

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee
<b>DATE</b>	10 June 2025
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Trees and Woodland
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CR&E/25/143
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Gale Beattie
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Mark Reilly
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Steven Shaw
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1

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### 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 recent years.
- 1.2 The report also gives an update on the council's, sustainability plans, projects and initiatives undertaken to protect and enhance Aberdeen's public trees and woodlands, including the 1 Million Trees initiative and the work to deliver elements of the Tree & Woodland Strategic Implementation Plan.
- 1.3 This report also seeks approval for Environmental Services to continue 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 welcomes the information contained within this report;
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer – Operations, to continue to explore funding options, including grants and sponsorship to help fund further tree planting in Aberdeen; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer - Operations, in consultation with Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning, to ensure that future tree & woodland planting includes appropriate / equivalent approaches to both i) carbon coding woodlands to support delivery of the Council's Carbon Budget, and ii) applying a tree equity bias to support the reduction of inequalities across relevant communities.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

#### 3.1 Storm Damage Work

- 3.1.1 The storms of the last four years have had a devastating impact on Council's tree population and had a significant impact on Aberdeen's open spaces.
- 3.1.2 All types of trees have been affected. A substantial number have been blown down, many have been uprooted, branches and limbs snapped off, and several trees left in a precarious and dangerous position. Trees in parks, play areas, open spaces, streets, and woodlands have all been impacted. Where required Environmental Services have assisted Education and school estates with their trees.
- 3.1.3 The Arboricultural team are called out and work in the worst of the storms to ensure trees are made safe and that roads are cleared for safe access. The team has continued to work continuously on trees and woodland impacted since the storms. Storm damage has been the focus of the team's work since Storm Arwen hit in 2021.
- 3.1.4 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 have resulted from the storms. The recovery work continues to be a focus for the team and is going well and the final clean ups are now being undertaken. This work will be completed in 2025. Of course, what is unknown is the impact of any future storms.

### **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. This work will involve officers from Environmental Services and Strategic Place planning.
- 3.2.3 The next step is for an operational plan to be drawn up with target planting schemes identified. This work is ongoing will be shared with the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee in due course.

### **3.3 Aberdeen Open Space Audit: 2024 Report**

- 3.3.1 The work involved in Aberdeen's trees and woodland directly supports the findings and priorities identified in the draft Aberdeen Open Space Audit 2024 Report which was approved at the June 2024 Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee.
- 3.3.2 An Open Space Audit is an evidence gathering exercise used to assist with protecting and enhancing blue-green spaces both through the Planning process, by supporting blue-green infrastructure policies in the Aberdeen Local

Development Plan and National Planning Framework 4, the spatial strategies for Aberdeen and Scotland.

3.3.3 Aberdeen has a variety of blue and green open spaces that are important to our quality of life, benefiting our communities, our environment and our economy. Green spaces can include parks, gardens, playing fields, woodlands, play areas, allotments, and civic spaces and blue spaces include features such as ponds, burns and rivers. They are often combined in features such as rain gardens or Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Taken together, these features can form important networks of blue and green infrastructure (BGI) for people, wildlife and public services such as active travel routes, wildlife corridors and surface water management systems.

3.3.4 A periodic audit provides key information on the types, distribution, qualities, and accessibility of open and blue-green spaces across Aberdeen. This information is also critical to directing green space policies, management of spaces and the interventions of partners. The findings will also be of use to professionals across a range of fields, community organisations and city partners to aid in their own approaches to open space.

3.3.5 The audit also identified community views on the value of open spaces and this was completed through an Aberdeen Open Space Audit Public Survey giving insights on how people use and perceive Aberdeen's green and open spaces.

3.3.6 The key findings of the Audit that link to trees and woodland are -

3,902 hectares of open space were surveyed as part of the Open Space Audit.

Natural / semi natural greenspaces are the largest category of open space with 1796 hectares equating to 46% of open space, with open semi natural space (1057ha 59%) and woodland (687ha 38%) being the primary sub types.

- 82% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to see more greenspaces managed in a more natural way for the benefit of wildlife and nature.
- 49% of respondents said they would be encouraged to visit spaces more often if they were managed for wildlife and nature.

Parks, woodlands and natural or semi-natural areas had the highest citywide satisfaction rates reported by respondents:

- Parks: 86%
- Woodlands: 82%
- Natural or semi-natural areas: 82%

3.3.7 Tree Canopy Cover

Aberdeen tree canopy figures were derived from an iTree Canopy study undertaken in 2020. The study concluded that Aberdeen has 17% tree canopy

cover, though areas of the city have a canopy cover as low as 6%. Ward level figures are noted below.

[Scotland's Forestry Strategy](#) sets a target of 21% forest and woodland cover by 2032 and the [Tree Design Action Group](#) recommends a minimum 20% canopy cover for urban areas (15% for coastal locations) to improve human health and well-being.

In the last 100 years, forest and woodland cover in Scotland has increased from around 5% to 18.5%. This percentage is higher than the rest of the UK but is still well below the European Union (EU) average of 43% forest and woodland cover.

### Ward Tree Canopy Cover

Ward	Tree Canopy Cover %
Hazlehead / Queens Cross / Countesswells	27%
Lower Deeside	25%
Kincorth / Nigg / Cove	24%
Dyce / Bucksburn / Danestone	22%
Midstocket / Rosemount	22%
Tillydrone / Seaton / Old Aberdeen	20%
Airryhall / Broomhill / Garthdee	19%
Hilton / Woodside / Stockethill	17%
Bridge of Don	13%
Torry / Ferryhill	13%
Kingswells / Sheddocksley / Summerhill	8%
George Street / Harbour	7%
Northfield / Mastrick North	6%

- 3.3.8 The findings of the Open Space Audit have an important role to play in future tree and woodland work and specifically with regards to protecting our open spaces and planning future tree planting.

### 3.4 1 Million Trees

- 3.4.1 Environmental Services has been restocking areas affected by storm damage and also planting trees on new areas of land identified as suitable for tree planting. The team has worked in partnership with communities, including schools and businesses, to plant trees across Aberdeen.

- 3.4.2 Environmental Services has planted 41879 trees since the Winter of 2022. This is more tree planting than has been achieved 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.

Carnie Woods(Arwen damage restocking)	Nov-22	8688
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Brotherfield Woods(Restocking after clear fell)	Nov-22	8711
Crematorium amenity strip(Arwen restocking )	Nov-22	800
Inverdee (Scout nature conservation initiative)	Mar-23	334
Ellon Rd(Friends of Westfield Park)	Mar-23	55
Parkway(Friends of Westfield Park)	Mar-23	50
Seaton (Beating up NorthStar plantation)	Mar-24	1000
Hazledene Road(Arwen restocking )	Apr-24	496
Denwood(Arwen restocking )	Apr-24	8925
Tullos Hill(Nature Restoration Fund)	Apr-24	9340
Queens Den	Jan-25	820
Culter bypass(Community Council)	Jan-25	1960
Lovers Walk (restocking after clear fell)	Jan-25	700
Total April 2025		41,879

### 3.5 General Tree Work

- 3.5.1 The team's focus and priority for the last 12 months has been on dead and dying Elm trees. The team has removed approximately 125 dead Elms over the last year.
- 3.5.2 Overall, in the last year, the team has dealt with 950 tree related enquiries. All of these enquiries required a tree survey followed by the relevant, required action being added to the team's work programme. A number of other ad-hoc surveys were also carried out. All of Aberdeen's parks have been surveyed.
- 3.5.3 With the team's focus being on high risk trees it has meant that there is little capacity to undertake other tree work. General tree maintenance and minor works is not being tackled as routinely as it should be.

### 3.6 Street Tree Planting

- 3.6.1 A commitment to plant new and replacement street trees continues. Street tree planting has been allocated £8000 from the 2025/26 Nature Restoration Funding and this will be used to plant new and replace street trees across Aberdeen in the 2025/2026 planting season.

### 3.7 Woodside Wee Forest

- 3.7.1 The first Wee Forest was planted in Aberdeen in 2022 thanks to the joint efforts of Aberdeen City Council's Environmental Services team, NatureScot, and pupils and staff of Woodside Primary School.
- 3.7.2 The Woodside Wee Forest is thriving. It is huge success.

Biodiversity increases in the Wee Forest with every passing year; a variety of invertebrates have colonised the Wee Forest and many are used to feed chicks of the many birds in the greater Woodside area.

The Wee Forest is used every week by outdoor education groups from Woodside Primary School and Nursery, with pupils and staff helping to maintain and monitor the plants.

### **3.8 Natural Environment Strategy**

- 3.8.1 A refresh of the Natural Environment Strategy, forming one of the 6 enabling strategies under Net Zero Aberdeen, will shortly commence. This will form an overarching strategy for the city over all key natural environment topics, including trees, open space, natural heritage and outdoor access. This strategy refresh will be followed by an associated Spatial Delivery Plan.

### **3.9 Council Climate Change Plan**

- 3.9.1 Work to update the Council Climate Change Plan is due to commence. The current plan covers Council assets and operations. Given the interlinked nature of the climate and biodiversity crises, the planned update will encompass relevant climate and nature priorities for the organisation, in a Council Climate and Nature Plan.

## **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 and sponsorship.

Over £100,000 of external funding has been accessed since 2023 to fund tree planting and woodland paths projects.

- 4.4 Nature Restoration Funding is available for 25/26 and part of this fund will be set aside to help with tree planting for the 2025/2026 season. This will include for street tree planting as described above.

## **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?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	No significant risks.	Future trees and woodland works will link and align to a future ACC Forest and Woodland Strategy.	L	Yes
<b>Compliance</b>	No significant risks.	Continue to monitor.	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	Suitable space for future tree planting.	To work with internal and external partners to identify suitable spaces.	L	Yes
<b>Financial</b>	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

<b>Reputational</b>	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
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	<p>Tree planting programmes identified through Climate Plan not realised.</p> <p>Carbon impacts of tree planting not measured and not usable in carbon budgets.</p>	<p>Continued positive and constructive collaboration with partners and appropriate grant funders.</p> <p>Ensure woodlands are climate certified to support Council Climate Plan.</p>	L	Yes

## 8. OUTCOMES

<b><u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u></b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>  <a href="#"><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></a>	Supports the delivery of Aberdeen City Council Policy through the Council's commissioning intentions, aligned to the LOIP key drivers, and stretch outcomes.
<a href="#"><u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u></a>	
Place Stretch Outcomes	<p>Climate Change. 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.</p> <p>Nature and Safe Spaces. Supports Stretch Outcome 15. 26% of Aberdeen's area will be protected and/or managed for nature and 60% of people report they</p>



	feel that spaces and buildings are well cared for by 2026.
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>	The work related to this report supports objectives in a range of regional and city strategies including: Strategic and Local Development Plans, Local Outcome Improvement Plan, Aberdeen Adapts, Net Zero Route map and Natural Environment strategy for the City.

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	Previous Integrated Impact Assessment relating to the Trees and Woodland Committee Report May 2023 has been reviewed and no changes required.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required.
<b>Other</b>	None

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

NA

## 11. APPENDICES

None.

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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