

## TREES FOR CLIMATE FUNDING OFFER

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Report of: Natural Environment Manager

Report to: Chief Officer Climate, Energy and Green Spaces

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### Brief summary

1. Climate, Energy and Green Spaces 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 13 of these nationally.
3. Leeds City Council is a founding member of the White Rose Forest (WRF) which covers West and North Yorkshire. The WRF is the largest of the ECF's.
4. Kirklees Borough Council (KBC) is the Accountable Body for the WRF and has 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

- a) The Chief Officer, Climate, Energy and Green Spaces 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.

## What is this report about?

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

## What impact will this proposal have?

2. 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. Climate, Energy and Green Spaces has been successful in attracting funding offers for the 2022/23 planting season with the England Community Forests Trees for Climate fund. This is part of UK Government led funding initiative (Nature For Climate), which ring fenced £12.1 million, called 'Trees for Climate' fund, for the England Community Forests to create and establish new woodlands within the geographical boundaries of the 13 England Community Forests. The White Rose Forest (WRF) is the largest of the England Community Forests and Leeds is a part of this.

Kirklees Borough Council is the Accountable Body for the WRF and is 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 **52.89 ha** of new woodland in Leeds in 2022/23. 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.

The maximum grant available to the council is **£471,242.00**. 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.

The T4C Grant Agreement needs to be executed as a Deed before funding will be released by KBC.

## How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing       Inclusive Growth       Zero Carbon

3. Woodland creation and tree planting schemes take place across the City each year and provide attractive and connected areas for people to enjoy, provide opportunities for increased physical and mental health.

Attractive, healthy environments attract investment, creating opportunities for inclusive growth.

The City's woodland creation and tree planting programme is part of a carbon-led tree planting strategy. The aim being to lock up 50% of residual CO2 by 2050.

## What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?       Yes       No

4. 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.
5. Full on-line consultation via 'Common Place'.

### **What are the resource implications?**

6. 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 Trees For Climate grant available to the council is **£471,242.00**. This grant agreement needs to be executed as a deed which needs to be legally sealed in liaison with the Council's legal team.

### **What are the key risks and how are they being managed?**

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

### **What are the legal implications?**

8. 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.

## **Options, timescales and measuring success**

### **What other options were considered?**

9. The Trees For Climate funding is one of several government and corporate funding opportunities that we successfully apply for.

### **How will success be measured?**

10. Once the funding Agreement has been sealed as a Deed by LCC and Kirklees Legal teams, the funding will be paid in full to LCC.

### **What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?**

11. Planting in the 2022/23 tree planting season has been completed. The funding offer has been made and the legal process needs to be completed by **30<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

### **Appendices**

- None.

### **Background papers**

- EDCI already published at the start.