasp	*Castanea sativa*	All
Chalara ash dieback	*Fraxinus excelsior*	Probably all
Holm oak scale, *Nidularia pulvinata*	*Quercus ilex*	Brompton Cemetery
Plane lace bug, *Corythucha ciliata*	*Platanus x hispanica*	Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens
Hornbeam decline, *Cryphonectria carpinicola*	*Carpinus betulus*	Richmond Park

4.0 KEY CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

c) Historic legacy:

Aim: To conserve the historic structure of our landscapes, we will develop best practice to ensure that historic features are conserved.

Historic England lists the main parks and Brompton Cemetery as Grade I (The Green Park Grade II) on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. This recognises their world historical role as designed landscapes, shaped by royalty, famous designers, Londoners and gardeners over many generations creating a prodigious legacy. We have a duty to conserve and enhance the Royal Parks' landscapes and radical change in the appearance or purpose is undesirable. We must also protect the archaeology that underpins the landscape as well as listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments in some parks. However, we need to prepare for a future where change may arise out of necessity due to the impacts of climate change or pests and diseases. Each park is considered to be a unique landscape with specific challenges and therefore individual tree plans will be developed to address the specific requirements of each park.

PARKLAND

Avenues and lines.

All the parks contain impressive avenues and tree lined roads. Seen across the whole estate there is extensive diversity of taxa such as plane, lime, horse chestnut, Norway maple and walnut. However, in St James's Park and The Green Park, the avenues are entirely of mature London plane.

Any decision taken on the future of an existing avenue can only be taken after a thorough consideration of all the circumstances at the time involving all internal and external stakeholders.

One way of reducing the difficult decisions needed in future avenue replacement is to generally avoid replacing lost trees in existing avenues as these often fail to establish well due to the proximity of adjacent trees and overshading, or they become fully mature trees at a time when the rest of the avenue has declined warranting full replanting.

Avenue diversity.

If opportunities for creating more avenues or lines arise, then the trees chosen should aim to enhance diversity and be likely to thrive in the forecast future climate and be of sufficient stature and form to complement the large scale of our landscapes.

Overplanting.

In certain areas, overplanting can interfere with the delineation of landscape features and may cause poor quality trees to develop if the issue is not addressed. The aim is that all trees planted should have the space to grow to attain their full potential.

Single species loss.

The potential loss of a single species due to disease such as London plane or oak, must be addressed. Dutch elm disease caused a huge change to the park landscapes in the 1970s but elm was no longer present in avenues or lines, so the landscape impacts were less pronounced. The loss of London plane would severely impact all of the inner London parks, not only due to their landscape impact but the costs of remediation and replanting - the current iTree replacement value for plane in Hyde Park alone is calculated as £6.74 million. Likewise, the loss of oak in Richmond Park would see the loss of thousands of mature trees.

Views and vistas.

One of the joys of visiting the parks can be the experience of suddenly encountering a view whilst travelling through the landscape. Some of the views are of such importance that they enjoy statutory protection such as the views to St Paul's Cathedral from Richmond and Greenwich Parks and Primrose Hill, or the Palace of Westminster from Serpentine Bridge. Other views are protected in Local Authority plans and views within the parks are identified and embedded in Park Management Plans. All need careful conservation if they are to be enjoyed by future generations and tree establishment and management must reflect this.

In some areas action will be required to maintain or re-open views that are in danger of becoming obscured by vegetation. Trees may need to be removed that have inadvertently been planted or self-seeded within viewing corridors or are preventing the successful establishment of existing landscape features.

Views through and beneath tree canopies may also lead the eye to wider park landscapes and these can become obscured if tree canopies are not lifted.

Commemorative and sponsored planting.

From time-to-time TRP receives requests from government or other stakeholders to plant trees singly, or in numbers, to commemorate significant national, local or personal events. These should only be considered if planting proposals are in line with the individual park management and tree plan for that park.

WOODLAND

Whilst mainly absent as a feature of the inner London parks, woodlands form important landscape features and distinct habitats in the outer parks.

Woodland management.

Most woodland has a distinct character. They are often dominated by one or two species (oak and sweet chestnut) and tend to be single aged and lacking in understorey flora. The impacts of ageing, disease and pests such as the grey squirrel, mean that many require intervention and, following surveys, individual management plans are proposed for all woodland areas as an outcome of individual park tree management plans.

Resources to manage woodland areas have not always been available and can result in new planting remaining unthinned and unable to flourish.

In planning future woodlands, it is important that both the appropriate financial resources and skills are available at the outset to enable them to become properly established.

Hedges, shelter belts and boundary screens.

Historically, hedges were not a significant feature in the wider landscape of our parks but, in recent decades, more perimeter hedges have been introduced to help screen features and benefit wildlife. Within the parks, shelter belts may be planted to lessen the visual impact of features such as car parks. Most parks have densely planted belts of trees that are designed to reduce the impact of surrounding buildings and roads.

Hedges represent an opportunity to enhance biodiversity by being planted with a wide range of mostly native species which benefit birds and invertebrates.

Hedges require maintenance and either laying or periodic thinning if they are to achieve full potential.

Hedges connect landscapes across parks and provide important wildlife corridors.

Boundary screens provide the essential green barriers that allow visitors to enjoy the park landscape away from the busy distractions of urban areas.

Outcome c:
To conserve the historic structure of our landscapes, we will develop best practice to ensure that historic features are conserved.

- To produce individual park tree management plans.
- To conserve the current appearance of our parks as much as possible.
- To protect underlying archaeology and scheduled ancient monuments from damage.
- To avoid infilling gaps in existing avenues and lines.
- To diversify the variety of trees in avenues and lines where opportunities arise.
- To plant trees only where conditions allow them to grow to their full potential.
- To consider the risks and impact and plan for the loss of a single dominant species.
- To identify current views and ensure they are retained and protected from becoming obscured.
- To undertake commemorative tree planting only where the proposals fit with Park Management Plans and individual park tree plans.
- To identify current areas of woodland. Undertake condition surveys and produce management plans.
- To ensure the provision of resources and skills needed to manage woodlands in the future.
- To promote opportunities for hedge and screen planting to encourage connectivity for wildlife.

4.0 KEY CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

d) Landscape diversity:

Aim: To increase the diversity of trees in our landscapes and, over time, aim to reduce the dominance of single species planting in each park.

Diverse tree varieties.

Visitors to our parks enjoy an amazing range of different landscapes from the deer grazed oak wood pasture of Richmond Park to the formal plane avenues of St James's Park. This diversity of landscape style is to be celebrated and will be retained. Whilst numerically each of the parks tend to be dominated by a small number of tree taxa, in reality each park contains a significant diversity in tree taxa, which provides potential resilience in the face of future climate change. In Hyde Park for example, whilst plane and common lime account for 47.6% of the total tree count of 3714 trees, the next 8 most numerous taxa account for a further 26% of the trees. The remaining 26.4% consist of some 94 genus and species. When cultivars are added, records indicate that there are around 300 different trees in Hyde Park alone. This diversity helps us to evaluate trees that may perform better in a changing climate.

Diversity in park structure.

Trees form a part of the overall landscape of each park. Unplanned tree planting or natural regeneration can affect the balance between trees, shrubbery, understorey and grassland. It is for each park tree plan to evaluate what ratio of tree canopy spread to open space is appropriate and to manage future tree establishment with these objectives in mind.

- Each park requires analysis of the existing age structure, condition and taxonomic complements to enable establishment targets to be agreed.
- It should not be assumed that annual tree planting programmes are an automatic requirement. It is important to understand that well managed grassland and soils can lock up at least as much carbon as trees.

Outcome d:
To increase the diversity of trees in our landscapes and, over time, aim to reduce the dominance of single species planting in each park.

- To undertake assessments of current and predicted canopy cover for each park to inform future canopy cover targets.
- To ensure that tree establishment actively enhances habitats and supports the landscape character of each park.

4.0 KEY CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

e) Ecological enhancement:

Aim: To encourage the development of diverse habitats both within, and allied to, our trees.

Veteran trees:

Most of our parks contain veteran and some ancient trees and Richmond and Bushy Parks contain them in numbers that are of national significance, on account of the amount of saproxylic (dead wood living) invertebrate habitats they contain. These old trees are amongst the most valuable in terms of the biodiversity that they support and are both irreplaceable and beyond financial value. They will be accorded the highest priority in their management, and we aim to retain them for as long as possible. We will consider how best to ensure that younger trees become the veteran trees of the future – for example by reintroducing the practice of pollarding trees.

Dead wood management:

The invertebrate interest relies on a well distributed and continuously renewed source of decaying wood. In the more formal, designed horticultural landscapes of the central London parks, aesthetic considerations need to be balanced with the benefits that decaying wood provide. The residual amount of decaying wood and stumps will be treated differently from the wider more natural landscapes of Richmond and Bushy Parks. Opportunities to create this valuable habitat can be found in even the smallest parks by creating stumperies or log piles.

Associated parkland habitats:

While this vision is concerned with trees, it recognises that trees are part of wider habitats and need to be seen in the context of their relationship with understorey and grassland habitats along with the soils that sustain all life.

Partnerships:

We recognise that our treescapes are connected to wider landscapes across London and we work with a range of national and local organisations to ensure that all such landscapes will benefit from this vision.

Biodiversity Net Gain.

If our own developments must achieve Biodiversity Net Gain as part of their planning requirements, this normally takes the form of additional tree establishment in the Royal Parks to create additional habitat. This is small scale and manageable. However, if TRP is approached by other landowners or developers looking to offset the impacts of their developments elsewhere, TRP will indicate that setting aside land for high density tree establishment is not consistent with the aims of park management plans.

Outcome e:
Ecological enhancement: To encourage the development of diverse habitats both within, and allied to, our trees.

- To give the retention of veteran and ancient trees the highest priority.
- To manage younger tree generations to ensure that some will become the veterans of the future ensuring continuity of habitat.
- To manage parks to ensure aerial and grounded dead wood are continuously provided for wider biodiversity benefit.
- To manage trees to ensure they benefit as wide a range of other species of flora and fauna as possible.
- To manage tree habitats equally alongside other habitats.
- To work with a range of partner organisations to ensure that our trees deliver the widest possible benefits to communities and wildlife.
- To manage the parks solely for the benefit of the Royal Parks visitors and wildlife.

4.0 KEY CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

f) Arboricultural interest and quality:

Aim: To value and develop the diversity and quality of our trees.

Arboricultural diversity.

The parks collectively contain a huge diversity of trees of all ages, shapes and sizes. This diversity is welcome and provides some resilience to future threats, nevertheless many of our park landscapes are dominated by one or two species such as London plane and English oak. This is not something that can be changed in the short term, but our long-term aim is to achieve a more balanced distribution of tree taxa. It is known that larger trees sequester more carbon and remove more pollutants than small trees, therefore there should be a presumption that large trees should dominate the landscape.

Tree selection.

No-one knows precisely how climate change and pests and diseases will affect our trees, but, in part, it is reasonable to respond by creating landscapes with a broader range of trees. We will change the ratio of native to non-native trees over time to increase diversity. This will be a long-term process given the current dominance of maturing tree stocks.

In considering future choices, the current maxim of 'Right tree, right place' is relevant. To achieve improved diversity and resilience is challenging, but there is considerable published advice. The best current source of advice regarding tree selection is published by TDAG - 'Tree Species Selection for Green Infrastructure: A Guide for Specifiers' At present the UK market for tree supply is dominated by a few large nurseries whose product lines are focussed on the local authority street tree market and procurement should be based on as wide a choice of suppliers as possible.

There are many other lists published, suggesting trees which may be more resilient to future climate change. The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, have published a report on how climate change is likely to impact their landscape and what steps they are taking to make a more resilient landscape. TRP share many of these concerns. Most recently the GLA commissioned a report from the Urban Plant Lab entitled 'Future Climate Suitability of London's Public Realm Trees' which evaluates the future prospects of a very wide range of tree species currently found in London. There will need to be changes in the UK supply chain for tree procurement given the difficulty in procuring new varieties in the quantities and sizes needed for landscape scale establishment. Opportunities to acquire new varieties with a variety of provenances, for evaluation, growing on and planting should be taken within biosecurity protocols. We will consider what facilities on or off site may be required to propagate and grow trees on to a size suitable for planting.

Tree form.

Trees planted in our parks should be of an appropriate form and size chosen to complement the landscape. Fastigiate and variegated trees do not always sit well in the wider landscape, and their use should be restricted to carefully designed horticultural or formal locations. Trees that appear out of place with the surrounding landscape should be considered for replacement.

Native / non-native tree balance.

The balance between native and non-native taxa must be considered. Many of our key native species including oak, beech and birch are regarded as being at high risk due to climate change. Native trees provide the widest range of benefits to other native flora and fauna and therefore must continue to form a significant proportion of future establishment, albeit with a provenance carefully selected to offset climate impacts. Non-native taxa may offer enhanced resistance to climate change, and some are of similar form to our native species. They will be expected in time to form both a wider range of taxa, and, more likely, a larger overall proportion of trees in each park. Non-native trees may offer habitat to a range of other native species, but the extent of these benefits will only be understood after research. There are also some tree species that were commonly planted in the past which are now regarded as invasive species and landowners are under an obligation to manage them and regulate their spread. These include the honey locust and the tree of heaven.

Coniferous trees.

Apart from Scots pine, yew and juniper, there are no other native conifers, yet trees such as redwoods, cedar and swamp cypress are amongst the most impressive trees in our landscapes. In the future it is likely that a wider range of conifers will be planted across our landscapes to provide year-round shade and shelter.

Tree establishment and aftercare.

Trees that are not well established or cared for in early life can develop defects that pose higher risks to the public and cost more to manage in the long term. Their lives are shortened, leading to the loss of benefits that the largest trees deliver over their lives. In the future, we will increase our focus on formative pruning and canopy lifting necessary to improve individual tree quality and reduce the risk of obstructing views, vistas and sightlines near roads.

Management for the public. The lives of many trees are shortened by a combination of physical damage and compaction of tree roots. Shallow rooted trees such as birch, elm and beech are at risk from mower damage. Management regimes will be adjusted to reduce physical damage as far as possible using techniques such as reductions in mowing frequency, mulching with woodchip and leaf shredding in situ in most cases.

Extensive joggers' tracks are evident across the rootzones of many trees in the inner parks. In practice it is difficult to influence where people choose to exercise, short of physically blocking routes with fencing, but the use of bark woodchip is a practical solution.

Trees do not thrive when their roots are covered in tarmac and therefore establishment in areas of hard landscape must be considered with long timelines in mind, tree planting pits should be constructed according to current best practice to encourage root growth. No-dig and permeable surfacing is preferable when new surfaces for pedestrians and vehicles are specified. Opportunities to remove impermeable surfacing from existing tree root zones should be taken wherever possible.

Tree conservation.

TRP participates in tree conservation and consideration will be given to developing national tree collections in conjunction with Plant Heritage, where space allows and building on existing collections. This will also allow the evaluation in situ of a wider range of taxa suitable for future planting and contribute to the conservation of rare taxa.

Public engagement.

Many of our visitors are fascinated by, and have an abiding bond with, our trees. Through carefully curated programmes involving a range of media, we will provide education and information for our visitors to enable them to support and understand the benefits that our trees give and the reasons why we manage them as we do.

Interpretation.

We will decide the extent to which trees may best be physically identified to aid public understanding of the value of trees either individually, or as a part of a collection.

Outcome f: Arboricultural interest and quality: To value and develop the diversity and quality of our trees.

- To aim to increase tree variety across the parks while recognising that any significant shift in the composition of each park is a medium to long term aim.
- To select trees from an increasingly wide range of taxa (including conifers) that will be better adapted to climate change.
- To seek out and procure or propagate trees of a wider range of species and provenance and establish a nursery facility, on or off site to grow on trees to a size suitable for planting.
- To follow published best practice to ensure that tree diversity is maximised through the choice of the most appropriate taxa which provide the widest range of benefits.
- To ensure that the ultimate form and shape of trees is considered in any selection process to ensure compatibility with the surrounding landscape.
- To monitor and control the impact of invasive species.
- To ensure an appropriate balance between native and non-native trees is maintained in each park, recognising that species selection should address the ecological values identified in the TRP biodiversity action plan.
- To employ professionally qualified teams to ensure the highest standards of tree care throughout the life of each tree.
- To employ management practices that are designed to minimise the physical damage caused by public use.
- To contribute to national tree conservation through developing national collections in conjunction with Plant Heritage.
- To educate and inform our visitors about our trees and how they are managed. To engage with them through multiple media to build support and understanding.
- To agree the best method for identifying individual specimen trees or collections to enable better visitor understanding through labelling and tree walks.

4.0 KEY CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

g) Public health and safety – risks and benefits:

Aim: To manage our trees to ensure that healthy trees are prioritised and that a balanced approach to public risk is undertaken.

Duty of care.

TRP has a duty of care to maintain safe parks for our millions of visitors. This duty is managed by the arboriculture team who work in accordance with section 21 of the TRP health and safety system.

Risk management.

The parks are zoned according to public occupancy, and a regime of planned inspections and maintenance is undertaken. The benefits of trees to people and wildlife are considered and weighted alongside risk.

Industry wide guidance on risk.

TRP follows the guidance laid out in the September 2024 document by the National Tree Safety Group 'Common Sense Risk Management of Trees – Guidance on trees and public safety in the UK for owners, managers and advisors'.

Outcome g:
Public health and safety – risks and benefits: To manage our trees to ensure that healthy trees are prioritised and that a balanced approach to public risk is undertaken.

- To follow the management systems prescribed in the TRP Health and Safety Manual to deliver our duty of care to maintain safe parks for our visitors, employees and contractors.
- To regularly undertake and review tree risk assessments and risk zones of each park, considering the benefits that trees provide.
- To follow industry best practice in the form of The National Tree Safety Group 'Common Sense Risk Management of Trees – Guidance on trees and public safety in the UK for owners, managers and advisors. 2024'

4.0 KEY CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES

h) Management arrangements and resources:

Aim: To ensure that TRP continues to retain expert knowledge and provide the resources to manage our trees.

The management of our trees is undertaken by qualified arboricultural and park staff under the direction of the Director of Parks, supported by specialist consultants and arboricultural contractors.

To deliver the outcomes of this vision will require an appraisal of the current staff resources to ensure staff succession, allocations and technical skills are addressed.

The most efficient way of undertaking physical works to our trees will be kept under review whilst ensuring that external contractors possess the skills and equipment necessary to undertake the full range of tasks we require.

Outcome h:
Management arrangements and resources to ensure that TRP continues to retain expert knowledge and provide the resources to manage our trees.

- To employ professionally qualified arboricultural and park management staff, contractors and consultants to ensure the highest standards of service delivery.
- To regularly review staff qualifications, skill levels and training necessary to deliver services.
- To keep service delivery models under review to ensure the highest quality and best value services are delivered.

5.0 TIMETABLE FOR DELIVERY

Work will now commence to prioritise the actions needed to deliver the outcomes listed in section 4 over the initial 10-year life of the vision.

THE ROYAL PARKS

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