

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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| COMMITTEE | Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee |
| DATE | 9 May 2023 |
| EXEMPT | No |
| CONFIDENTIAL | No |
| REPORT TITLE | Trees and Woodland |
| REPORT NUMBER | RES/23/132 |
| DIRECTOR | Steven Whyte |
| CHIEF OFFICER | Mark Reilly |
| REPORT AUTHOR | Steven Shaw |
| TERMS OF REFERENCE | 1 |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the ongoing Council work to Aberdeen's public trees and woodland following the storms of 2021 and 2022.
- 1.2 The report also gives an update on Environmental Services' sustainability projects and initiatives undertaken to protect and enhance Aberdeen's public trees and woodlands including the work to deliver elements of the Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan.
- 1.3 This report also seeks approval for Environmental Services to explore funding options, including grants and sponsorship to help fund further tree planting programmes in Aberdeen.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Notes and endorses the information contained within this report; and
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer – Operations and Protective Services, to explore funding options, including grants and sponsorship to help fund further tree planting in Aberdeen.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Storm Damage Work

- 3.1.1 On 26 November 2021 Aberdeen experienced a severe storm, Arwen. The severity of the storm and the direction of the wind saw widespread damage to the Council's tree population and had a significant impact on Aberdeen's open spaces.
- 3.1.2 All types of trees were affected. A substantial number blew down, many uprooted, branches and limbs snapped off, and several trees were left in a

precarious and dangerous position. Trees in schools, parks, play areas, open spaces, streets, and woodlands were equally affected.

- 3.1.3 Storms Malik and Corrie followed and although not as severe as Storm Arwen, their impact saw more damage to Aberdeen's trees and woodlands.
- 3.1.4 The Arboricultural team were called out and worked in the worst of the storms to ensure trees were made safe and that roads were cleared for safe access. The team has continued to work continuously on trees and woodland impacted since the storms.
- 3.1.5 The wider Environmental Services teams were involved daily to support the recovery work. Local teams are cleaning up, removing debris, uplifting branches, and clearing and sweeping open spaces and streets.
- 3.1.6 The number of incidents recorded resulting from the storms is over 500. Thousands of trees in Aberdeen were affected. All high risk and priority tree work has been completed but there is still much tree work to do to recover from the impact of the storms. Routine tree work programmes have been impacted and delayed as the team has concentrated on storm damage work. The team do not have a timescale when the recovery work will be completed but timely progress is being made. The demand on the team prior to Storm Arwen was fierce and the storms have increased this demand.
- 3.1.7 In February 2022 City Growth and Resources Committee agreed to set aside a sum of £500K from the General Fund Contingency budget, for the Council to deal with the storm damage caused by Storms Arwen, Malik, and Corrie.
- 3.1.8 This additional funding has made an enormous difference to the recovery work. The funding has allowed for additional resources to be brought in to help repair the devastation and tree loss caused by the storms. The team has been able to clear damaged areas, remove high risk trees and replant where trees have been lost. It has allowed woodland devastated by the storms such as Carnie Woods and Hazlehead, to be clear felled and restocked. The funding has also allowed for repair works to be completed. This has included path repairs and fence repairs. To date approximately £350K of the funding has been used and the remainder will be spent in 2023.
- 3.1.9 The impact of the storms has had a devastating impact on Aberdeen's trees, but the team has done an incredible job working through the hundreds of incidents that resulted from the storms and the recovery work is going well.

3.2 **Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan**

- 3.2.1 The Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan was approved by the former Operational Delivery Committee in June 2022. The plan sets out the vision, priorities and an action plan stewardship and expansion of Aberdeen City's urban, street trees, rural trees, and woodlands. It provides a long-term framework for ensuring that their qualities are measurable, recognised, properly valued, protected, and permanently enshrined in the environmental fabric of the city.

- 3.2.2 Work is currently ongoing to deliver Priority 2 of the plan - Expanding and enhancing the Granite City Forest.
- 3.2.3 This work will see a report completed that will provide a rationale to identify the best and most suitable sites for woodland creation in the city. The report that is currently being drafted will categorise areas for planting. This will include a searchable and quantifiable spatial register with analysis maps showing potential sites to take forward and develop as woodland creation schemes.
- 3.2.4 This work will also include Carbon Code (or equivalent) certifications to underpin our Climate Plan and Carbon Budgets.
- 3.2.5 The report will be complete later in 2023 and shared with committee. The next step is for an operational plan to be drawn up with target planting schemes identified. This work will allow for tree planting to begin for the 2023/24 season.

3.3 Community Tree Planting Schemes

- 3.3.1 Environmental Services worked in partnership with communities, including schools and businesses, to plant trees across Aberdeen. Our community tree planting saw over 20,000 trees planted across the city in 2021 and 2022.

Environmental Services have planted more trees in the last year than we have for many years, and we are proud of what has been achieved. We need to say a huge thank you to the local communities who have helped us plant the trees.

The planting was funded through corporate sponsorship and grant funding. There was minimal direct cost to the Council.

3.4 Street Tree Planting

- 3.4.1 A commitment to plant new and replacement street trees has seen more than 800 street trees planted in 2021/2022. Street trees bring much needed greenery to our urban areas. Scottish Government Nature Restoration grant funding and additional Council funding paid for the street trees.

3.5 Queen's Green Canopy Champion City

- 3.5.1 The Queen's Green Canopy is a unique tree planting initiative which invites people from across the United Kingdom to 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee' to create a legacy in honour of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Aberdeen has been selected as one of the initiative's Champion Cities. The Champion City programme has been launched to celebrate some of the nation's outstanding cities which have trees as a central part of their plans for green spaces.

Being a Champion City is a great honour and Aberdeen is one of only 20 cities across the whole of the UK to be awarded this.

In Aberdeen, there has been a programme of tree planting throughout the 2021 and 2022 seasons which includes:

- 70 oak trees provided to schools and community groups for planting.
- All our formal parks (Duthie Park, Hazlehead Park, Victoria Park etc) have planted a Queen's Green Canopy tree.
- Queen's Green Canopy was very much a headline in our Beautiful Scotland campaign for 2022 and is to be included throughout the 2023 tour and campaign.

Further information on The Queen's Green Canopy is available at the [The Queen's Green Canopy webpage](#).

3.6 Woodside Wee Forest

- 3.6.1 The first Wee Forest was planted in Aberdeen thanks to the joint efforts of Aberdeen City Council's Environmental Services team, NatureScot, and pupils and staff of Woodside Primary School.

The Woodside Wee Forest will join a group of 20 such forests across Scotland which are being planted.

Led by NatureScot, the programme aims to give people the opportunity to help tackle the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss by creating and caring for their own forest in their own neighbourhood.

To create each forest, around 600 native trees have planted by "Wee Foresters" in an area the size of a tennis court. Volunteer keeper teams look after the forest over the long term and school will use the forest for outdoor learning.

The 600 plants, which include alder, cherry, Scots pine, crab apple, holly, juniper, elder, willow, oak, rowan, and hazel trees along with dog roses, broom, gorse, blaeberry, heather, hawthorn, and blackthorn, have been planted by staff and pupils in a grassy area across Clifton Road from the school with help from the City Council's Countryside Rangers.

Pupils contributed many fantastic designs for the project and the overall winner demonstrated excellent design principals which will fit the Wee Forest ideals.

Woodside Primary School created a fantastic film to accompany the launch of the wee Forest. <https://youtu.be/9jVHbuanSRI>

This is a fantastic project, and it is thanks to the efforts of everyone involved that generations to come will enjoy the benefits of these native trees which have been planted in these green spaces.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Funding required to meet the Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan and Council's ambitions will be identified through commissioning intentions.
- 4.2 Funding will be a challenge but there are opportunities to access funding and options will be explored by the service through continued positive and

constructive collaboration with partners, sponsorship, and appropriate grant funders.

- 4.3 Environmental Services has funded recent projects with Scottish Government Nature Restoration grant funding, Paths for All grant funding and sponsorship.

Over £100,000 of external funding has been accessed in 2022/23 to fund tree planting and woodland paths projects.

- 4.4 Street tree planting has been allocated £15,000 revenue funding from the Council's budget and this will be used to plant new and replace street trees across Aberdeen in the 2023/2024 planting season.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Aberdeen's trees and woodland can help to address the climate change and biodiversity loss crises through sustainable management of the natural environment, by planting the right trees in the right places.

- 6.2 Our tree and woodland work and projects focus strongly on implementation and helping to deliver against the City Council and City's strategies, notably Net Zero Aberdeen Natural Environment Strategy, Goals 7 and 9 of Aberdeen Adapts, the Council Climate Change Plan and Granite City Growing amongst others.

7. RISK

The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement.

| Category | Risks | Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level | *Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions | *Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set? |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| Strategic Risk | No significant risks. | Future trees and woodland works will link and align to a future ACC Forest and Woodland Strategy. | L | Yes |
| Compliance | No significant risks. | Continue to monitor. | L | Yes |

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| Operational | Suitable space for future tree planting. | To work with internal and external partners to identify suitable spaces. | L | Yes |
| Financial | Lack of internal and external funding sources and the inability to continue to fund further storm damage works and any proposed tree planting programmes. | Build programme as part of commissioning intentions and budget process. Continued positive and constructive collaboration with partners and appropriate grant funders. | M | Yes |
| Reputational | Failure to fully support Aberdeen's tree planting programme identified through Climate Plan and LOIP. | Continued positive and constructive collaboration with partners and appropriate grant funders. | L | Yes |
| Environment / Climate | Tree planting programmes identified through Climate Plan not realised. Carbon impacts of tree planting not measured and not usable in carbon budgets. | Continued positive and constructive collaboration with partners and appropriate grant funders. Ensure woodlands are climate certified to support Council Climate Plan. . | L | Yes |

8. OUTCOMES

| <u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u> | |
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| Impact of Report | |
| Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement | Supports the delivery of Aberdeen City Council Policy through the Council's commissioning intentions, aligned to the LOIP key drivers, and stretch outcomes. |
| Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan | |
| Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes | Supports Outcome 3. 500 Aberdeen City residents upskilled/ reskilled to enable them to move into, within and between economic opportunities as they arise by 2026. |
| Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes | Supports Outcome 8. Child friendly city where all decisions which impact on children and young people are informed by them by 2026. |
| Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes | Supports Outcome 13. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate. Supports Stretch Outcome 15. Addressing the nature crisis by protecting/ managing 26% of Aberdeen's area for nature by 2026. |
| Regional and City Strategies | <p>The proposals within this report support the Council's contribution to a wide number of regional and city strategies. Most specifically, Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017 – outlining at the local level under its Policy NE5 (Trees and Woodlands). Aberdeen Adapts - the City's climate change adaption framework to enable Aberdeen to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change such as extreme weather. Goal 7, Increased space for nature and Goal 9, Trees & woodlands, protected and enhanced.</p> <p>The report is relevant to the Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029 and the Climate Change Act 2008.</p> |

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

| Assessment | Outcome |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Integrated Impact Assessment | Stage 1 Assessment completed. |
| Data Protection Impact Assessment | Not required. |
| Other | None |

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

11. APPENDICES

None.

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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