

## Report of Natural Environment Manager

## Report to Chief Parks and Countryside Officer

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021

## Subject: Trees For Climate Funding Agreement with Kirklees Borough Council

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s): This is a City-wide project - All electoral wards included.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible 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 of main issues

1. Parks and Countryside have applied for UK Government Trees for Climate (T4C) funding on behalf of Leeds City Council (LCC) to support the council commitment to create 50 ha of new woodland each year.
2. T4C funding was awarded to the England Community Forests (ECF) by DEFRA to deliver new woodland creation this year across all 10 of these nationally.
3. Leeds City Council is a founding member of the White Rose Forest (WRF) which covers West and North Yorkshire and is the largest of these ECF.
4. Kirklees Borough Council (KBC) are the Accountable Body for the WRF and have an agreement in place with the ECF whereby they administer the T4C fund to successful applicants.
5. LCC's application has been successful and KBC have drawn up a T4C Grant Agreement for LCC, which has been signed and dated. The council is now required to legally execute the grant agreement as a deed and have this legally sealed.

### Recommendations

1. The Chief Parks and Countryside Officer is recommended to approve the creation of the UK Government Trees for Climate grant agreement deed and to have this legally sealed between the Council and Kirklees Borough Council as the accountable body.

## 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to legally execute the UK Government Trees for Climate (T4C) grant agreement as a deed.

## 2. Background information

- 2.1 In January 2020 Parks and Countryside presented an Executive Board report detailing how the service could respond to the recently declared climate emergency. Following an announcement by the Leader of the Council in February 2020 the intention is to carry out the following:
- Convert 1250 hectares of Parks and Countryside land to woodland over 25 years;
  - This will equate to 50 hectares per year over this period;
  - Grow and plant 5.8 million trees.
- 2.2 The woodland creation initiative focusses on sites identified within Leeds City Council owned land, carrying out due diligence checks, consultation with ward members, residents and community groups.

## 3. Main issues

- 3.1 The council has a financial commitment in place that includes capital funding as well as an assumption of success in obtaining other sources of funding to supplement planting, establishment and maintenance costs. Parks and Countryside have been successful in attracting funding offers for the 2020/21 planting season with the England Community Forests Trees for Climate fund. This is part of UK Government led funding have of £12.1 million Trees for Climate funding to the England Community Forests to create and establish new woodlands within the geographical boundaries of the 10 England Community Forests. The White Rose Forest (WRF) is the largest of the England Community Forests and Leeds is a part of this.
- 3.2 Kirklees Borough Council are the Accountable Body for the WRF and are administering the WRF's share of the Trees For Climate fund. A grant agreement has been drawn up by KBC to fund the creation and establishment of 32.5 ha of new woodland in Leeds in 2020/21. This funding is part of a 15 year programme which includes establishment and maintenance enabling replanting of woodland sites where take up is poor or patchy. It also includes elements of natural flood management and fencing as well as establishment costs such as weed control and ongoing maintenance issues which could include litter management and engagement.
- 3.3 The maximum grant available to the council is **£400,924.30**. This grant agreement needs to be executed as a deed which needs to be legally sealed in liaison with the Council's legal team. All woodland creation sites that are included in the T4C Grant Agreement have been independently inspected by WRF staff and Parks and Countryside have been invited to claim the funding for which a claim form has been completed.
- 3.4 The T4C Grant Agreement needs to be executed as a Deed before funding will be released by KBC.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

4.1.1 The council aspiration and commitment has been the subject of an Executive Board report in January 2020 and subsequent announcement at full council in February 2020. Local ward members are consulted on individual schemes in their wards.

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

4.1.3 An equality, diversity, cohesion and integration screening was completed when the original decision by executive board was taken in January 2020 to commence the woodland creation programme. This report is to release capital funding to implement this decision in line with the findings which can be viewed here: [Proposal for Woodland Creation appendix A 291119.pdf \(leeds.gov.uk\)](#).

### **4.2 Council policies and best council plan**

### **4.3 Resources and value for money**

4.3.1 The council has a financial commitment in place that includes capital funding as well as an assumption of success in obtaining other sources of funding to supplement planting, establishment and maintenance costs. The maximum grant available to the council is **£400,924.30**. This grant agreement needs to be executed as a deed which needs to be legally sealed in liaison with the Council's legal team.

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

4.4.1 This is a significant operational decision and is not subject to call in. There are no issues with access to information. There is a legal requirement to execute the T4C grant agreement with Kirklees Borough Council as the accountable body. The aid granted shall not be used for commercial purposes or affect any commercial markets or affect international trade and so shall not fall within the scope of Subsidy Control. There is no market for carbon sequestration through forestry and which is the primary goal the Programme aims to achieve.

### **4.5 Risk management**

4.5.1 Failure to execute the T4C Grant Agreement as a Deed will mean that the funding will not be released by KBC.

## **5. Recommendations**

5.1 The Chief Parks and Countryside Officer is recommended to approve the creation of the UK Government Trees for Climate grant agreement deed and to have this legally sealed between the Council and Kirklees Borough Council as the accountable body.

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

6.1 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.