

**From: Michael Payne Cabinet Member, Highways and Transport**  
**Simon Jones, Director of Highways, Transportation & Waste**

**To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee Meeting – 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Subject: Shared Outcomes Fund – Trees Outside Woodland – Progress Update**

**Key decision: No**

**Classification: Unrestricted**

**Electoral Division: All**

**Summary:** This report provides an update on the Council's participation in the Defra Shared Outcomes Fund – Trees Outside Woodland project and describes the future workstreams and deliverables up to the end of the project's lifetime (31<sup>st</sup> March 2023).

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on project approach and deliverables the County Council will undertake as part of the Shared Outcomes Fund – Trees Outside of Woodland project.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Trees Outside Woodlands (TOW) project, led by Defra, Natural England, and the Tree Council, is a £2.52 million investment over the next two and a half years with up to £500k being allocated to Kent County Council. It is aimed at supporting schemes that establish new ways of expanding tree cover in our cities, towns, and countryside. These new trees should seek to maximise benefits for local quality of life, mitigate climate change impacts and create habitats for wildlife. The project, running from October 2020 to March 2023, is part of HM Treasury's broader £200 million Shared Outcomes Fund package. KCC was instrumental in framing the successful funding bid, through its active participation in the national Defra Ash Dieback Health and Safety Task Group.
- 1.2 The project will use pilot studies delivered on the ground by participating Local Authorities to develop cost-effective and innovative approaches to planting trees outside woodlands and will seek to increase the supply of locally grown, bio-secure tree stock through a series of innovative studies.
- 1.3 Tree planting outside of woodlands is often complex and expensive in its execution, urban environments pose many challenges to establishing trees and the costs of implementation are high. There has been an associated decline in

TOWs because of this which the Shared Outcome Funds seeks to address to deliver on an increasingly high-profile, national policy issue.

- 1.4 There is a clear need to promote large-scale expansion of tree cover outside of woodlands if optimal benefits for the global environment and local communities are to be realised. Simultaneously, strengthening local availability and biosecurity of tree stock is vital, if tree planting ambitions are to be achieved and the risk from importation of tree pests and pathogens, such as Ash Dieback are to be minimised. These, aspirations are driven both by government ambition and a commitment to ‘build back better’.
- 1.5 The Shared Outcomes Fund - TOW (Trees Outside Woodlands) is based on the following identified needs:
  - The cost [to government] of establishing and maintaining TOWs must be reduced.
  - Biosecurity outcomes for newly established TOWs must be improved, to reduce the risk of importing invasive tree pests and diseases.
- 1.6 It is intended that the findings of the various pilot studies will be used to inform long-term national policy, allowing a more strategic approach to increasing non-woodland tree cover to be taken across government. If the innovations being tested are successful, they can be rapidly applied to existing and future grant schemes and guidance.
- 1.7 The pilots will be jointly delivered by Defra, The Tree Council, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Forestry Commission, Natural England, Highways England, Network Rail, Chichester District Council, Cornwall Council, Kent County Council, Norfolk County Council and Shropshire Council.

## 2. Kent County Council’s Participation

2.1 Kent County Council has been identified as the lead Local Authority to deliver the ‘**Urban Tree Establishment Funding**’ pilot study and the ‘**Alternative Management of Roadside Corridors**’ scoping study. KCC will also be supporting our project partners’ pilot studies for greater robustness, as shown in Table 1.

2.2 **Table 1: Activities Matrix for Pilot and Scoping Studies.** Dark green indicates the study lead, pale green indicates study support.

Pilot study:	Kent CC	Chichester DC	Cornwall Council	Norfolk CC	Shropshire Council	Natural England	Highways England
<b>Urban Tree Establishment</b>							
<b>Subsidised New Tree Scheme</b>							
Agroforestry/ Orchards							
Management of Hedgerow Trees							

<b>Boosting Community Tree Nurseries</b>							
Scoping study:							
<b>Alternative Management of Roadsides</b>							
Natural Regeneration Potential							
Minimising Perverse Outcomes from Net Gain							

2.3 The ‘**Urban Tree Establishment Funding**’ pilot scheme looks to establish novel ways to increase tree cover within the urban environment. This pilot will focus on three areas:

2.3.1 **Planned New Developments** – analysis of optimal tree planting approaches, including species, setting, configuration and maintenance through formulation of a Trees Outside Woodlands Design Guide.

2.3.2 **Major Retrofit Planting** – investigating solutions to improve hard landscaping, utility routing and tree pit design in the same space.

2.3.3 **Small-scale Planting** - identifying land for tree planting to enable delivery of optimal benefits for people, wildlife, biosecurity, and ecosystem services.

2.4 The ‘**Alternative Management of Roadside Corridors**’ scoping study looks to investigate whether natural regeneration, seed sowing and other techniques can be used to establish or improve tree populations on land adjacent to the highway. This pilot will focus on four areas:

2.4.1 **Linking Existing Woods Using Opportunities Afforded by Transport** - investigating the expansion and linkage of existing tree cover using the linear corridors afforded by HS1, the M2, M20, M25, M26 and other major trunk roads.

2.4.2 **Improved Management Techniques** - researching optimal maintenance interventions and the most effective and robust strimmer guards, mulch mats or fencing and methods to reduce avoidable damage.

2.4.3 **Sylvan Transport Corridors** - investigating policy and provision of funding support towards landowners who have roads bisecting their land for new and expanded linear tree cover.

2.4.4 **Green Bridges** - investigating the costs and implementation of green bridges as a component of major highway infrastructure retrofits, new projects, and the wider planning process.

- 2.5 Kent County Council will provide support to Chichester District Council as part of the '**Subsidised New Tree Scheme**' pilot. This will involve working with the Kent Countryside Partnership Network to provide advice only (Year 1), subsidised trees (Year 2) and free trees (Year 3), to third parties within Kent, funded through SOF. This project will follow the 'right tree, right place', approach, by supplying locally appropriate and/or rare bio-secure native species for planting in specific locations, with the purpose of restoring biodiversity and reconnecting the landscape.
- 2.6 Kent County Council will also provide support to Norfolk County Council as part of the '**Boosting Community Tree Nurseries**' pilot, which involves an investigation into the development of community nurseries to support provision of free trees schemes, in collaboration with the Prison Industries Team within the Ministry of Justice, as a part of their ongoing work on establishing tree nurseries and fostering associated skills, as a component of inmate rehabilitation in prisons.
- 2.7 Several experimental trial plots will therefore be delivered monitored, and assessed for the various workstreams, in collaboration with partners, to gather data on the various methodologies.
- 2.8 This project also provides the opportunity to begin the restoration of now rare and uncommon native tree species, including black poplar, alder buckthorn, juniper, box, wild service, and small-leaved lime which once made-up Kent's natural tree cover, to the landscape. Pollen cores and Neolithic charcoal deposits from archaeological excavations suggest that prior to wide-scale human modification of the landscape, from the late Neolithic around 4,000 BC, woodland cover in Kent was much more diverse in terms of species composition than is the case today. This data will inform species selection for any trial planting sites.

### 3. Progress to Date

- 3.1 A dedicated project officer was in place in time for the project's initiation on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020, working within the Highway Soft Landscapes Team, and a Local Officer Task Group established, comprising KCC Highways, Resilience and Emergency Planning Service and Portfolio Management Office.

#### 3.2 Urban Tree Establishment -

3.2.1 **Small-scale Planting:** KCC are ideally placed to plant a number of experimental native woodlands across the county to boost urban tree cover. Site selection has focused on areas of the county with low tree cover and/or exhibiting multiple indices of deprivation. The experiment design involves trialling a range of planting methodologies including: Miyawaki method (i.e., high density native planting), bio-secure natural regeneration, local provenance seeding and traditional tree planting plots (as controls), across different soil types and utilising a range of organic soil enhancing additives.

3.2.2 The rate of growth, cost-effectiveness, carbon sequestration abilities, biodiversity and additional wider benefits for each plot will be

monitored, in collaboration with Natural England, throughout the duration of the project, comparing each experimental plot with an adjacent control plot.

- 3.2.3 These various methodologies will be trialled at: Allington Open Space, Hudson's Quarry and Park Wood Recreation Ground in Maidstone, Willowmead Open Space in Leybourne and Seager Road open space and Festival Field in Sheerness, working in partnership with District partners.
- 3.2.4 Plots will be protected by chestnut spile fencing products, sourced from local coppice woodlands and biodegradable tree guards will be utilised where they are required.
- 3.2.5 A consultant from Wild Urban Spaces has been contracted to advise on the Miyawaki planting methodology.
- 3.2.6 Site preparation and planting commenced in February 2021 (see Appendix 1).
- 3.2.7 **Major Retrofit Planting:** Funding was provided through the Shared Outcomes Fund TOW budget for 34 trees to be planted in February 2021 in linear SuDS pits at George V Avenue, Margate as part of the Flood and Water Management 'Cool Towns' project (EU Interreg 2Seas). Data on temperature monitoring and flow control (undertaken by GreenBlue Urban) will be generated by this project.
- 3.2.8 Total number of trees planted in Year 1: **2,846** (2,814 in experimental urban planting plots + 32 for 'Cool Towns' project).

### 3.3 **Alternative Management of Roadside Corridors –**

- 3.3.1 The development of a large trial plot to test variations on the theme of natural regeneration (including bird-sown trees and scrub) and broadcast sowing has been agreed with Forestry England and TOW national project partners at Forestry England's new Pleasant Farm woodland site near Lenham (see Appendix 2).
- 3.3.2 This pilot project site area has now been agreed with Highways England, as an appropriate highway corridor suitable for accommodating planting trials, in line with relevant highway guidelines.
- 3.3.3 The tree cover development, tree height, density, diversity/richness, biodiversity, soil data and survivability of the plots will be monitored throughout the duration of the project, through quarterly and annual reporting on all data collected. This will contribute towards answering specific Defra/Natural England research questions.
- 3.3.4 Planting and seed sowing will commence in autumn/winter 2021.

## 4. Looking Forward

### 4.1 Urban Tree Establishment –

- 4.1.1 **Small-scale Planting:** An additional trial planting site at Sevington Border Facility is currently under discussion.
- 4.1.2 A Miyawaki-method Handbook will be developed, informed by learning from these small-scale urban planting trials.
- 4.1.3 **Planned New Developments:** Development of an Urban Tree Cover Design Guide for Kent is already underway.
- 4.1.4 Implementation monitoring and evaluation of Design Guide trial plots will inform this workstream.
- 4.1.5 **Major Retrofit Planting:** Analysis of utility provider behaviours, utility routing enforcement opportunities, funding streams from utility providers to restore tree cover and to produce a report of legislative recommendations to key stakeholders.

### 4.2 Alternative Management of Roadside Corridors –

- 4.2.1 Identify relevant locations within defined transport corridors as part of key scoping studies.
- 4.2.2 Expand on the existing work by A-one+ who identified potential green bridge sites on the Highways England network in Kent.

## 5. Financial Implications

All capital and revenue costs are fully financed through the Shared Outcome Fund.

## 6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The legal implications of KCC's participation in the Shared Outcomes Fund – TOW project is addressed within a Memorandum of Agreement, which has been agreed with Defra and all other participating parties.

## 7. Policy Framework

- 7.1 The Council's involvement in the Shared Outcomes Fund - TOW project supports KCC's Strategic Vision through the Strategic Outcomes:
  - 'Kent communities feel the benefits of economic growth by being in-work, healthy and enjoying a good quality of life.'
  - 'Kent's physical and natural environment is protected, enhanced and enjoyed by residents and visitors.'
- 7.2 The project is in line with Corporate Strategic Outcome 4: A cleaner and greener Kent and supports the corporate commitment to plant 1.5 million trees within the county, as part of the wider strategy for the protection, restoration,

and creation of natural solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change, support biodiversity, and promote multiple benefits.

## **8. Equalities Implications**

8.1 An equalities impact assessment for the overall project has been carried out by Defra, it states: *“This proposal has strong links to a number of government targets and national, local and departmental strategies tree planting, biodiversity, resilience of natural systems and human health and wellbeing, including the 25 Year Environment Plan. By providing the tools needed to enhance and accelerate the planting and establishment of TOWs, it will feed into efforts to improve the state of nature, mitigate, and adapt to climate change, and provide society with access to green spaces and the benefits that these bring.”* Therefore, no negative impacts have been found.

## **9. Other Corporate Implications**

9.1 The County Council’s involvement with the Shared Outcomes Fund – TOW project supports KCC’s tree health and biosecurity duties as outlined in the [KRF Animal and Plant Health Emergency Plan](#).

## **10. Conclusion**

10.1 The Shared Outcomes Fund – TOW project represents and opportunity for Kent County Council to support and influence tree planting strategies and policies at a national level.

10.2 Its overall ambition is to unlock new approaches to tree planting which will support and directly contribute to the UK’s and Kent’s ability to achieve its aspirations for increased tree cover in the years to come whilst improving our overall understanding of non-woodland trees.

10.3 Findings of these pilot studies will work towards improving the national approach to enhancing non-woodland tree stocks. Any successful approaches (such as those which can deliver greater tree cover for the same cost as current approaches) can be incorporated into current and future tree planting schemes, including Environmental Land Management and the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and could be rolled out across the country.

## **11. Recommendation:**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on project approach and deliverables the County Council will undertake as part of the Shared Outcomes Fund – Trees Outside of Woodland project.

## **12. Background Documents**

- Appendices 1 & 2 – Site Plans and Photos

### 13. Contact Details

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