

## 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 0939

**BOX 1**

**DIRECTORATE:** Place

**DATE:** 31/01/2024

**Contact Name:** Julia Foster

**Tel. No.:**

**Subject Matter:** Tree Council Network Rail Community Tree Planting Grant

**BOX 2****DECISION TAKEN**

To accept a combined grant of £29,800.20 from the Tree Council's Network Rail Community Tree Planting Grant, and agree to the terms and conditions set out in the Grant Offer Letters.

**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. Cemeteries and crematoriums provide important cultural ecosystem services within the urban green infrastructure, providing places for remembrance and reflection for users. As such, they are a highly valued urban greenspace. Since 2021 limited planting has taken place within CDC cemetery sites, despite opportunities for new tree planting being available across many sites. Without outside project

support it is likely that cemetery tree cover will decline in the future due to a lack of planting and natural regeneration, which may have negative implications for the future role of cemeteries as urban greenspace.

6. Since 2021 we have successfully planted almost 30,000 trees in school grounds, with planting projects delivered in 49 schools. This programme is increasing in popularity with schools; as a result the Sustainability Unit is regularly receiving enquiries from new schools requesting tree planting within their grounds.
7. Funding from the Tree Council is specifically targeted at covering creation costs of tree planting projects. As such, this funding would provide an essential resource to increase our planting figures and contribute towards achieving our target of planting one million trees by 2031.
8. Applications for this funding were by invitation only to selected LAs, of which CDC was approached based on its One Million Tree Target and its achievements in delivering tree planting projects to date.
9. This funding will pay for the following tree planting projects:-

### **Lot 1: Cemeteries and Crematoriums**

Tree Council funding will fully fund the delivery of tree planting projects in cemeteries and crematorium across the Doncaster borough. Based on opportunities identified from on-site assessments, 8 CDC sites will be provided with hedgerows and trees (orchard and native broadleaf species) which will provide positive aesthetic value and sensory feelings to each location, whilst also benefitting local wildlife at each site through habitat creation.

The majority of planting will be delivered by a local contractor. This funding has a commitment to community engagement for planting; where it is possible to so do, this will be delivered through community planting sessions to engage local businesses, community groups, schools, brownies/scouts and local residents), led by our Countryside and Woodland Rangers (CWSRs) service and with contractors supporting with capacity for both delivery and/or leading sessions where required.

All planting must be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

Total value: £14,950.12

### **Lot 2: Schools**

Tree Council funding will fully fund the delivery of planting projects in the grounds of 20 selected schools in Doncaster, located across all 4 locality areas. This will:

- Create green spaces to connect children with nature and help their education on these matters
- Enhance biodiversity through creation of wildlife-focused habitats
- Improve security of spaces by planting hedgerows as natural boundaries
- Manage environmental issues through productive planting (e.g. create shadelines, manage groundwater, provide windbreaks)

Schools will be provided with hedgerows, orchards and/or tree circle classrooms. Planting will be delivered by our Countryside and Woodland Rangers (CWSRs) service wherever possible, with schools being involved with planting as part of educational sessions. Contractors will support with delivery of hedgerow planting and additional planting where capacity requires; this will be funded using part of the agreed EMR underspend from 22/23 QGC planting (funding allocated to tree planting within school grounds).

All planting must be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

Total value: £14,850.08

**BOX 4****ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

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**

Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides the Council with a general power of competence, allowing the Council to do anything that individuals generally may do. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives the Council the power to purchase goods and services.

Any goods or services purchased using this funding should be procured in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules and any funder requirements.

The Council will be required to comply with any grant terms and conditions from the funder and the responsible officer should ensure they are aware of those conditions and seek necessary advice as required.

**Name:**   S.R. Fawcus                        **Date:**   01.02.24  

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

**BOX 6****FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

It is proposed to accept a combined grant of £29,800.20 from the Tree Council's Network Rail Community Tree Planting Grant Scheme for the tree planting across 28 sites as described in the report.

85% of the grant will be received once the funder has the 'Grant Acceptance Letter' and the first of two 'Grant Claim Forms'. The remaining 15% will be received once the funder has the second Grant Claim Form, following successful completion of all works, submission of the project evaluation report and confirmation of no more than 5% mortality of planted trees upon inspection.

The grant agreement states that if over 5% tree mortality is found the service will be required to 'beat up' with tree replacements, and any stakes, canes, spirals and tubes required, to 100%. The Sustainability Service will need to identify any additional funding required for this if it occurs.

All planting outlined within the project proposal must be completed by the end of March 2024, unless an extension is sought and agreed. The grant agreement states that failure to meet the obligations could lead to funding being withheld or clawback invoked. 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 grant 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 any necessary grant claims or returns required.

Any work done by the Countryside and Woodland Rangers Service as part of these projects will be carried out within existing resources. Some further planting will be carried out at the schools in addition to the grant funded works in order to utilise the full allocation of EMR 2020-05 that was approved for the Queens Green Canopy scheme in 2022/23. This was funding allocated to tree planting within school grounds and therefore still considered to be within the scope of what the approval was originally for.

A revenue cost centre will be created for this grant scheme on approval of this report.

**Name: Olivia Brown**

**Date: 02/02/2024**

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

## **BOX 7**

### **OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS**

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 The Grant Funding offer.

**Name: H Donnellan**

**Date: 13/02/2024**

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 expenditure in relation to the purpose of the Grant which is to provide support to Local Authorities in England with funding required to accelerate plans for tree and woodland planting. As such the grant will be used for the purpose of delivering the Funded Activities.
2. Costs are rising. The funds awarded are within the costs expected by Tree Council for this activity and have been accepted. Any modification to the original budget will be at the discretion of the Tree Council.
3. Risks and issues emerging which threaten the ability to meet the requirements of the grant agreement must be reported to the Tree Council immediately.
4. The LA shall participate in monitoring and engagement activities conducted on Tree Council's behalf by the deadline agreed.
5. All projects must have a 95% tree survival rate. If over 5% tree mortality is found the LA will be required to 'beat up' with tree replacements, and any stakes, canes, spirals and tubes required, to 100%.
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 may be a difficulty in appointing skilled/experienced contractors to deliver works where required.
  - 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 funding agreement)
  - Staff capacity: The number of skilled/experienced staff able to deliver tree planting activities in an educational capacity employed within the council is limited. With the shortage of contractors this could impact on the 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 this is deemed commercially sensitive information. Signatures should also be redacted under section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, as the information is deemed personal sensitive information and exempt from publication.

**Name:** \_A J Rowbotham      **Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> 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. TC Grant Offer Letter - CDC - Lot 1
2. TC Grant Offer Letter - CDC - Lot 2
3. TC Grant Acceptance Letter -CDC - Lot 1
4. TC Grant Acceptance Letter -CDC - Lot 2
5. Grant Claim Form 1 - PR018 - CDC Lot 1 (Cems)
6. Grant Claim Form 1 - PR019 - CDC Lot 2 (Schools)
7. NWR Project Evaluation Checklist 2023
8. Email: Tree Council (*stating updates to apply to grant agreements*)

**BOX 13  
AUTHORISATION**

**Name: Dan Swaine                      Signature:    Date: 15.02.24**

Director for Place

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

**YES**

**If yes please authorise below:**

**Name: Faye Tyas    Signature:    Date: 22.02.24**

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](mailto: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.**