

Decision Maker: PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR SUSTAINABILITY, GREEN SERVICES AND OPEN SPACES

FOR PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY BY ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday 6 September 2022

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: BROMLEY WOODLANDS ESTABLISHMENT

Contact Officer: Lee Gullick, Carbon Programme Manager
Tel: 0208 461 7623 E-mail: lee.gullick@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Director of Environment and Public Protection

Ward: Chislehurst, Chelsfield

1. **Reason for decision/report and options**

- 1.1. In November 2020, the Council agreed a Net Zero Action Plan with a recently revised target date of 2027. One of the initiatives identified for delivery in that Plan is the establishment and/or enhancement of Council green spaces for natural carbon offsets and co-benefits.
 - 1.2. A Woodlands Establishment Board has been set up to identify and appraise the viability of opportunities for expanding existing woodland or creating new woodland. Four under used sites have been identified as potential woodland sites.
 - 1.3. Using funding secured from the Forestry Commission's Woodlands Creation Planning Grant, a desk top assessment of the suitability of these four sites has been completed. This report seeks approval to receive stage 2 funding from the Grant to undertake a more thorough site analysis and produce a Forestry Commission approved woodlands management plan.
 - 1.4. If appropriate, the site analysis and woodlands management plan may be used to access further grant funding from the Forestry Commission for the delivery of the woodlands project, including planting and maintenance.
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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 The Environment and Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee are asked to review the proposals in this report and provide their comments to the Portfolio Holder.

2.2 The Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Green Services and Open Spaces is asked to approve proceeding to Stage 2 of the Woodlands Creation Planning Grant and endorse a woodland establishment appraisal for the following sites:

- Edgebury Grazing Lands, Slades Drive, Chislehurst, BR7 6JY
- Kemnal Road, Imperial Way, Chislehurst, BR7 6JR
- World's End Lane, BR6 6AW

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: None.
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Transformation Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy: Carbon Net Zero Action Plan
 2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority (delete as appropriate):
 - (4) For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: No Cost: Grant Funded - Forestry Commission will reimburse the costs incurred at Stages 1 and 2, up to a total of £2,625
 2. Ongoing costs: None
 3. Budget head/performance centre: n/a
 4. Total current budget for this head: n/a
 5. Source of funding: External
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None:
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable:
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: None
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Property

1. Summary of Property Implications: None
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Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications:

Establishing woodland will sequester modest amounts of carbon from the atmosphere, which will contribute towards national carbon mitigation efforts. The identified spaces are currently underutilised, and their regeneration will also improve the ecology and biodiversity of the areas. Residents will enjoy seeing the council invest in the natural regeneration of these “tired” sites. Woodlands establishment is permanent and will therefore ensure these positive contributions to these sites are long lasting and self-sustainable.

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (current and projected): All ward residents will stand to benefit from the regeneration of these sites. Using the Council's GIS software, the number of dwellings within 100m of each site are shown as follows:
 - **Edgebury Grazing Lands:** 219
 - **Kemnal Road:** 61
 - **World's End Lane:** 80

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Yes
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Ward councillor comments have been requested and will be reported by officers at the committee meeting. Ward councillors will be briefed and included in the broader consultation plans as part of the stage 2 work identified in this report.

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 On 29th January 2020, the Environment and Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee reviewed and approved a 2029 Net Zero Carbon Strategy, with the Net Zero Carbon Action Plan subsequently reviewed by the same committee on 17th November 2020.
- 3.2 At a Full Council meeting on 28th February 2022, it was agreed that the Council would revise their target for the delivery of the Net Zero Action Plan to achieve carbon neutrality from 2029 to 2027.
- 3.3 Initiative 6 identified within the Net Zero Carbon Action Plan is the establishment and/or enhancement of Council green spaces for natural carbon offsets and co-benefits, with an intermediary target to undertake feasibility assessments.
- 3.4 The Action Plan recognises that carbon sequestered through woodlands establishment will be modest, with offsetting benefits increasing over the long-term. However, in addition to carbon mitigation, woodlands establishment also offers wider benefits, including biodiversity and ecological advantages and offers regenerated spaces for residents to enjoy.
- 3.5 In late 2020, officers established the Woodlands Establishment Board to identify and appraise the viability of opportunities for expanding existing woodland or creating new areas of woodland on council owned land. Using the Council's GIS software, the Board has identified three under-used sites with potential for woodlands establishment. The four sites are identified in the table below, with site maps and aerial shots provided in **Appendix 1**.

Site Name	Site Address	Ward	Site Size (Hectares)
Edgebury Grazing Lands	Slades Drive, Chislehurst, BR7 6JY	Chislehurst	6.4
Kemnal Road	Imperial Way, Chislehurst, BR7 6JR	Chislehurst	5
World's End Lane	World's End Lane,	Chelsfield	1.12

Please note these sites may be known colloquially under a different name to those recorded on the Council's ownership record.

- 3.6 In 2022, officers secured grant funding totalling £1k from the Forestry Commission's Woodland Creation Planning Grant for a stage 1 desktop appraisal of these sites. This exercise identified any constraints and opportunities that arise in relation to the proposed sites prior to any consultation. On the basis of this information, the Forestry Commission will then assess the potential for planting woodland on the proposed site, and for those sites where the project has good potential, they may offer a Stage 2 grant.
- 3.7 The Forestry Commission have now offered a Stage 2 Woodland Creation Planning Grant of up to £1,625 for Stage 2 assessments in relation to all four sites identified in paragraph 3.5. The output of a Stage 2 assessment is a Woodland Creation Design Plan. This plan will demonstrate the design process for these sites with surveys of key features and an analysis of how these affect the proposed woodland design. The Plan will comply with UK Forestry Standards (UKFS), and will include a site context map, site appraisal plan, design concept plan and final design plan.

- 3.8 Part of the Woodland Creation Design Plan includes consultation with stakeholders, including the local community, on the suitability of the identified sites and their potential design as woodland. Given the potential stakeholder interest in some of these sites, officers are seeking approval to deliver this stage 2 work and are placing the recommendation on public record. This will give stakeholders an opportunity to understand the Council's intentions and maintain transparency.
- 3.9 It should be noted that these grants are for feasibility and design work only and do not include funds for delivery, which would include planting and maintenance. The Forestry Commission has made available several different grant funding opportunities which can be accessed for this purpose, and which complement the national Nature Recovery Framework agenda in England. The Stage 2 work will need to be approved by the Forestry Commission to access these funding opportunities, further details of which are set out in **Appendix 2**.
- 3.10 It should be noted that any site which is taken forward for planting would be establishing new woodland on a permanent basis.

Stakeholder Engagement at Edgebury Grazing Lands

- 3.11 There are over 200 dwellings within 100m of the Edgebury Grazing Lands site, and there has already been public interest in the potential design of this site for woodland. There is an explicit desire from the local community to be included in these designs, and anecdotally, community representatives have been supportive of the Council investigating how it may regenerate this green space.
- 3.12 Local community representatives and the Chislehurst ward councillors are advocating for the establishment of an Edgebury Fields Friends group for the purpose of coordinating stakeholder engagement in the Stage 2 design process.
- 3.13 Currently, the borough's Friends groups for parks, woodlands or green spaces maintained by the Council are provided support from the Council (via the parks management and grounds maintenance contractor idverde). It should be noted that the Edgebury Grazing Lands currently fall outside of the idverde contract remit and therefore the support that is provided to associated Friends groups would not apply, until such time as the site may be established as a council maintained woodland.

4. TRANSFORMATION/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The most significant policy driver is the Council's 2027 Carbon Net Zero Action Plan. Carbon captured through woodland planting will make modest offset gains.
- 4.2 Strategic Objective 2 in the Council's adopted Open Space Strategy makes a commitment to planting more trees in under-used opens spaces.
- 4.3 The project also supports Making Bromley Even Better, supporting the ambition for 'residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment, great for today and a sustainable future. Specifically, the proposals will tackle carbon levels in the borough and support the Council's net zero ambitions.

5. STRATEGIC PROPERTY CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 This paper relates to the sites which are all owned Freehold by the Council:

Site	LBB Ownership	Third Party Leases	Current Use
Edgebury Grazing Lands, Slades Drive, Chislehurst,	Freehold	N/A	Previously grazing land but now vacant as Marjorie McClure development is underway but this would not prevent woodland planting.
Kemnal Road, Imperial Way, Chislehurst	Freehold	N/A	Previously grazing land but now vacant to allow for woodland establishment and under the management of Carbon Management Team
World's End Lane	Freehold	N/A	Previously grazing land but now vacant to allow for woodland establishment and under the management of Carbon Management Team

6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1. There are minimal financial implications arising from this report's recommendations. Officers are requesting approval to proceed to stage 2 of the Woodland Creation Planning Grant to appraise the sites identified in this report for woodland establishment. Total funding of up to £1,625 is offered by the Forestry Commission for the stage 2 works and the production of a Woodland Creation Design Plan. This funding is not for planting or maintenance.
- 6.2. The stage 2 outputs are required to apply to the additional Forestry Commission grants for delivery (planting, maintenance, carbon verification); the range of grants available are outlined in Appendix 2. The delivery costs and subsequent grant funding request will be dependent on the final design. Officers will assess the available grant funding options following the final design (which are not limited to those highlighted in Appendix 2), including any financial implications for the Council, and will request permission from members to proceed with an application if appropriate.
- 5.3. Given the dependency on the success of current and future funding applications, officers in the Carbon Management Team advise that the Council are not committing to any expenditure beyond those funds already secured at this point.

7. CARBON REDUCTION/SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Establishing a woodland will sequester modest amounts of carbon from the atmosphere which will contribute towards carbon mitigation/offsetting. The identified sites are currently underutilised, and their regeneration will improve ecology and biodiversity in the areas.
- 7.2 Woodlands establishment is permanent and will therefore impacts will be long-lasting and sustainable. A new native woodland can capture 300-400 tonnes of CO2 equivalent per hectare (tCO2e/ha) by year 50, and 400-500 tCO2e/ha by year 100. These figures are indicative, the final figures will need to be verified by arboricultural specialists following the Stage 2 design as sequestration rates vary by age, species and woodland density.

Non-Applicable Headings:	IT and GDPR, Procurement Considerations, Personnel Considerations, Legal Considerations
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	ES10094 – 2029 Net Zero Carbon Strategy ES20047 – Net Zero Carbon Action Plan ES20201 – Carbon Management Programme Update Net Zero Action Plan Reports Appendix 1 – Site Maps and Details Appendix 2 – Forestry Commission Funding Table