

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

TREE PLANTING AND THE NORTHERN FOREST

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on progress towards tree planting targets.
- 1.2 To outline future approaches to the Northern Forest and other tree planting initiatives.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Northern Forest is the government's 25-year vision to plant 50 million trees across the North of England, stretching from Liverpool to Hull. This is set out in the 25-year Environment Plan, involving £5.7 million of government funding, delivered through the Community Forests in urban areas and the Woodland Trust in rural areas.
- 2.2 We have identified six main approaches to maintaining and increasing tree cover in North Lincolnshire:
 - 1. *Urban Areas*- identifying and planting on suitable Council and partners' land
 - 2. *Urban Areas*- identifying and planting suitable locations for street trees
 - 3. *Rural (& some Urban) Areas*- targeting tree planting according to the Biodiversity Opportunity Map:
 - 4. *Green Infrastructure/Ecosystem Service standards for new development*
 - 5. *Tree Protection and Replacement* - planting a specified number of trees for every tree lost
 - 6. *Natural regeneration and natural habitat change* - allowing native trees to spread naturally, creating scrub and new woodland.

Action taken

- 2.3 After a procurement exercise TCV (The Conservation Volunteers) were selected to deliver: tree ordering, volunteer recruitment, tree planting, aftercare and the coordination and leadership of volunteers and community groups over a 4-year period.
- 2.4 The Council has set a target to plant 172,000 trees: one for each resident. In 2020/21, we launched a tree counter and tree planting map on our website, allowing partners, businesses, landowners and members of the public to record the trees that they had planted. The counter currently records 92, 646 trees having been planted since the beginning of the campaign
- 2.5 North Lincolnshire Council will be formally joining Humber Forest (the local Community Forest for the Northern Forest Strategy). This will give increased access to support and funding.
- 2.6 We have secured a Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (WCAF) grant to employ a Woodland Creation Officer and Historic Environment Record (HER) Assistant for two years. This will support work to promote planting “the right tree in the right place” and to develop schemes with private landowners and town and parish councils.

Future Development

- 2.7 With a planting strategy, framework provider, volunteers, capital funding, grant schemes and robust procedures in place, our next challenge is to secure additional planting sites. This will require around 30-50 hectares of land, depending on planting density.
- 2.8 We continue to work with TCV volunteers on weeding and aftercare of trees. We will use our contingency funds and the free trees sourced from the Woodland Trust to gap up losses this planting season and over the next couple of seasons.
- 2.9 We need to maintain the existing planting schemes to the point when the trees grow to form a closed canopy. Ongoing woodland management will still be required beyond that point
- 2.10 We will continue to develop and deliver a pipeline of tree planting projects, working with landowners, businesses, community groups and our partners in the Humber Forest, the Woodland Trust, the Forestry Commission and TCV. We will continue to protect existing trees and woodlands and promote a high standard of new landscaping, street tree provision and green infrastructure. Details of proposed tree planting sites for 2022/23 are set out in Appendix 1.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Cabinet is invited to note the contents of this report and support the continued delivery of priority actions towards the tree planting target.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)

- 5.1 £100k of capital funding has been allocated from the Council resource, with a target of drawing in £667k of match funding through Humber Forest and the Woodland Trust, and ultimately Defra. Funding programmes include Woodland Trust MoreWoods, Trees for Climate, Northern Forest and various Forestry Commission grants. The spend has been profiled over four years, tying in with the framework agreement with TCV and the WCAF funding programme. A high level of match funding was achieved in the 2020/21 planting season, with the largest schemes being 100% funded in cash terms.

- 5.2 With WCAF, we have the funding to employ a Woodland Creation Officer and Historic Environment Record (HER) Assistant for two years. Capacity to order trees, recruit and lead volunteers and plant and care for trees has also been built through the framework agreement with TCV-The Conservation Volunteers.

- 5.3 To reach our 172,000 tree target we will require between 30 and 50 hectares of land, assuming typical planting densities. This is likely to require significant contributions from businesses and private landowners. Funding for land acquisitions is available from Humber Forest and other sources, provided that schemes can demonstrate value for money overall.

- 5.4 Communications have been coordinated by both TCV and our own Marketing and Communications staff. Key messages have been disseminated using our website, social media, press releases, recruitment posters and the landowner leaflet. In the future, Humber Forest should take a more active role in promoting opportunities in our area.

6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)

- 6.1 Safer Neighbourhoods staff have helped to carry out community consultation around the planting schemes in urban areas and have screened the proposals to consider any implications in relation to anti-social behaviour. They have also reduced problems through work with the Police and the use of CCTV. Working with volunteers and local

people has helped to increased effort around tree aftercare and reversing the effects of vandalism, whilst building support and civic pride.

6.2 Planting significant blocks of new woodland and street trees in the ideal locations will increase habitat connectivity, enhance amenity and increase the delivery of ecosystem services such as carbon storage, rainfall interception and temperature moderation. Well-planned tree planting may therefore represent an important contribution to carbon sequestration and climate change adaptation.

6.4 The tree planting programme has strong links to the Council Plan:

- The provision of new blocks of woodland, particularly where there is public access, helps to keep people safe and well by providing cleaner and greener space for people to enjoy and use.
- The volunteer tree planting schemes help to enable resilient and flourishing communities where residents can be proud of where they live and experience a strong sense of belonging. We achieve this by working in partnership with voluntary and community groups and organisations.

7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) was carried out for the tendering process for the framework provider. The IIA recorded largely positive impacts. For example:

- Volunteering tends to enhance health and wellbeing, social inclusion and acquisition of skills.
- Increasing woodland cover will increase the provision of ecosystem services such as the interception of rainwater.
- Absorption of air pollution.
- Capture and storage of carbon; regulation of temperature.
- Contact with nature and improved physical and mental health and well-being.

8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

8.1 Extensive internal and external consultation has taken place, all expressed support for significant tree planting in North Lincolnshire.

8.3 For each significant planting site, consultation is carried out with the Historic Environment Record, Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre, Environmental Health, Safer Neighbourhoods and Asset & Estate Management. Planting schemes are publicised on the Forestry Commission Public Register for 28 days. Schemes only go ahead once

it can be demonstrated that any negative impacts have been eliminated or minimised and positive benefits have been maximised.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Cabinet note the content of the report and support the continued delivery of priority actions.

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report –

Defra 2018 A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment

Appendix 1: Tree Planting Proposals

2022/23 Planting Season- Proposed Main Sites

Site Name	Parish	Predicted number of trees	Details
Beck Field, Bottesford	Bottesford	3400	A Woodland Trust MoreWoods funding application has been approved, and permission granted, for the planting and aftercare of 3,400 trees and shrubs. TCV aim to carry out the planting with local volunteers before Christmas 2022.
Brambling Way	Scunthorpe	1350	Humber Forest has informally agreed to fund the planting aftercare. The site has been cleared of weedy growth. TCV aim to carry out the planting with local volunteers before Christmas 2022.
Private site	Crowle	1200?	A private landowner would like to create a woodland on a 0.5-hectare site, in memory of her son. A site visit with Humber Forest is planned for November, with a view to plating this season.
North Cliff Road	Kirton in Lindsey	2000?	A community group is seeking £55,000 of funding to buy and plant a one-hectare site. We are providing advice and looking into whether this could be achieved more cheaply.
Private site	Whitton	3000?	We have been consulted on a private England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO) Application Form to plant five hectares of woodland. The site raises potential conflicts in relation to archaeology and internationally important bird assemblages associated with the Humber Estuary. We are currently looking into these issues.
Others	Various	??	We are aware of other enquiries in the pipelines of the Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust, but don't have details of tree numbers and timescales as yet.