

COMMITTEE Housing and Environment DATE 11th January 2010

DIRECTOR Pete Leonard

TITLE OF REPORT A Tree for Every Citizen

REPORT NUMBER:

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members on the progress with the manifesto commitment in Vibrant Dynamic Forward Looking document to plant a tree for every citizen of Aberdeen.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- (i) notes progress to date;
- (ii) approves the proposed planting sites;
- (iii) notes the scale of funding leverage available from external funding sources.
- (iv) instructs that a final report be presented to the Committee, which will provide a detailed planting project plan; and
- v) nominates an Elected Member as a 'Champion' for the project to help support and promote the programme.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As a part of the Scottish Forestry Strategy, Forestry Commission (Scotland) (FCS) has a target to increase the area of land under tree cover from 17.1% in 2006 to 25% by the second half of the 21st century. In the Grampian area there is a target to deliver 300ha of woodland expansion in 2009-10 with financial support through the Scotland Rural Development Programme (Rural Priorities) (SRDP). FCS Has indicated its very strong support for the City's tree planting plans and SRDP funding would potentially support 63% of the City's Phase I Planting Proposals with additional funding being sort as follows:-

Estimated overall costs £343,500

Funded by:

- Forestry Commission (Scotland) through SRDP £216,400 (Agreed in principle subject to full application)
- Aberdeen Greenspace £62,000 as matched funding (application approved but subject to ENTRUST approval)
- Notional contribution by ACC through the Aberdeen Countryside Ranger Service £40,000 to support the on-going community consultation elements of the Planting Programme (required by FCS to justify the community supplement element of the SRDP grant)

- SURF Interreg IVB project £25,000 over three years to support the community/volunteer, schools involvement and consultation aspects of the project and to develop linkages with local businesses. This funding is for sites within the SURF project area in the north of the City.

Local businesses are being approached with a view to them sponsoring a number of the planting areas that are of particular strategic significance to them in terms of their environmental credentials. One company has already committed £500 and another may offer substantially more. This will allow additional planting or enhancements to the areas involved.

The above funding package is to cover the planting costs and ongoing maintenance of the new planting for the first three to five years. After this period the trees should be well established, requiring minimal further intervention and maintenance cost.

The above funding package covers the expected costs to deliver the project.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 4.1 This report links to the Aberdeen City Council's Single Outcome Agreement and Community Plan in terms of the following National Outcomes:

(1) We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe:

(6) We live longer, healthier lives.

(10) We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need:

(11) We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.

(12) We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations; and

(14) We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.

- 4.2 This report also links generally to the Council's policy statement, Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking, by promoting the city as a better place to live and work.

- 4.3 In more specific terms, the report links to Vibrant Dynamic & Forward Thinking as follows:

Environment

Aberdeen's environment - natural and built - is part of what makes our city unique. Aberdeen City Council has a duty both to protect that environment and to play its part in protecting our planet.

The partnership will:

3. Adopt and implement policies which safeguard Aberdeen's green belt and green wedges
 4. Institute a programme of tree-planting with the objective, with partners, of planting one tree for every citizen by 2011.
 6. Minimise the impact of council activities on the environment, including a target of being carbon neutral overall by 2020 and a commitment that all new council developments will be carbon neutral.
- 4.4 The delivery of this project will support the Council's Draft Nature Conservation Strategy 2009, Proposed Openspace Strategy, The Council's recent 10:10 Commitment, and Air Quality Plan 2006.

There is no requirement for an Equalities & Human Rights Impact Assessment arising from the recommendation in this report.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 All the sites identified as potential tree planting sites are in Aberdeen City Council ownership and are outwith areas for potential development in the current local plan and areas under consideration for development in the next Local Plan. This has been checked with colleagues in the Local Plan Team. The design and location of the new planting areas will compliment and dovetail in with the proposals for future development areas within the City.
- 5.2 The Forestry Commission has published a report (Combating Climate Change - a role for UK forests, (Nov 2009)) which provides advice and recommendations on how providing extra tree cover in the UK can help reduce carbon emissions, thereby preventing damaging climate change. The report argues that an extra 4% of forest cover in UK would reduce the UK carbon emissions by 10%. Greater forest cover can help us achieve this either through directly absorbing CO₂ or by providing more sustainable materials for construction and renewable energy. The report also states that trees, particularly in towns and cities, have an important role in helping society to adapt to climate change by providing shelter, cooling, shade and controlling rainwater runoff. It says tree and woodland planting should be targeted to places where people live, especially the most vulnerable people, and places where people gather, such as town and local centres which currently have low tree cover.
- 5.3 Consultation is, and will be undertaken with, the relevant Elected Members for the areas proposed for planting, the relevant Community Councils, other relevant bodies and agencies, the ACC Archaeology Unit as well as members of the relevant local communities themselves.
- 5.4 A programme of community consultation events has started with events in Kincorth and the Bridge of Don areas. More are planned for early 2010.

- 5.5 An important part of the project will be community involvement, not only in developing the site plans but also with the planting and ongoing management. There will be opportunities for the general public to get involved with most of the sites and where schools are near by these will be targeted. There are great educational opportunities relating to tree planting and the ongoing study of the trees and the woodlands as they grow. The input from the Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) Interreg IVB project will support this.
- 5.6 The implementation of this project will be undertaken by existing officers in Housing and Environment assisted by an experienced consultant appointed through a tendering procedure and costed into the overall project budget.
- 5.7 The species mix and design of the woodlands will enhance the biodiversity value of Aberdeen green spaces by providing improved wildlife habitats and networks and promoting and conserving Local Biodiversity Action Plan species such as red squirrel and wych elm as well being sustainably managed to provide a future timber crop over the next 30-120 years.
- 5.8 The design of the planted areas will incorporate public access and will be designed to make the new woodland areas inviting, pleasant and safe places to use and visit for recreational activities. The designs will respect the local conditions and features and avoid areas where there could be future light loss issues for local residents.
- 5.9 Some areas of planting will be fenced to exclude rabbits and some in areas the trees will be protected from deer and rabbits with tree shelters. In other areas the trees will not be protected where there is not expected to be an issue with rabbit or deer damage. However if there is rabbit or deer damage there may be a need to control these species to minimize damage.
- 5.10 There will be an opportunity for a high level media launch for the project potentially involving Scottish Government Ministerial input.
- 5.11 With the involvement of the Interreg IVB SURF (Sustainable Urban Fringes) project there are opportunities to learn and share knowledge and experience transitionally between partner organizations in relation to public involvement and consultation.

6. REPORT

A report was submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee of 10 June 2008 describing a range of options to deliver the manifesto commitment to plant a tree for every resident in Aberdeen, around 202,000 trees by 2011. This committee resolved to instruct officers to continue with current tree planting programmes (around 10,000 per year) and to investigate funding opportunities to deliver this commitment, as at the time there were no resources available from the Authority to deliver the greater rate of tree planting to plant the 202,000 trees.

This report is to feedback to members the progress made to date with this project and to advise members of the start of the large scale tree planting programme which aims to plant around 180,000 trees in two phases over the next two to three years now that a comprehensive funding package has been assembled with a partnership approach to obtaining external funding.

Further details of the Phase I project, including the full financial breakdown can be found in the attached extract (document still to be finalised) Granite City Woodlands, Woodland Creation Programme Phase 1 Proposals which is appended to this report.

The proposed planting sites for the period up to December 2010 are:-

- Danestone (2.2 ha 4,700 trees)
- Balgownie Drive (2.69ha 5,470 trees)
- Greenfern Woodland (7.67ha 16,500 trees)
- Seaton (near Donmouth LNR to the rear of Shell petrol station) (8.54ha 19,000 trees)
- Howes Road (1.73ha 2,350 trees)
- Inverdee pitches, (adjacent to the existing riverside woodland, not encroaching into the pitches). (1.87ha 4,000 trees)
- Lochinch Farm (3.29ha 7,150 trees)
- Abbotswells open space (6.95ha 12,000 trees)
- St Fitticks Park (7.23ha 13,250 trees)
- Westfield Park (7.55ha 12,150 trees)

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006
[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/SFS2006fcfc101.pdf/\\$FILE/SFS2006fcfc101.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/SFS2006fcfc101.pdf/$FILE/SFS2006fcfc101.pdf)

Policy and Resources Committee, 10 June 2008 – Item 7.3 Tree Planting Project

'Combating Climate Change - a role for UK forests' (Forestry Commission)
(see <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-7y4gn9>)

Plans of each proposed woodland planting site are currently available online at
http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/Consultations/cst_CurrentConsultation.asp