

## RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

**1. Description of decision**

To approve grant funding support which is provided under the Trees for Climate Programme for the land located at Berry Wood in partnership with the Forest of Marston Vale Trust.

**2. Date of decision**

14 August 2023

**3. Reasons for decision**

To enable the Forest of Marston Vale Trust to deliver the Trees for Climate Programme in Bedford, in accordance with the approved purposes of the grant and the requirements of DEFRA.

To enable the creation of a gross woodland area totalling 16.65 ha and annual maintenance for 15 years at Berry Wood.

The Forest of Marston Vale Trust will manage the planting and establishment of the new woodland. The grant payable under this agreement will reflect this arrangement of works being undertaken by the Forest of Marston Vale Trust on behalf of this Council.

**4. Alternatives considered and rejected**

The alternative is not to accept this funding agreement – The Council could choose not to support the delivery of the programme through the Forest of Marston Vale Trust. The environmental benefit of planting a new woodland will be lost along with the maintenance for a period of 15 years post planting.

**5. How decision is to be funded**

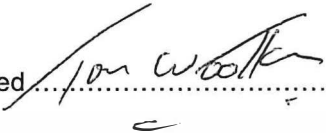
This support is provided under the Trees for Climate Programme being delivered locally by the Forest of Marston Vale Trust and funded by DEFRA. The total grant will be £299,587.50.

**6. Conflicts of interest**

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

Not Applicable

Signed  .....

Date: 14 August 2023

Name of Decision Taker: Tom Wootton

**This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.**

Date decision published: .....15August2023.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: .....24August2023.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

**Bedford Borough Council – Report to the Mayor**

**Date: 14 August 2023**

**Report by: Chief Officer Environment and Chief Officer for Commercial Services & Business Transformation**

**Subject: Trees for Climate Programme Funding Support – Land at Berry Wood**

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To approve grant funding support which is provided under the Trees for Climate Programme for the land located at Berry Wood in partnership with the Forest of Marston Vale Trust.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the Mayor considers, and if satisfied, agrees to:

**To approve the funding of £299,587.50 which is provided under the Trees for Climate programme for land at Berry Wood.**

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To enable the Forest of Marston Vale Trust to deliver the Trees for Climate programme in Bedford, in accordance with the approved purposes of the grant and the requirements of DEFRA.
- 3.2 To enable the creation of a gross woodland area at Berry Wood, totalling 16.65 ha, together with funding for annual maintenance for 15 years in partnership with the Forest of Marston Vale Trust and funded by DEFRA.

#### 4. KEY IMPLICATIONS

##### Legal Issues

- 4.1 After taking relevant legal advice from the Council's legal services team there is no reason why the Council should not agree to the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement.

##### Policy Issues

- 4.2 The Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2026, vision of the period of this Plan is:

- *We want Bedford Borough to thrive as a place, that people are proud of, want to live in and move to. To do this we need a growing and strong local economy and an active response to climate change. From this foundation our residents will be able to thrive and realise their potential, supporting and celebrating our diverse and inclusive communities.*

- 4.3 Cross-Cutting Theme – Climate Change Emergency – to deliver what we need to do across all our services to address climate change.

Sustainable Development and Environment Efficiency Strategy:

##### Priority 1: Demonstrating Community Leadership

- *Support local communities to reduce energy costs and carbon emissions*
- *Support schools/academies in the Borough to reduce their energy and water use*

##### Priority 2: Building Community Resilience

- *Support local communities to help them become resilient to the impacts of climate change*
- *Support the installation of low carbon buildings and communities within new and existing developments*

##### Resource Implications

- 4.4 Initial planting up and resource implication will be managed and delivered locally by the Forest of Marston Vale Trust and funded by DEFRA. There is no requirement for match funding.

Grant will be paid in support of this project in the following ways:	
Capital grant: <b>funds retained by the Forest of Marston Vale Trust to deliver the woodland</b>	£141,525
Annual Maintenance payments:	£4,995/year for 15 years
Annual Environmental Benefits payments:	£5,542.50/year for 15 years
<b>TOTAL (incl. all annual payments):</b>	<b>£299,587.50</b>

- 4.5 A ring-fenced maintenance reserve will need to be established so that the annual maintenance and environmental benefits payments can be drawn down to enable the Council to meet its requirements under the project/ funding agreement.

#### Risk Implications

- 4.6 If the Council does not strive to help the UK government and the Borough to reduce the impacts of Climate Change, it may have a negative impact on the Council's reputation and its ability to reach government set targets.

#### Environmental implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Council

- 4.7 The Trees for Climate Programme will also help to deliver one of the actions needed to reach the UK government target of net zero carbon by 2050, along with a wide range of additional benefits, including health and well-being and air quality benefits, an increase in biodiversity and the improvement of ecological networks to improve resilience of our biodiversity.

#### Equalities Impact

- 4.8 In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.9 In operating the Climate Change Fund the Council recognises the need to ensure that all residents and organisations of the borough are able to access information on the fund. The fund has been promoted through press articles, presentations and the council's website: [www.bedford.gov.uk](http://www.bedford.gov.uk). Those interested in the application process can email their interest to [climatechangefund@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:climatechangefund@bedford.gov.uk)

## 5. DETAILS

- 5.1 The 'Trees for Climate' programme will result in significant investment in woodland planting. The project will create 16.65 ha of new, publicly accessible woodland adjoining the current Berry Wood. The aims of the project are:
- Create new mixed broadleaf woodland on agricultural land with species adapted for projected climate change and potential pests and diseases.
  - Increase overall biodiversity by extending adjacent woodland and improved habitats.
  - Integrate scheduled monuments within woodland planting to showcase the importance of neolithic mortuary complexes as part of the historic landscape of North Bedfordshire.
- 5.2 Objectives of the project are:
- Establishment of a gross woodland area of 16.65ha
  - Retention of 4.93ha (representing 30%) of open space in the form of rides, glades and designed open space, mainly for protection of scheduled monuments.
  - Establishment of a total of 26,370 trees and shrubs at Berry Wood.
  - Establish the trees over a period of 15 years by performing regular maintenance such as weeding and beating up.

### Project Plan

- 5.3 Ground Preparation – Prior to planting commencing, the site is to be cultivated, rolled and drilled with a wildflower mix to provide an established field layer to the site.
- 5.4 Planting – The primary species make up 85% of the trees being planted and consist of native broadleaves and conifers (5% Scots pine). The remaining 15% are woody shrubs which are to be planted on the outward facing edges of the woodland towards scheduled monuments, and associated paths to create a more natural looking edge and increase biodiversity potential. Denser planting to be concentrated in the centre of woodland compartments, adopting a variable matrix to mimic natural colonisation processes and facilitate assisted nucleation and structural diversity. 5m clear margins to be retained to perimeter of woodland to allow access to ditches and boundary features.
- 5.5 Both primary tree species and woody shrubs will be planted at a variable matrix achieving 2250 stems/ha to reduce the amount of future management and thinning required.
- 5.6 All trees will be planted using the notch method with and will have 1.2m high tree guards fitted (0.6m high guards for woody shrubs). To reduce the unnecessary use of plastics and materials in afforestation projects the selected Tubex Nature tree guards (or similar) are made of fully biodegradable material (not applicable to cable ties).

### Establishment Phase

- 5.7 Beating up – Funding is being provided to cover the cost for replacing tree failures for the first three years of establishment. This funding will cover a loss of up to 20% of total tree numbers.
- 5.8 Replacement tree species should be of a mix the same as the initial planted species and should be in proportion to the initial individual species quantity. Cell grown trees would be preferred as these give the best chance of success. Tree failures will need to be surveyed towards the end of each planting season (late summer) and marked for replacement.
- 5.9 Weed Control - funding is being provided for an annual spot application of an appropriate herbicide for the first three years of establishment. The application should happen in mid-late spring when competing vegetation is emergent and must adhere with all relevant legislation and guidance.

### Future thinning

- 5.10 Typically from year 20 onwards, selective thinning may be necessary for the development of healthy woodland ecosystem, which encourages the development of an all-rounded woodland structure that incorporates a flourishing shrub layer amongst a mixed woodland canopy.
- 5.11 Removing or killing trees in overcrowded areas will improve the overall structure and health of remaining trees and allow light to reach the woodland floor which is highly beneficial for ground flora. If possible, leaving standing and lying deadwood will boost biodiversity by creating a rare habitat that is often missing from over managed woodlands. This can be done by ring barking selected trees or carefully hand felling and not 'tidying' fallen trees but letting them, as far as possible, decompose naturally.
- 5.12 Felling operations including thinning may require acquisition of approved felling licences prior to any operation commencing, these can be obtained through an approved Woodland Management plan or through an individual licence application with the Forestry Commission
- 5.13 Protective materials including tubes, spirals and stakes should be removed from site at this stage.

### Open Space

- 5.14 The appropriate management of the designated open space within a woodland is crucial for biodiversity and, in this case, for controlling suckering and regeneration to scheduled monument sites. These areas should be cleared, by mowing or flailing, at least once every 3 years to prevent tree growth and establishment. If areas are being managed for wildflowers, they should be cut regularly during the first year, every other month to control competing grasses and plants, and then twice annually, once in spring and then again in late summer after wildflower seeds have ripened and fallen.

5.15 Public access routes may need more frequent cutting and any public rights of way must be kept clear of encroaching vegetation (minimum 2m width for a public footpath).

## 6. **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME**

6.1 The following Council Units or Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Deputy Mayor & Portfolio Holder for Environment, Highways and Transport  
Director of Environment – Craig Austin  
Chief Officer for Finance – Rhian Bevan  
Team Leader (Legal Services) – David Doorne/Maxine Facchiano

No adverse comments have been received.

## 7. **WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS**

7.1 This report is not relevant to an individual ward.

*Report Contact Officers:*

Paul Pace – Chief Officer for Environment  
[paul.pace@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:paul.pace@bedford.gov.uk) ext. 47275

Paul Smith – Chief Officer for Commercial Services & Business Transformation  
[Paul.smith@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:Paul.smith@bedford.gov.uk) ext. 42150

*File Reference:*

*I: Environment/Committees/Reports/Decisions*

*Previous Relevant Minutes:*

*None*

*Background Papers:*

*None*

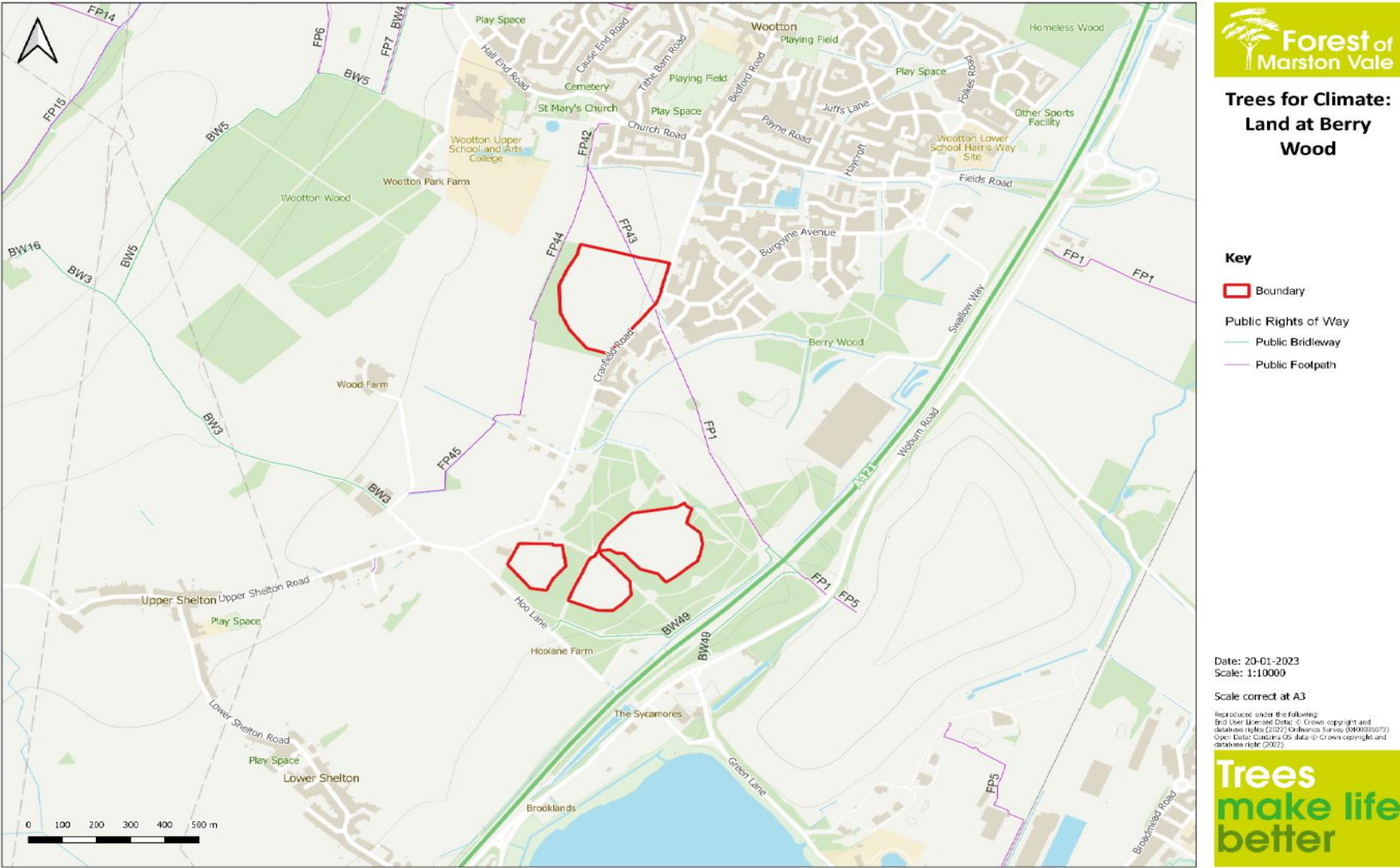
*Appendices:*

*Plan of planting at Berry Wood*



**APPENDIX**

**Plan of planting at Berry Wood**



Appendix 1