

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/20 REPORT NO.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

PORTFOLIO DECISION OF:

Cllr Guney Dogan Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability
(in consultation with Cllr Mary Maguire Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement and Cllr Ian Barnes Deputy Leader of the Council)

Agenda – Part:

KD Num: 4980

Subject: Enfield Chase Restoration Project – Woodland Creation in Enfield

Wards: Chase, Cockfosters and Highlands

REPORT OF:

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 It is proposed to restore 60 hectares of publicly accessible woodland in rural areas of Enfield and improve access by upgrading the public footpath that connects Trent Park to Hilly Fields Park. It is estimated that the new woodland will involve planting 60,000 trees and capture 234 tonnes of carbon emissions per year.
- 1.2 This report follows the Cabinet Report on the Enfield Rural Catchment Project that was approved in February 2019 (Report No 167, Item 12) which proposes using Natural Flood Management techniques, such as woodland creation, to reduce flood risk to urban areas downstream.
- 1.3 The Enfield Chase Restoration project has been awarded £748k funding by the Greater London Authority (GLA). A separate grant of £519k is to be claimed from the Forestry Commission.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To approve the scheme in principle, subject to finalisation of the woodland creation plans and confirmation of funding.
- 2.2 Accept £748k of funding from the GLA and seek additional funding contributions from the Forestry Commission.
- 2.3 To prepare and submit a Borough Capital bid of £150k for 2020/21 to ensure that the project is adequately funded and that the match-funding requirements related to the external funding are met.
- 2.4 A subsequent report will then be submitted to seek approval for the delivery of the recommended scheme.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In the middle ages Enfield Chase was part of an extensive forest that stretched northwards for 12 miles from the City of London. Much of this forest has been lost in modern times through urbanisation and conversion to farmland; however, there are still significant, if fragmented, remnants of historic woodland existing within parts of Enfield's Green Belt land – please refer to the attached map for further information on the extent of existing woodland within this area.
- 3.2 The Enfield Chase Restoration project proposes to create new publicly accessible woodland on land that is currently designated Green Belt and primarily used for farming, and thereby extend and reinstate some of the residual landscape of the much-reduced forest. This report follows, and should be read in conjunction with, the Cabinet Report on the Enfield Rural Catchment Project that was approved in February 2019 (Report No 167, Item 12). The previous report delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Environment to approve delivery of the woodland creation scheme in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Property and Assets (now Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement).
- 3.3 As described in the previous report most of the land where new woodland is proposed is leased from Enfield Council by tenant farmers. Since the previous report was published the project has been progressed by Council officers working with the GLA, Forestry Commission and tenant farmers to identify the most suitable locations for woodland creation. A Woodland Creation Planning Grant from the Forestry Commission is funding a woodland design consultant to map these areas and make recommendations regarding suitable species and densities of planting – please refer to the Woodland Creation map attached for further information. These areas are classified as Priority A (high) and B (low) based on their proximity to the core area of the project which aims to create a swathe of woodland along a section of the London Loop footpath between Trent Park and Hilly Fields Park, to maximise public access benefits. The London Loop is a circular signed network of public footpaths around the outer edge of London.
- 3.4 As converting farmland to woodland reduces income it was agreed with the GLA that a significant proportion of their funding could be used to compensate for this loss. An economic analysis (independently verified) carried out by London Borough of Enfield officers of the estimated income associated with current farm practices and the future costs of maintaining a woodland, concluded that the offer should be £375 per hectare per annum for 10 years. Letters outlining this offer were sent to each of the seven tenant farmers included in the project in July 2019. All of the farms have expressed interest in participating to some degree; however, negotiations are still ongoing and consequently it has not yet been possible to finalise the woodland creation plans at this stage.
- 3.5 Following the initial Expression of Interest that was submitted to the GLA by Enfield Council in October 2018, a Stage 2 funding application was submitted in May 2019. At this time, it was agreed that the GLA would target their

funding towards the creation of 60 hectares (equating to approximately 60,000 trees) of publicly accessible woodland and the associated improvements to the London Loop footpath. To fulfil the GLA criteria regarding timescales it is proposed to sign a formal funding agreement between Enfield Council and the GLA in November 2019. This agreement will require all of the GLA funded works to be completed by March 2021.

- 3.6 Additional funding is sought from the Forestry Commission through the Woodland Carbon Fund, which is a funding scheme that offers bespoke support for large scale woodland creation projects that aim to deliver significant economic, environmental and social benefit. These benefits include a recognition of the ability of woodland to remove carbon from the atmosphere and act as a cost effective way of compensating for emissions. This grant is for direct woodland creation at a landscape scale and is paid at a rate of £8,500 per hectare with an additional £150 per hectare for the Woodland Creation Planning Grant. Consequently, the overall sum paid by the Forestry Commission for the creation of 60 hectares of woodland would be £519,000. This sum could be increased if the area of woodland creation was extended beyond 60 hectares, but these additional areas would not be eligible for GLA funding.
- 3.7 The GLA grant will also be used to fund the following items:
- Upgrading 3.3km of the existing London Loop footpath from Trent Park to Hilly Fields Park, which is currently of poor standard, to an improved 2.5m width bound surface
 - Potentially adding a new 0.5km connection of multi-use path from Salmons Brook up to Trent Park
 - Providing amenity features such as signage and seating areas at appropriate locations
 - Community engagement activities
 - Contribution to project management and legal costs
- 3.8 To enable these works a match-funding contribution of £150k from Enfield Council is required. It is proposed to prepare and submit a Borough Capital bid of £150k for 2020/21 to ensure that the project is adequately funded and that the match-funding requirements related to the external funding are met.
- 3.9 It is not possible to quantify the long-term economic value of the proposed woodlands with certainty. The Government's Basic Payment Scheme for farming is due to be phased out by 2028 and it is expected that a replacement subsidy system will reward land managers for providing public goods, such as woodland, but the payment rate has not yet been determined. While much of the new woodlands will be classed as productive it is important to recognise that non-productive woodland delivers significant wider benefits. These include carbon offsetting and important non-market benefits such as habitat creation and recreational opportunities, with associated public health and well-being benefits, that could be considered to outweigh some of the more tangible economic benefits.

- 3.10 This is a good example of how the Council are aligning the delivery of programmes, projects and activities with that of the Council's Climate Change Task Force and the aim to be a carbon neutral Local Authority by 2030.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Do nothing: This scheme is part of a series of improvements to improve the biodiversity and amenity value of Enfield's rural land. To do nothing will lose an opportunity to attract significant funding to the London Borough of Enfield, improve the environment, for both people and wildlife, and reduce flood risk to local residents and infrastructure. In addition, by not proceeding with this proposal the Council would miss an opportunity to make a positive contribution to reducing borough-wide carbon emissions and addressing the world-wide climate emergency.

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Contribution to mitigating climate change by offsetting carbon emissions. It is estimated that broadleaf woodlands can capture 3.9 tonnes of carbon per hectare per year, 60 hectares of woodland would be expected to capture 234 tonnes per year. Consequently, the scheme has the potential to offset over 20,000 tonnes of carbon emissions over its lifetime.
- 5.2 Increased opportunities for recreational activities such as walking and cycling, by improving access to Enfield's Green Belt land, and associated benefits to public health and well-being. As well as providing a focal point for the historical interest of restoring the ancient woodland of Enfield Chase.
- 5.3 Improvements to the environment by creating woodland habitat that benefits biodiversity and alleviates flood risk by reducing rainfall runoff from Enfield's rural upland areas.
- 5.4 Increased access to nature including creating opportunities for education in a natural environment.
- 5.5 By investing £150k we are able to leverage in £1.27m of external investment of £748k from the GLA and £519k through the Forestry Commission's Woodland Carbon Fund.

6. COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS

6.1 Financial Implications

- 6.1.1 The total capital budget for this project is £1,561,000
- 6.1.2 Funding is made up of
- £748,000 secured grant from the GLA
 - £519,000 grant from the Forestry Commission

- £144,000 secured grant from DEFRA
- £150,000 match-funding from the council (this element will be from capital funding to be approved for financial year 2020/21)

6.1.3 Any funding shortfall from a yet to be secured grant from an external partner will have to be met by the Council.

6.1.4 Maintenance costs from this project is estimated at £10,000 per annum and this will be met by appropriate department responsible for maintaining the new assets.

Project Budget Profiling

Milestones	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21	FY 2021/22
	£ k	£ k	£ k
GLA Funding			
Site appraisal, surveys, community engagement, outline design	14.5	9.5	
Development of licence for planting with tenant farmers, legal advice and checks	10		
Recreational and access routes		469	
Licence fee payment		225	
Other works to cover project supplementary expenses		20	
Other External Funding Sources			
Supplementary funding (woodland creation, NFM features, others)		813	

6.2 Legal Implications

6.2.1 Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits local authorities to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of their functions.

6.2.2 The Council has a general power of competence under section 1(1) of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that individuals may do, provided it is not prohibited by legislation and subject to Public Law principles. The proposals in this report are compliant with the Council's general power.

6.2.3 Some of the farmland referred to in this report will be subject to agricultural tenancies under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 and benefit from security of tenure restricting the circumstances as to when the Council, as Landlord is able to serve a Notice to Quit. Accordingly, an agreement in respect of the planting of the trees will need to be negotiated.

6.2.4 All legal agreements arising from the matters described in this report must be approved in advance of contract commencement by Legal Services.

6.3 Property Implications

- 6.3.1 Much of the land proposed woodland creation project on is designated as green belt and lies within the Councils freehold title ownership. Predominantly such land is occupied by agricultural tenants by way of agricultural tenancy agreements.
- 6.3.2 Initial consultations with the Councils tenant farmers, who occupy much of the green belt land adjoining Salmon's Brook is currently being undertaken and through the consultation process, proposals are being invited for how to deliver the project's objectives. It will be necessary to undertake a review of these proposals against the relevant tenancy agreements and governing legislation to assist project officers in project delivery.
- 6.3.3 It will need to be established whether project infrastructure can be delivered without the explicit voluntary agreement of LBE's tenants and what if any consideration needs to be offered to realise the project's goals. Due to the constraints of traditional agricultural tenancy agreements (and the security of tenure that goes with them) there is concern that delivery may not be feasible without tenants' voluntary agreement through negotiation and in accordance with the Strategic Asset Management Plan which incorporates a Rural Strategy.
- 6.3.4 Alterations to the farms, to help alleviate flood risk and new woodland creation through tree planting will also have to be given formal consent from the Council as Landlord in accordance with the leases affected. All such requests would ordinarily be considered on a case by case basis and any terms of such consent will have to be given careful consideration by Strategic Property Services.
- 6.3.5 It is noted that this project could significantly reduce the capital value and income generation capacity (for landlord and tenant) of an agricultural holding with woodland typically valued at a discount to productive arable farmland. There may be circumstances where income arising from these measures can be obtained and secured for the benefit of the Council and its farm tenants. Further, changes to the UK's agricultural subsidy/entitlements schemes are ongoing (the Agriculture Bill is being consulted on) and the likely changes to such agricultural subsidy schemes needs to be considered. It must be remembered that any woodland will take many years to mature until a commercial return can be expected.
- 6.3.6 Strategic Property Services supports the project and notes wider benefits which include carbon offsetting, habitat creation for wildlife and additional recreational opportunities. Whilst it is clear that from a land holding perspective there will be long term benefits there will likely be a reduction in achievable income over the short to medium term and income targets may need to be revised.

- 6.3.7 External stakeholder engagement is highly desirable and recommended due to the sensitivities of alterations to sensitive green belt land in the Council's ownership.
- 6.3.8 The project needs to be mindful of emerging strategic asset management plans and the possibility that this project could may affect with emerging longer-term strategic property objectives. Strategic Property Services will review any proposals with this in mind and to help avoid potentially unnecessary abortive costs.
- 6.3.9 It is essential that careful consideration through the strategic review mechanism is given to any measures that may have a negative impact to LBE's freehold income potential and capital value. Similarly, the extent of the opportunity to improve the Councils freehold value and income through project delivery also needs to be established and carefully monitored.

7. KEY RISKS

- 7.1 The following key risks relate to not implementing the project:
- Loss of opportunity to improve access to Enfield's Green Belt land
 - Loss of attraction of up to £1,267k of external funding to Enfield
 - Loss of opportunity to increase biodiversity and wildlife habitat
 - Loss of opportunity to cooperate with the local community
- 7.2 The main risk to delivery of the project is agreeing the specific locations where woodland will be created with the tenant farmers. As these locations have not yet been confirmed the attached woodland map identifies over 120 hectares of woodland creation potential to increase the likelihood of achieving the 60-hectare target.

8. INTERNAL DEPARTMENT IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATION

8.1 Highway Services

- 8.1.1 The woodland creation proposals to create new woodland have been discussed with the Principal Arboricultural Officer in Highway Services. It has been agreed that although the proposals will require a change in the pattern of maintenance activities, the overall cost of future maintenance will not be significantly increased as only minimal maintenance is required, particularly during the first 20 years. It is estimated that the maintenance requirements for 60 hectares of woodland would require a Grounds Maintenance Operative for less than 1 day per week with an associated cost of approximately £6k/year.
- 8.1.2 The cost of maintaining the new footpath has been estimated based on the current maintenance budgets for Enfield's existing footpaths. Using a figure of £0.50/m²/year the proposed 2.5m wide, 3.3km long bound-gravel footpath would have an estimated maintenance cost of approximately

£4k/year. This will be funded from the existing Highway Services maintenance budget.

8.2 Strategic Planning

- 8.2.1 The proposals have been discussed with The Planning Service, specifically Strategic Planning & Design in the context of Enfield's recently adopted Heritage Strategy and emerging new Local Plan 2036. Discussions will continue with officers as the emerging spatial options for growth are refined. It has been agreed that the woodland creation proposals are to be supported in terms of emerging policies to proactively manage growth, climate change and enhancing the borough's green/blue infrastructure and assets, in particular measures for enhancing opportunities for greater accessibility to the Enfield's Green Belt and reducing flood risk. As detailed proposals emerge for the woodland creation project, the final design and planting areas will be assessed in terms of overall historical landscape and character impact and in the context of the Local Plan. The project will be closely coordinated to ensure no conflicts arise with the borough's heritage strategy and future growth options.
- 8.2.2 The New Local Plan will be underpinned by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which will monitor the progress of projects and programmes (including the Enfield Woodland Restoration Project) in the context of the emerging policies and wider network of green and blue spaces.

9. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES – CREATING A LIFETIME OF OPPORTUNITIES IN ENFIELD

9.1 Good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods

By improving infrastructure for walking and cycling, this project contributes to the aim of creating good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods

9.2 Sustain strong and healthy communities

This project has potential to significantly improve the green environment in Enfield's rural areas. Encouraging residents to visit these areas improves quality of life and supports community activities. Reducing flood risk and pollution by planting trees also helps to sustain strong and healthy communities.

9.3 Build our local economy to create a thriving place

Reducing flood risk and investigating opportunities to diversify the rural economy helps to create a thriving place to live and supports the local economy.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Corporate advice has been sought in regard to equalities and an agreement has been reached that an equalities impact assessment is neither relevant nor proportionate for the approval of this report to approve the Enfield Chase Restoration project.
- 10.2 The scheme will be designed in accordance with good practice to ensure it is reasonably accessible for all users; any new footpaths will be compliant with the Equalities Act 2010.
- 10.3 It should be noted that any contracts awarded should include a duty on the successful applicant to assist us with meeting our obligations under the Equalities Act 2010.

11. PERFORMANCE AND DATA IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There may be scope to monitor and assess current and future use of the upgraded path

12. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The scheme will be designed in accordance with the Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015, and industry good-practice standards, to be safe for members of the public.

13. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The public health benefits associated with this project are significant. Enfield's new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy [JHWBS] has as one of its key priorities measures to increase and encourage levels of physical activity by the residents of the borough. The JHWBS also recognises that access to green spaces for both physical exercise and mental recreation can be of great utility in encouraging the maintenance of emotional health and the potential prevention of common mental disorders. Accordingly, Public Health welcomes this proposal warmly.

Background Papers

- 1. Woodland Creation in Enfield map