ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE Housing and Environment

DATE 1 March 2011

DIRECTOR Pete Leonard

TITLE OF REPORT Tree for Every Citizen phase 2

REPORT NUMBER H&E/11/20

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members on phase 2 of the implementation of the commitment

in the Council’s Policy statement, “Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward

Looking”, this aims to plant a tree for every citizen of Aberdeen.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

(i) Notes progress to date;

(ii) Agrees to deer control being undertaken as outlined in the report

(Option 9 in Options Appraisal - Undertake a cull of deer), noting that

deer control will be a condition of any grant received

(iii) Instructs officers to take forward the proposals for the second phase

of this project and

(iv) Supports the proposal to include Tullos Hill as Scotland’s first

Diamond Wood as a part of the celebration of HM The Queen’s

Diamond Jubilee

(v) Instructs officers to report back progress to the Housing and

Environment Committee on 10 May 2011.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Tree for Every Resident project which started large scale tree

planting in February 2009 is being delivered on a cost neutral basis

through grant funding and contributions from local businesses.

The second phase of the Tree for Every Citizen project will be

entirely funded through external grants and sponsorship.

The breakdown of funding is detailed below:

• Scottish Government through its Scottish Rural Development

Programme (SRDP – Rural Development Contracts – Rural

Priorities) approx £334K

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• Aberdeen Greenspace funding will be applied for to fund support

additional for works which cannot be funded from SRDP, for example

path/access improvements beyond the woodland areas.

• Contributions from local businesses approx £5k plus staff and

community volunteer time

• BAA Communities Trust Fund £5k towards staff time for promoting

and enabling community involvement with the tree planting and

ongoing use.

This mix of grant funding will be used to fund tree planting at Balgownie

Road, Tullos Hill and the second phases of planting at Westfield Park,

Bridge of Don, Seaton and St Fitticks Park, Torry.

Some of Tullos Hill was planted with trees under a Forestry Commission

Forestry Grant Scheme in 1996. Unfortunately due to the combination of

environmental conditions, roe deer browsing and a lack of post planting

management this scheme has largely failed.

An arrangement has been reached with Forestry Commission Scotland

to enable a new scheme to be started. This will be funded through the

Scottish Rural Development Programme and other grant funding which is

achievable and cost neutral. The funding package includes 5 years

funding for post planting management to ensure successful

establishment of the trees. This will also enable the improvement of

paths and the interpretation of the archaeology of the site.

In the medium to long term these woodlands will have the capability to

generate sustainable income through the sale of timber and timber

products especially with the government support for biomass fuels. This

supports the required outcomes and targets of the Climate Change

(Scotland) Act 2009 and its associated delivery plan.

3.2 If the Committee decide not to endorse the proposed deer management

programme and require the Tullos Hill site to be deer fenced this would

cost in the region of £25k-£50k. This would be depending on whether a

perimeter fence was constructed (approx. £25k) or smaller internal

compartments (approx. £50k) are created. Staff time to make daily

checks of the fence, which would be needed to ensure it remained intact,

would cost in the region of £11k per year for at least 5 years, plus any

repair costs. These additional costs would not attract grant funding and

Scottish Natural Heritage would, in any event, require a reduction cull of

deer locally due to the loss of habitat from excluding deer from approx

60ha of the site. SNH argue that the current population require all the

available feeding habitat to survive, reducing this habitat would lead to

potential starvation and unacceptable stress upon the deer population.

Deer fencing would also have a substantial impact on the visual amenity

of the site and restrict public access. (See Appendix 1 for the Options

Appraisal)

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This level of additional cost could not be found within the requirement for

the project to be cost neutral and would not reflect best practice or best

value.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The implementation of this project will be undertaken by existing officers

in Housing and Environment and assisted by an experienced consultant

appointed through a tendering procedure which is costed into the overall

project budget on a ‘no win no fee’ basis. This approach has been taken

so that if the funding applications are not successful the consultant will

not receive any payment from the Council. The process for the

appointment of the consultant was approved by Finance and Resources

Committee 2nd December 2010.

The grant funding for the planting of the trees includes funding for the

establishment and maintenance costs for the first 5 years by which time

there will be minimal maintenance required as the trees will be well

established. A condition of the grants will be that the woodlands are

managed and maintained for at least 10 years with an expectation that

they are maintained in the longer term.

4.2 All sites selected for tree planting are owned by Aberdeen City Council

and are outwith areas proposed for future development as indicated in

the Draft Local Development Plan and following discussions with

colleagues in Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure.

4.3 The species mix and design of the woodlands created will enhance the

biodiversity value of Aberdeen’s green spaces by providing improved

wildlife habitats and networks. This project will promote and conserve

the North East of Scotland’s Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority

species such as red squirrel and wych elm as well being sustainably

managed to provide a future timber crop over the next 30-120 years

which will generate an income stream to help manage the woodlands in

the future.

The mix of species will vary from site to site but will include oak, ash,

rowan, cherry, holly, wych elm, hazel, blackthorn whitebeam, Scots pine,

larch, Douglas fir, Norway spruce and juniper.

4.4 The design of the planted areas incorporates public access and will be

designed to make the new woodland areas inviting, pleasant and safe

places to use and visit for recreational activities. The designs will respect

the local conditions and features and avoid areas where there could be

future light loss issues for local residents.

4.5 Tullos Hill is designated as District Wildlife Sites but any tree planting will

not detract from this designation, it would enhance the criteria for

designation.

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4.6 The planting site at Tullos Hill has been selected as one of sixteen pilot

study sites across the UK (four in Scotland) for the new Woodland

Carbon Code which is looking to set out the standards for voluntary

carbon sequestration projects that incorporate core principles of good

carbon management as part of modern sustainable forest management.

Compliance with the code means that woodland carbon projects are:

• responsibly and sustainably managed to national standards;

• can provide reliable estimates of the amount of carbon that will be

sequestered or locked up as a result of the tree planting;

• must be publicly registered and independently verified;

• meet transparent criteria and standards to ensure that real carbon

benefits are delivered.

See http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-863ffl for more information

4.7 The Woodland Trust would like to work in partnership with Aberdeen City

Council to help develop the Tullos Hill project to make the site one of 60

Diamond Woods across the UK. This would be a part of their Jubilee

Woods Project in celebration of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

The site has been selected as Scotland’s first Diamond Wood where at

least 60 acres of new tree planting can be achieved subject to

Committees’ approval of this report. The Jubilee Wood Project has HRH

Princess Anne as Patron. The Woodland Trust will be able to support

the project with additional staffing resources to support more community

involvement and developing work with local schools in the longer term.

The Woodland Trust would also be able to access additional funding not

available directly to ACC to support this work.

The Woodland Trust also has a very effective and well respected

publicity network which they would use to help promote the project.

See http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/more-trees-more-good/Pages/jubilee-woods.aspx for more

information

4.8 The new proposed scheme for Tullos Hill will involve a larger planting

scheme than the original 1996 scheme, covering 58ha with almost 40ha

for new tree planting. This would include work to promote the

archaeological and wildlife importance of the site, improve public access

and provide a designed semi-natural landscape suitable for a range of

uses including outdoor learning. This funding would include a

Community Woodland Supplement which would fund time for an existing

Countryside Ranger post to work with the local community to encourage

their involvement and use of the site. These outcomes will support the

delivery of the Nature Conservation Strategy, Outdoor Access Strategy,

Curriculum for Excellence and the protection and enhancement of the

archaeological interest of the site.

Some additional archaeological survey work may be required at Tullos

Hill and St Fitticks Park due to their known archaeological importance

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and to ensure that archaeological and historic sites are protected and

preserved, as well as being made more accessible to the public.

4.9 In order to establish woodland at Tullos Hill it will be necessary to

develop a Deer Management Plan. Roe deer are present on the site in

numbers that have shown can do serious damage to the establishment

or regeneration of the woodland. Advice on this matter has been

sought from staff from the former Deer Commission (now part of

Scottish Natural Heritage) and is detailed below in Appendix 2.

4.10 Parts of Tullos Hill where tree planting is proposed have previously been

landfilled. The design of these areas has taken account of this and

follows the guidance published by the Forestry Commission to ensure

that it does not compromise the landfilled areas. The site has been

inspected by staff from Forestry Commsision Scotland’s Forest Research

section and they have concluded that there is no reason in terms of the

soil structure, depth and composition why trees will not establish. There

are some trees from the original planting scheme within small enclosures

and from natural regeneration, along with other vegetation which has

grown well on the landfilled areas. This indicates that there is not

contamination in the soil that will affect the growth of trees. It will be a

requirement of the SRDP Grant funding to ensure that trees do establish

on the site, if there was to be a significant failure there is the potential

that the grant could be required to be re-paid pro rata. The risk of this is

considered to be extremely small. The trees planted in the landfilled

areas will be small in terms of their size at maturity and could be

managed as a short rotation coppice for biomass fuel.

4.11 This phase of a Tree for Every Citizen is planned to be completed by

the end of the financial year 2011/12.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 A report was submitted to the Policy and Strategy Committee of 10 June

2008 describing a range of options to deliver the Council’s commitment

to plant a tree for every resident in Aberdeen, which is approximately

210,000 trees, by 2011. This committee resolved to instruct officers to

continue with the current tree planting programmes (around 10,000 per

year) and to investigate funding opportunities to deliver this commitment,

as at the time there were no resources available from the Council to

deliver the greater rate of tree planting to plant the 210,000 trees.

This committee resolved to approve the plans for the project to deliver

the first phase of planting at the meeting on 11th January 2010 with the

funding package that had been developed from a range of partners.

An update report was approved at Housing and Environment Committee

on 25 May 2010 and a Bulletin Report was submitted for the 26 Octo