



**Report of Chief Officer Parks and Countryside**

**Report to Director of Communities and Environments**

**Date: 18/05/2020**

**Subject: Request authority to spend on infrastructure relating to the climate emergency scheme**

**Capital scheme number: 33264**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- The Chief Officer Parks & Countryside is requested to approve the authority to spend £200,000 to establish the tree growing scheme at the Arium. This is based on the costs to implement a tree specific automated benching system. This will require a capital investment from the council.

**2. Best Council Plan Implications**

- The report highlights the contribution to the following Council Business Plan priorities:
- Improve the quality of Leeds' parks
- Create the environment for effective partnership working
- Work effectively at a local level.

**3. Resource Implications**

- This DCR relates to a wider scheme and will support the 'Climate Emergency' tree planting scheme for the next 5 years. The capital investment relating to this report covers the cost of establishing the infrastructure required to deliver the climate emergency programme, specifically relating to tree production.
- There are no extra staffing resources needed relating to this specific DCR.

## Recommendations

- a) That the Chief Officer Parks & Countryside gives authority to spend £200k on a new automated benching system to support the production of trees for the climate emergency scheme.

### 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request authority to spend £200k in order to construct an automated benched zone at the Arium, complete with irrigation and bench compression systems. This zone will then become the primary zone for tree production, allowing for near perfect growing conditions, fast and responsive watering and ease of movement.
- 1.2 The Arium needs a tree specific benching system to cope primarily with the weight of the trees and to protect the foundations of the building from waterlogging.
- 1.3 The programme aims to produce a minimum of 200,000 trees a year.

### 2. Background information

- 2.1 In February 2020 Parks and Countryside presented an Executive Board report detailing how the service could respond to the recently declared climate emergency. The intention is to convert 630 hectares of Parks and Countryside land to woodland in the next 25 years, equating to 25 hectares per year over this period. This will require the Arium to grow 2.8 million trees.
- 2.2 This report establishes that the Arium could be adapted to grow trees to meet carbon offsetting demands set by the government.
- 2.3 The initiative was confirmed at Full Council in March 2020 including the expected numbers and species of tree required. As such the service has committed to establishing a tree growing programme which will develop 200,000 trees a year, split into 12 recommended species identified in the list below.
  - Acer Pseudo
  - Alnus
  - Betula
  - Carpinus
  - Corylus
  - Crataegus
  - Fagus
  - Malus
  - Pinus
  - Prunus avium
  - Prunus spinosa
  - Pyrus comm
  - Sorbus auc
  - Viburnum opulus

### **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 In order for the Arium to be able to produce the required trees, adaptations need to be made. The Arium has a total of 4 growing zones which were originally designed for bedding production. 2 zones are currently benched already, though the type of benching is not suitable for tree growing and only works for bedding and wildflower. A 3<sup>rd</sup> zone is utilised for containerised plants including fountains and hanging pots.
- 3.2 This report therefore proposes that the remaining 4<sup>th</sup> zone be utilised for tree growing and that the adaptations are put in place to maximise the efficiency of the project through an automated tree specific benching system.
- 3.3 The system needs to be bespoke, as it needs to fit within the already significantly specialised horticultural glasshouse. It also needs to integrate with the 'brain' of the building (Hortimax) to allow for full automation. This has all been considered while undertaking procurement exercises. The cost of the benching will be £200k.

### **4. Corporate considerations**

#### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 The Executive Member for Environment & Sustainability has been consulted on these proposals in February 2020. Full council discussed the matter in March 2020.

#### **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

- 4.2.1 A screening document has been prepared and an independent impact assessment is not required for the approvals requested. The screening document has been sent to the equality team to be approved and published as part of the previous reports.

#### **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

- 4.3.1 This report draws attention to co-ordinated working that demonstrates a contribution towards the following priorities contained in the City Priority Plan:
  - Best City for Communities – engage communities in seed gathering for the project.
  - Best City to Live – Improve the cities air quality and carbon reduction through tree planting.
- 4.3.2 The report highlights the contribution to the following Council Business Plan priorities:
  - Improve the quality of Leeds parks
  - Reduce negative climate impact
  - Work effectively at the local level

4.3.3 The projects inception focuses on the Parks and Countryside services capability to assist and deliver substantial, tangible change with regard to reducing the cities impact on the climate. Through collaborative work with the Universities and the councils Forestry team the service is aware of the important need to increase the cities canopy cover. By allowing the service to make key adaptations to its horticultural facility it will be able to produce a significant number of high quality tree specimens to meet the demand to increase the cities canopy cover over the coming decade.

#### 4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

4.4.1 **Full scheme estimate** requirements for the 2020/21 programme for establishing the tree planting programme will be £200k.

#### 4.4.2 Capital funding and cash flow

Previous total Authority to Spend on this scheme	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2020 £000's	FORECAST				
			2020/21 £000's	2021/22 £000's	2022/23 £000's	2023/24 £000's	2024 on £000's
LAND (1)	0.0						
CONSTRUCTION (3)	80.8	80.8					
FURN & EQPT (5)	0.0						
INTERNAL DESIGN FEES (6)	0.0						
OTHER FEES / COSTS (7)	70.2	40.0	30.2				
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>151.0</b>	<b>120.8</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Authority to Spend required for this Approval	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2020 £000's	FORECAST				
			2020/21 £000's	2021/22 £000's	2022/23 £000's	2023/24 £000's	2024 on £000's
LAND (1)	0.0						
CONSTRUCTION (3)	200.0		200.0				
FURN & EQPT (5)	0.0						
INTERNAL DESIGN FEES (6)	0.0						
OTHER FEES / COSTS (7)	0.0						
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>200.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>200.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Total overall Funding (As per latest Capital Programme)	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2020 £000's	FORECAST				
			2020/21 £000's	2021/22 £000's	2022/23 £000's	2023/24 £000's	2024 on £000's
LCC Corporate Borrowing	2751.0	120.8	830.2	600.0	600.0	600.0	
Revenue Contribution	0.0						
Capital Receipt	0.0						
Insurance Receipt	0.0						
Lottery	0.0						
Gifts / Bequests / Trusts	0.0						
European Grant	0.0						
Health Authority	0.0						
Private Sector	500.0		50.0	100.0	150.0	200.0	
Section 106 / 278	0.0						
Government Grant (Specify)	0.0						
Departmental Borrowing	0.0						
Any Other Income (Specify)	0.0						
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>3251.0</b>	<b>120.8</b>	<b>880.2</b>	<b>700.0</b>	<b>750.0</b>	<b>800.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Balance / Shortfall =</b>	<b>2900.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>650.0</b>	<b>700.0</b>	<b>750.0</b>	<b>800.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Parent scheme number: 33264  
Title: Tree Planting Initiative

## **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.1 This is a significant service decision which is not subject to call in.

## **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 In order to grow the trees efficiently the service must procure the correct equipment. Germination of seed is estimated to be at roughly 50%. This could drop significantly if the correct equipment and conditions are not in place. This would then require reinvestment to replace the lost seed, compost and trays.

4.6.2 If the trees are not grown to the agreed quantity the council will fail to meet its targets for carbon reduction as part of the climate emergency.

## **5. Conclusions**

5.1 This scheme is essential to the council meeting its carbon reduction targets and represents a large part of what the Parks and Countryside service can achieve to help with the climate emergency. Leeds City Council is in a unique position, by having a facility like the Arium it can create an inclusive scheme, which can make a real impact on the climate going forward. Furthermore, because the Arium can be adapted to grow trees, the council can allow the public to be involved through seed gathering, providing much needed inclusion and education regarding the current climate emergency.

## **6. Recommendations**

6.1 That the Chief Officer Parks & Countryside gives authority to spend £200k on a new automated benching system to support the production of trees for the climate emergency scheme.

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.