

OFFICER DECISION RECORD 1 FORM

This form should be used to record Officer Decisions in Excess of £100k (but below the key decision threshold), or where required by Financial, Contract or other Procedure Rules or following formal delegation from Cabinet or a Cabinet Member or a Council Committee.

Decision Reference No: PLACE24 0959

BOX 1**DIRECTORATE:** Place**DATE:** 15/02/2024**Contact Name:** Julia Foster**Tel. No.:****Subject Matter:** Woodland Trust Grow Back Greener Challenge Fund (23/24)**BOX 2****DECISION TAKEN**

To accept a combined grant of £40,186.03 from the Woodland Trust's Grow Back Greener Challenge Fund, and agree to the terms and conditions set out in the Grant Agreement.

BOX 3**REASON FOR THE DECISION**

1. Following the declaration of a Climate & Biodiversity Emergency in 2019, Doncaster has set an ambition to plant one million trees across the borough over the next ten years, to increase tree coverage from 13% to 16.5%, planting more trees in urban areas, community spaces, town centres, gateway green areas and woodlands.
2. The Government's Net-Zero Strategy: Grow Back Greener states that halting climate change and protecting the natural world are two parts of the same coin, so we will be restoring our countryside to reduce emissions, sequester carbon and build in our resilience to climate change...We will increase the planting of trees to sequester carbon...' (page 26)
3. The England Trees Action Plan 2021-2024 (May 2021) - The Government has committed to increasing tree planting rates across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year, intending to spend over £500 million from the Nature for Climate Fund on trees and woodlands in England between 2020 and 2025. (Some of this funding is being routed through Woodland Trust and other organisations to provide free trees for schools).
4. Team Doncaster's Environment & Sustainability Strategy 2020–2030 - Natural Environment: Woodland, Trees and Green spaces includes the following aims:
 - Protect and enhance existing woodland and green spaces.
 - Increase overall tree cover and woodland cover
5. The strategic and developmental resource needed to plan and co-ordinate successful tree planting projects with the borough requires the development of new capacities within the Council, specifically around delivering background engagement and communications skills for acquiring sites for planting within the private sector. Funding from GBG is specifically targeted at covering the costs of specialist surveys, woodland creation, fencing, other infrastructure, and ongoing maintenance. As such it would provide an essential resource for

increasing tree planting across the borough, ensure successful planting projects can be delivered to 2025 and further into the future.

6. This funding will pay for the delivery of woodland creation, plus a further 5 years of maintenance, for the following tree planting project on a CDC asset site:

Woodland Creation: Toll Bar Park

This project will improve the ecological and amenity value of an existing recreational site which lies on the fringe of Tollbar, a suburb of Doncaster. Woodland creation in this urban fringe location will involve a total planted area of 1.8 ha (including open space) of native woodland, with areas of varying density for variable structure and to reflect site conditions and for landscape character. A total of 2,100 trees will be planted (including approx. 25% shrubs), with 40% open space of the site remaining for recreation and access purposes.

Sensitive woodland creation at this site will increase habitat connectivity and other ecological benefits whilst also enhancing the space for the local users of the site. This site will link in with the existing woodland sites at Bentley Community woodland and the nearby CDC Bentley tip site to increase tree cover, robustness and ecological connectivity in the area of NE Doncaster.

Capital Works (Year 1): £29,196.03

Maintenance Works (Years 2 – 5): £10,990.00

Total value: £40,186.03

BOX 4

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

1. Site sizes and/or specifications make them ineligible for funding through other sources, such as England Woodland Creation Offer, LATF and Urban Tree Fund.
2. As the sites are council owned assets, there are further limitations for accessing funding for planting through wider community-focused schemes.
3. Continuation of planning planting projects using current council funding has proven limiting for the delivery of our aspirations for increasing the canopy cover across the borough as referred to above.

Recourse to the Council's earmarked reserve for projects delivering the Environment and Sustainability Strategy would not be prudent when funds were being offered from external resources.

BOX 5

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

As set out in S111 Local Government Act 1972, "a local authority shall have power to do anything (whether or not involving the expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions."

The procurement route chosen must be in accordance with the requirements of Contract Procedure Rules & the external funder

Name: S. R. Fawcus

Date: 16.02.24

Name of Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services (or representative)

BOX 6**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

It is proposed to accept a grant from the Woodland Trust's Grow Back Greener Challenge Fund of £40,186.03, to cover woodland creation costs of £29,196.03 and maintenance costs of £10,990.00.

The maintenance grant will be awarded in instalments; 70% following confirmation of satisfactory completion of the woodland creation work and 30% in year 5 or year 10 following confirmation of successful establishment of the trees. The grant for the woodland creation is payable in arrears on completion of the work. All expenditure must be claimed no later than the 14th of April of the year the works take place.

As there is no requirement in the grant conditions to treat the grant as a capital grant, and the value is below the de minimus for capital expenditure at CDC, the grant income and related expenditure can all be treated as revenue. Appropriate year end accounting entries will be required in order to match the income for maintenance costs to the relevant year.

Directors are responsible for ensuring that plans are in place for all external funding within the Directorate, including ensuring that all expenditure is in line with the agreement and identifying alternative funding for any associated costs, which cannot be recovered from the project funding, as per FPRs E9 to E15. The relevant director is also responsible for producing all necessary grant claims and returns listed within the grant agreement and for any exit strategies for the grant.

Name: Olivia Brown

Date: 26/02/2024

Name of Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Director of Finance (or representative)

BOX 7**OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS****Procurement**

The Tree Planting Project is to be delivered in line with Contract Procedure Rules and Public Contract Regulations, ensuring value for money and legal compliance.

It is advised that early engagement with Strategic Procurement and Legal services is made in order to ensure these implications are fully adhered to.

It is to be noted that any funding stipulations are followed to ensure compliance of The Grant Funding offer

Name: Rob Debenham

Date: 22/2/24

Name of Assistant Director (or representative)

ANY IMPLICATIONS SENT TO DEPARTMENTS SHOULD GENERALLY BE SUBMITTED AT LEAST 5 WORKING DAYS IN ADVANCE TO ENSURE THESE CAN BE GIVEN THE RELEVANT CONSIDERATION.

BOX 8**EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:** (To be completed by the author).

1. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:
 - a. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
 - b. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - c. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
2. To comply with its Public Sector Equality Duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different communities, the Council is engaging with local communities in less affluent areas and will ensure inclusivity for participation in all planting activities.
3. The council will work to ensure that no staff member, adult or child participating in the project receives less favourable treatment on any grounds such as gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, ethnic or national origin, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion or marital status.
4. The council values difference and recognises the value that different backgrounds, skills, outlooks and experiences brings. Fairness and equality will be promoted at all times.
5. The council will not tolerate behaviour that contradicts this statement.

BOX 9**RISK IMPLICATIONS:** (To be completed by the author)

1. The Grant covers revenue expenditure in relation to the purpose of the Grant which is to provide support to Local Authorities in England for the maintenance required to ensure 85% successful establishment of planting projects is achieved by Year 5 (2029). As such the grant will be used for the purpose of delivering the Funded Activities.
2. Costs are rising. The capital and revenue funds awarded are within the costs expected by Woodland Trust for this activity and have been accepted. Woodland Trust are unable to increase the total grant.
3. Risks and issues emerging can be discussed with the Grow Back Greener Grant Manager.
4. The LA shall participate in monitoring and engagement activities conducted on Woodland Trust's behalf by the deadlines agreed.
5. Woodland Trust will notify the LA of any planned changes relating to the administration and monitoring of GBG.
6. Some key risks to be monitored and mitigated include:
 - Recruitment of contractors: Due to the increase in demand nationally for tree planting projects, there is a difficulty in appointing skilled/experienced contractors to deliver works.
 - Tree stock availability: The national increase in planting project is putting pressure on nurseries being able to supply tree stocks, particularly UKISG nurseries (which are a requirement for the GBG agreement)
 - Staff capacity: The number of skilled/experienced staff able to deliver tree/woodland maintenance works currently employed within the council is limited; recruitment is underway to increase capacity, but due to national demands these

positions have not yet been filled. With the shortage of contractors this could impact on the maintenance delivery requirements of the funding.

**BOX 10
CONSULTATION**

**BOX 11
INFORMATION NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

The background papers should be redacted under section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 because they are deemed commercially sensitive information. Signatures should also be redacted under section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, as the information is personal and sensitive and exempt from publication

Name: A J Rowbotham **Date: 27th Feb 24** _____

Name of FOI Lead Officer for service area where ODR originates

**BOX 12
BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Please confirm if any Background Papers are included with this ODR: **YES**

1. GBG Landowner Grant Agreement - Toll bar park
2. GBG Project Plan - Tollbar Park (Final)
3. WT Ethical Compliance Form
4. Grant Summary - GBG

**BOX 13
AUTHORISATION**

Name: Dan Swaine Date: 29 February 2024

Director for Place

Does this decision require authorisation by the Chief Financial Officer or other Officer

YES/NO

If yes please authorise below:

Name: Faye Tyas Date: 5 March 2024

Assistant Director of Finance & Technology & Chief Financial Officer

Consultation with Relevant Member(s)

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Designation _____

(e.g. Mayor, Cabinet Member or Committee Chair/Vice-Chair)

Declaration of Interest YES/NO

If YES please give details below:

PLEASE NOTE THIS FORM WILL BE PUBLISHED ON THE COUNCIL'S WEBSITE IN FULL UNLESS IT CONTAINS EXEMPT OR CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION.

Once completed a PDF copy of this form and any relevant background papers should be forwarded to Governance Services at Ladem@doncaster.gov.uk who will arrange publication.

It is the responsibility of the decision taker to clearly identify any information that is confidential or exempt and should be redacted before publication.