

**Name of meeting:** Kirklees Cabinet  
**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020  
**Title of report:** White Rose Forest Plan and the Trees for Climate programme

**Purpose of report:**

- 1) To confirm Kirklees role as the accountable body for the White Rose Forest namely by granting
  - (i) An authority for Kirklees Council to enter into grant agreements to receive both revenue and capital funding from Cheshire West & Chester Council (CWAC), as the accountable body for the “Trees for Climate” programme, re White Rose Forest Project – both in Kirklees Council’s capacity as the accountable body for the White Rose Forest and also as a grant recipient;
  - (ii) An authority for Kirklees Council to enter into grant agreements (in its capacity as accountable body) with the other parties to the White Rose Forest Project (from time to time) re both revenue and capital funding;
  - (iii) An authority for Kirklees Council to enter into grant agreements (in its capacity as accountable body) with third party landowners who are not party to the White Rose Forest Project joint venture agreement;
  - (iv) An authority for Kirklees Council to vary the existing joint venture project agreement/enter a new joint venture project agreement for the White Rose Forest Project upon completion of the White Rose Forest Plan expected December 2020.
- 2) To take a leadership role across the geography of the White Rose Forest joint venture to deliver the White Rose Forest Plan as a way of tackling the climate emergency and supporting a “green” economic recovery.

<p><b>Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><b>If successful, the grants received and distributed will cover areas of North and West Yorkshire over next five years.</b></p> <p><b>The current target figure is 1500 hectares at a total cost of at least £20 million over 5 years</b></p> <p><b>The 1st year revenue grant applied for (but not yet secured) will be in the region of £700k</b></p>
<p><b>Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council’s Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)?</u></b></p>	<p><b>Key Decision – Yes</b></p> <p><b>Public Report/Private Appendix – Yes details of the national “Trees for Climate” bid need to remain private until confirmed with a public announcement expected in the Autumn</b></p>
<p><b>The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>
<p><b>Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> &amp; name</b></p> <p><b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?</b></p> <p><b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?</b></p>	<p><b>Karl Battersby - 30.06.20</b></p> <p><b>Eamonn Croston - 30.06.20</b></p> <p><b>Julie Muscroft - 29.06.20</b></p>
<p><b>Cabinet member <a href="#">portfolio</a></b></p>	

	<p><b>Peter McBride</b> - Deputy Leader of the Council and holder of the Deputy Leaders Cabinet Portfolio and Regeneration Portfolio</p> <p><b>Naheed Mather</b> – Greener Kirklees</p> <p><b>Rob Walker</b> – Culture and Environment</p>
--	--

**Electoral wards affected:** The White Rose Forest joint venture agreement currently covers West and three of the seven North Yorkshire District Council areas (previous Leeds city region Local Enterprise Partnership area and now York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership area). The North Yorkshire County Council are minded to sign the JV, so the WRF will then cover North and West Yorkshire entirely including the Yorkshire Dales and North Yorkshire Moors National Parks.

**Ward councillors consulted:** n/a

**Public or private:** There is a private Appendix to this report. The Appendix is recommended for consideration in private in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 namely it contains information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council and third parties. It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption, which would protect the rights of an individual or the council, outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information and providing greater openness in the council's decision making.

**Has GDPR been considered?** No details of third party landowners contained in report at this stage

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 Kirklees Council, the accountable body for the White Rose Forest (WRF) since 2002, is leading the development of the WRF Plan for the Leeds city region.
- 1.2 The WRF Plan will 1) set out broad targets for increasing tree and woodland cover up to 2050 in the Leeds city region and 2) provide a “delivery pathway” for landowners and WRF partners to design, deliver and maintain new community woodland, using a variety of funding streams .
- 1.3 Once the WRF Plan has been agreed by Leeds city region, Local authorities and other partners in December 2020, a new governance structure to help deliver the WRF Plan will require a revised Joint Venture Agreement (JV). Kirklees Council will need to oversee this process. Funding is being sought to cover the costs of the revising the JV.
- 1.4 The government announced a £640m Nature for Climate Programme on the 11 March 2020 Budget to create 30,000 hectares of new woodland by 2025. Work is underway to develop a Community Forest led strand of this fund, creating 6000 hectares of new woodland in England’s Community Forest areas, including 1500 hectares (approx.3000 football pitches) in the White Rose Forest.
- 1.5 Should the Community Forest strand be successful, DEFRA have invited Cheshire West and Chester Council (a/c body for the Mersey Forest), to make an application to be the accountable body, programme managers, funding recipient and distributor for a national “Trees for Climate” programme.
- 1.6 Cheshire West and Chester Council would then contract Kirklees Council to deliver the programme in line with the WRF Plan across the geography of the joint venture.
- 1.7 This would require Kirklees to have “back to back” agreements with 1) other WRF partners such as Leeds city council, 2) 3<sup>rd</sup> landowners such as Yorkshire Water 3) itself as a grant recipient on its own land.
- 1.8 The DEFRA investment may include a revenue strand to fund various posts within the WRF partnership and a capital element to pay for the conversion of suitable land into woodland.

**NB** The details of this have yet to be confirmed and are therefore not for public awareness at this stage.

- 1.9 This level of investment in new trees and woodlands presents a great opportunity to be part of a post-Covid recovery package

## 2. Information required to take a decision

### Background

- 2.1 The WRF was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2000 to create a “well wooded landscape” in West Yorkshire to support economic growth by attracting and retaining business investment.
- 2.2 In 2002, the WRF was made into joint venture agreement and Kirklees Council became the accountable body. There are currently over 30 signatories to this agreement including all the local authorities of the Leeds city region

- 2.3 In 2009, the WRF expanded into the Leeds city region and was identified as a “local authority trailblazer” for its work with Yorkshire Forward in delivering the nation’s first partnership green infrastructure investment programme.
- 2.4 The 2017, Leeds City Region Green and Blue infrastructure strategy was published. The WRF partnership was identified as the convenor partnership for priority 5 “Plant and manage more trees and woodlands”. A key action under this priority was to produce a **WRF Plan** for the city region that would set planting targets and develop delivery mechanisms to make them achievable.
- 2.5 The WRF Plan and the joint venture that underpins it was recognised in April 2018 by the Leeds city region Chief Executives as our contribution to the Northern Forest.
- 2.6 As one of the founding partners in the **Northern Forest**, the WRF have led the formation of the Northern Forest Operations Group which is made up of programme managers across the four community forests and the Woodland Trust. This group has helped deliver the first two years of the DEFRA Northern Forest grant. This has confirmed to DEFRA that the community forest network is capable of planning and delivering programmes of woodland creation.
- 2.7 The government announced a £640m Nature for Climate Programme on the 11 March 2020 Budget. This funding is to support climate mitigation programmes, sequestering and storing carbon from the atmosphere in trees and peat. The Nature for Climate programme is part of an array of actions needed to reach the UK government target of net zero carbon by 2050 to avoid dangerous global temperature rises. By creating new woodlands, a wide range of additional benefits can be achieved. Some of these relate to adaptation to the climate emergency. Others include health and well-being and air quality benefits, an increase in biodiversity and the improvement of ecological networks to improve resilience of our biodiversity.
- 2.8 These environmental and wider benefits particularly delivered via community forests are detailed in the Government’s 25 Year Plan for the Environment

#### WRF Plan

- 2.9 The WRF Plan has been taking shape over the last few years. It is a named Action in the Leeds city region green and blue infrastructure strategy under Priority 5 “Plant and manage more trees and woodlands”. The White Rose Forest is the convening partnership for this action. The basic framework and approach for the WRF Plan is already in place.
- 2.10 The current consultation round with WRF Partners, is focusing on setting planting and sequestration targets and the practicalities of setting up and resourcing a multi-partner **WRF Delivery Pathway** across the geography of the joint venture agreement

The basic multi partner approach can be outlined as follows

- 1) Co-ordinated landowner marketing and engagement
- 2) Multi-disciplinary design (Right tree right place etc)
- 3) Wider stakeholder involvement in funding and delivery

- 2.11 The two programmes that operate under this framework are

- 1) **Landscapes for Water** (catchment approach /rural)

The priority catchments for landowner engagement are the Aire, the Calder and the S.U.N.O (Swale, Ure, Nidd and Ouse) catchments. Our priority landowners are Yorkshire Water and the

National Trust. The primary driver for this programme is using trees and woodlands to reduce flood risk

2) **Green Streets** (key transport corridors/urban areas)

The priority landowners are Local Authorities and Highways England. The primary driver for this programme attracting economic investment and providing healthy environments for communities

It is intended that the WRF Plan will be completed and approved by December 2020

Setting Tree Canopy Targets for the Leeds city region

2.12 The primary target in the WRF Plan will be for increasing the area of tree canopy cover by 2050 for the Leeds city region. It is currently 11.2%. The **WRF Carbon Group** is undertaking a carbon led approach to this using a range of data from the Forestry Commission and others such as Blue Sky digitised tree canopy data, Woodland Carbon Code, Leeds I-tree study, Woodland for Water, Low Risk planting data and the Ecological Site Classification. The study will provide a realistic range for increasing tree cover and, from that, provide a meaningful assessment of the city region’s carbon sequestration potential. We hope to provide a range of options for each Local Authority to consider by September 2020. Please note that this work will have a second phase that will include North Yorkshire should North Yorkshire County Council join the WRF joint venture. This work will be linked to both the West and North Yorkshire emissions pathway work streams.

2.13 The WRF Plan will set out a targets for actual planting schemes for both its programmes in the next 5 years. Currently, subject to funding, it stands at

<b>Landscapes for Water</b> including Yorkshire Water and National Trust land (Common Cause)	1535 hectares
<b>Green Streets</b> including Local Authority land	1080 hectares

Other targets in the WRF Plan

2.14 The WRF Plan will look at setting targets in hectares, for bringing ancient semi natural woodland into management under a **Woodland Ways** programme

2.15 Secondary metrics for biodiversity (exploring links with DEFRA’s Biodiversity Net Gain), flood reduction, health and air quality, access and community engagement are being considered based on the simple use of geographic information systems (GIS) and incorporating suitable design processes as shown in the table below.

<b>Community Forestry objectives</b>	<b>Description of potential scoring metrics</b>
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of new native woodland</li> <li>• Buffering ancient woodland</li> <li>• Within Living Landscapes priority area</li> </ul>
Carbon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estimate of carbon sequestered (calculation tbc)</li> <li>• Area of new woodland in a Woodland Carbon Code scheme</li> </ul>
Flood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of suitably designed woodland within Woodland for Water</li> <li>• Within priority Landscape for Water Catchment</li> <li>• Identified Environment Agency Hotspot</li> </ul>

Health /Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of suitably designed urban woodland within Green Streets priority area</li> </ul>
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers of people involved in planning</li> <li>• Numbers of people involved in planting</li> <li>• Numbers of people involved in aftercare</li> <li>• Numbers of Businesses involved</li> </ul>
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of new woodland with public access</li> <li>• Area of new woodland within Priority Places</li> </ul>

These secondary metrics will be the basis for scoring new planting schemes entering the WRF Delivery Pathway.

- 2.16 It should be noted that DEFRA’s current Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric does not fully support the benefits of woodland and is artificially weighted in favour of non -tree habitats. This has been raised with DEFRA and the Forestry Commission nationally. The Right Tree in the Right Place approach should provide the optimum biodiversity benefits for both tree and non-tree habitats within the same design process as successfully demonstrated with the Gorpley Reservoir project.

#### Some WRF Plan highlights

##### 1) Landowner engagement

- 2.17 The multi partner approach to landowner engagement is our partnership’s USP and is being pioneered in the Aire catchment in partnership with the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme 2 NFM programme. The contract with the Environment Agency has been delayed due to Covid 19 but is expected to start in October. It should be noted that this project is exploring some interesting innovation that could, if successful, provide real benefits for the Northern Forest and beyond.

##### 2) WRF staff capacity boost

- 2.18 Kirklees Council Major Projects Service, as a response to its climate emergency declaration, is to employ two further staff members to support the development of the WRF Plan and its implementation. The resourcing of these posts includes a proposed Council underwrite of £98k per annum from the strategic investment & support reserve for some of the revenue cost requirement. It is anticipated that some or all of the underwrite may subsequently be clawed back in time from other funding streams supporting the overall project.

##### 3) WRF Partnership structures update

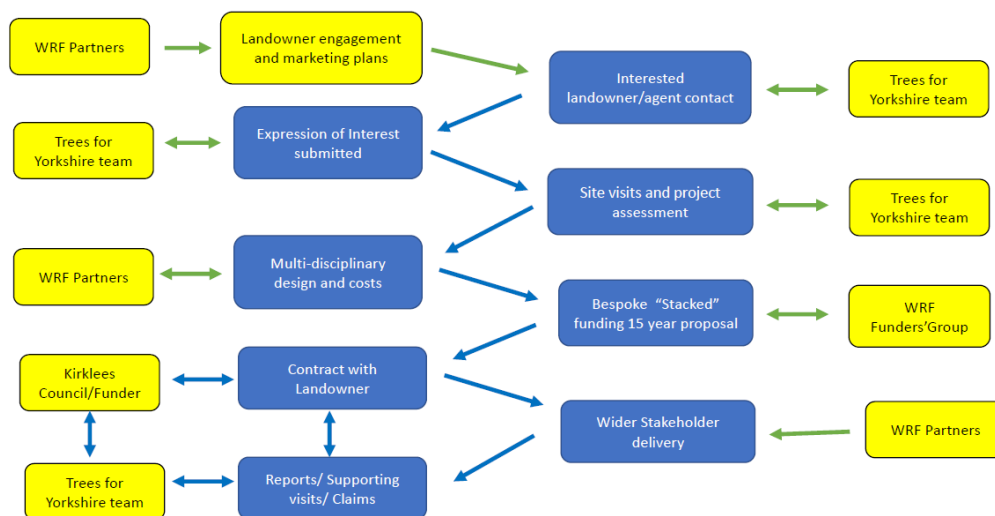
- 2.19 Each Local Authority in the Leeds city region (except Barnsley) has now set up a **District WRF Group** to help steer its response to the WRF Plan locally. Angela Blake chairs the Kirklees WRF Group
- 2.20 Leeds City Council have hosted a Chairs of the Districts WRF Group to bring together all the Chairs and WRF Leads in each Leeds city region District into one group. This group will meet twice a year and help co-ordinate delivery on Local Authority land across the city region.
- 2.21 It should be noted that most Local Authorities including Kirklees Council, have allocated additional staff time and financial resources to expanding tree cover within their respective landownerships.

2.22 The **WRF Funders' Group** has also been established to bring together all tree planting and woodland creation funders into one place to help link the right funding for the right project.

4) WRF Delivery Pathway

2.23 The process of long-term land use change is a complex process with a bewildering array of competing interests. The **WRF Delivery Pathway**, (after setting targets ,the next key part of the WRF Plan) sets out to simplify this process by offering support to landowners ,their agents and WRF partners from the initial enquiry stage , through to design and regulatory considerations, finding suitable funding opportunities and exploring delivery options. If no support is required each scheme can still be recorded digitally to keep track progress on achieving overall tree planting targets for the city region.

Summary flow diagram of the WRF Delivery Pathway



WRF Governance

2.24 The current WRF joint venture (2009) requires updating on account of the following.

- 1) The WRF Plan will require a change of structure and partner responsibility if its new targets are to be met on time
- 2) North Yorkshire County Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority are minded to join the WRF partnership. The WRF Plan needs to be updated to reflect the needs of both authorities and the changes to Local Enterprise Partnership boundaries.
- 3) The regulatory environment has altered since 2009 so it needs bringing up to date

A **WRF Governance working party** has started work in looking at this issue with a view of providing recommendations to the WRF Steering Group. Once agreed this will lay out the requirements for a revised joint venture once the WRF Plan has been agreed in December 2020.

Options

2.25 Option 1- For Kirklees to pass over the responsibility of overseeing the WRF joint venture to another authority such as Leeds City Council. This is likely to delay the management of the “Trees for Climate” programme as no other Authority has requested to do this.

Option 2 – Pass over the management of the “Trees for Climate” programme to the Community Forest Trust (CFT), a WRF signatory based in Manchester. The CFT will be employing more staff for the WRF and HEYwoods as part of this programme. However, the WRF Joint venture is a local authority-based agreement and it is expected that the a/c body should be a local authority. Passing over management to the CFT could be viewed as a significant shift away from the current structure of the WRF.

Option 3 – Do nothing and not be part of the “Trees for Climate” programme. This would provide significant reputational risk to Kirklees, in the light of its committed to tackling climate change and its 18 years standing as the WRF accountable body. It would also undermine the national programme given WRF is providing up to 25% of the land outputs.

#### Cost breakdown

- 2.26 The full £640million Nature for Climate fund announced in the March 2020 budget to create an additional 30,000 hectares in England by 2025, has yet to be fully costed and allocated. It is not expected to be signed off by Treasury until Autumn this year. The England’s Community Forests has submitted a proposal for creating 6,000 hectares. This includes 1500 hectares for the White Rose Forest. This is likely to be a substantial figure for our geography and it will be the responsibility of Kirklees Council to fulfil the role of accountable body. The details of the bid have not been confirmed nor made public.

Before the capital element of the fund is detailed and signed off, we understand that DEFRA wish to provide revenue support for the England’s Community Forest network to develop the capacity of the partnership to build their respective pipelines. This information is not publicly available.

#### Timescale

- 2.27 The Nature for Climate fund is set to run for the rest of this Parliament. ie up to 2025.

#### Expected impact/ outcomes, benefits & risks

- 2.28 Should the “Trees for Climate” proposal be supported, this investment will provide the necessary resources for core WRF partners to develop the WRF pipeline with 150 hectares by March 2021. ie 10% of our 1500 hectares minimum target for the “Trees for Climate” programme.

It will provide partnership capacity to run the WRF Delivery Pathway across North and West Yorkshire.

#### Key Risks

- 1) Not securing the full “Trees for Climate” capital programme for 6,000 hectares

- 2.29 DEFRA have openly supported community forestry with the development of the Northern Forest. We have the support of the Forestry Commission. Support for community forests and the Northern Forest is also in the DEFRA’s 25 Year Plan for the Environment. However, until it is signed off by Treasury, then the “Trees for Climate” programme cannot be guaranteed. This risk will be managed by only spending any received external revenue support on existing staff. No new staff will be recruited until the 5-year Nature for Climate capital programme has been sign off.

- 2.30 If the Nature for Climate Capital programme is not signed off by Treasury in the Autumn, the WRF Plan will reduce its expected outputs for the first 5 years to reflect the level of capital funds that are available. These include existing Forestry Commission grants, Woodland Trust Morewoods (for small scale private planting), Trees for Cities and other corporate based offers and the second phase of Grant from DEFRA Northern Forest programme which has two years to run.



2.31 Funding for the existing Major Projects Service WRF team will in part be derived from a full costs recovery approach to these existing programmes

2) Securing the capital programme but not securing and delivering a full pipeline of projects

2.32 Our key landowners Local Authorities/Yorkshire Water/National Trust have identified significant potential land opportunities over the next 5 years subject to funding being available. WRF Partners have currently estimated approximately 2600 hectares across North and West Yorkshire. This is still an outline figure based on partner experience and some preliminary scoping work. The WRF target for the “Trees for Climate” programme is set at 1500 hectares. Well within our initial estimates.

2.33 Risks will be minimised by ensuring that the “Trees for Climate” programme has adequate professional support including project management, legal, financial for both Kirklees WRF Major Projects team but also with relevant WRF partners who have aspiration and opportunity to add to the pipeline .

2.34 Financial exposure will be minimised as payments to individual WRF partners are likely to be based mainly on outputs delivered, evidenced, and audited. DEFRA via Cheshire West and Chester Council may provide funds or a proportion of the agreed funds, ahead of delivery. The Council will only provide limited upfront funding in specific circumstances with appropriate contractual safeguards following guidance from Legal and Finance. This will minimise risks to the Council as accountable body.

2.35 The Council will mirror the conditions that DEFRA, via Cheshire West and Chester Council, might set out in the Section 31 grant agreement in back to back agreements with each WRF Partner or Local Authorities. Payments will only be made when Kirklees has drawn down funds from Cheshire West and Chester Council.

2.36 Landowner agreements with 3<sup>rd</sup> party landowners will be based on contractual arrangements approved and used by the Forestry Commission. This will allow Kirklees Council to clawback grants on failed schemes.

3) Limited forestry skills pool

2.37 If “Trees for Climate” is successful, WRF will be advertising over a relatively short period of a few months a number of project managers who will be required to lead and co-ordinate multi-partner projects that focus on landowner engagement, land management design and delivery. This will also be occurring at the same time in our fellow community forest partnerships in Hull and East Yorkshire, Manchester City of Trees and Mersey Forest. Concerns have been raised as to whether that number of skilled and experienced rural and urban forestry-based project managers are available in the jobs market.

2.38 The mitigation for this risk is to work with partners in Yorkshire to undertake group recruitment and secondly to target individuals with the appropriate transferable skills from different sectors.

4) Forestry Commission Capacity

2.39 The expected uplift in tree planting schemes will require more capacity in the Forestry Commission to undertake public register processing, possible Environmental Impact Assessments. Delays of just a few weeks can seriously impact on whether a given scheme can get planted by the end of March (tree planting only occurs from November to March).

2.40 Conversations have been had with the Forestry Commission regionally and nationally and it is hoped that they will also undertake recruitment to help fulfil their regulatory duties.

#### 5) Impacts of Covid -19

2.41 The normal operations within Local Authorities and other WRF partners have been seriously impacted by the lockdown. These include group planning and design sessions, WRF Steering Group meetings, consultation timetable, site visits /travel, as well as budgetary pressures.

2.42 This is a risk to all programmes in all sectors. Our mitigation is to propose that the WRF “Trees for Climate” programme, should it be signed off by Treasury in the Autumn, be part of the **West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Plan**. That is to reflect the benefits of community forest investment in our urban infrastructure. Green urban environments reduce pollution and promote uptake of active travel/recreation as well as attract and retain business investment into a region.

#### Evaluation

2.43 All the revenue investments will need to demonstrate direct benefits to the capacity of the WRF Partnership to set targets , unlock new planting schemes for the pipeline, and revise the WRF joint venture and its partnership structures to effectively manage and maintain a productive WRF Delivery Pathway.

2.44 Contracts between Kirklees and other WRF partners for revenue funding will have clear outputs related to our overall requirement to delivery the expected 1500 hectares in North and West Yorkshire.

2.45 The current suggestion is that the WRF Steering Group will set up a Management Board to oversee the implementation of the WRF Plan and to monitor progress on its contracts with partners in developing the pipeline.

2.46 The details of the contracts have yet to be determined but will reflect the outputs in the contract from Cheshire West and Chester Council.

#### Sustainability

2.47 The sustainability of the WRF’s element of the “Trees for Climate” programme will be determined by the success of the full 5 year capital programme being signed off by the Treasury as part of the wider Nature For Climate fund announced in the March budget.

2.48 The purpose of this report is to have the necessary key decisions in place to prepare for that eventuality.

#### Services & agencies involved

2.49 Support for these four key decisions will empower the Kirklees Major Projects Service to work with legal, finance and human resources to set up the appropriate mechanisms to act as an effective accountable body across North and West Yorkshire for the “Trees for Climate” programme.

2.50 For “Trees for Climate” investment on Kirklees own land, it will allow Kirklees Streetscene, as part of the Kirklees WRF Group, to set new standards in urban and community tree planting. There is an opportunity for Kirklees to offer the WRF a flagship project called Castle Hill Wildwood to establish native woodlands and associated habitats across this iconic landscape in close partnership with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

- 2.51 In the wider District , through existing partnership structures we can direct significant investment into our upland catchment notably with Yorkshire Water and National Trust but also work with 3<sup>rd</sup> party landowners through the River Connections team and the Colne Valley Tree Society to ensure that we can target woodland creation in the Holme and Colne sub- catchments. This work will include partnership working with the Environment Agency and the Calder Rivers Trust.
- 2.52 The key defining approach of the WRF partnership is having a multi-disciplinary approach to design. Kirklees Council can take the raised profile within the WRF partnership to demonstrate best practice for both urban and rural community forestry. In practical terms, this means bringing other disciplines and agencies into the design process as soon as an area of land is identified by the landowner for long term land management use change.
- 2.53 A key challenge through this multi-disciplinary design approach is to integrate woodland creation with wider biodiversity priorities. Kirklees Council could take a lead in ensuring that Biodiversity Net Gain calibrations reflect this design led approach.
- 2.54 Securing the “Trees for Climate” programme will enable Kirklees, as its accountable body, to play a significant role with other WRF Partners on the WRF Funders’ Group. This working party is made up of tree funding organisations including the Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Woodland Trust, West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The aim is to ensure that every well design woodland creation project can be funded by one or more suitable funding sources.

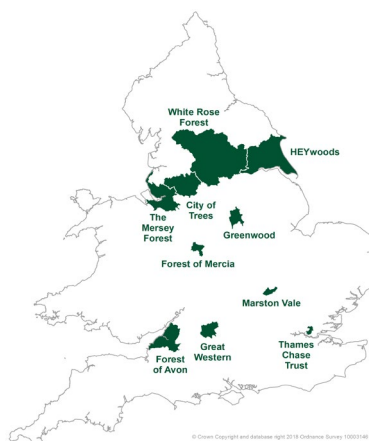
### **3 Implications for the Council**

#### Working with People

- 3.1 In the WRF Plan Consultation Draft it states “Community Forestry is the process of widening and deepening our communities’ involvement with and connection to the planning, planting and management of trees and woodlands”
- 3.2 For Kirklees owned land, Streetscene will involve the local community and its representatives to fully understand how best to convert land in the long term over to trees and woodlands, including if this is even appropriate. Well-designed urban treescapes and woodlands, take into account community usage as well as providing opportunities for carbon sequestration, landscape improvement, improving air quality and biodiversity. Integrating access into urban woodlands is an essential prerequisite to good design. There will be a need to involve schools and communities in the identification of planting sites, collecting suitable tree seeds for growing, planting and aftercare. Urban woodland to be effective needs a regular and longterm approach to maintenance eg litter and formative pruning. Should the Nature for Climate fund be successful, Kirklees will be able to “stack and match” various tree planting funds including its own, to deliver 15 year maintain packages for its community woodlands. This can be achieved with the help of the WRF Funders’ Group

#### Working with Partners

- 3.3 The WRF is a joint venture agreement with 30 plus signatories including 9 local authorities. It requires partnership working to function.
- 3.4 Nationally, Kirklees has represented the WRF on the England’s Community Forest Network and therefore worked with other community forests across the country to present a business case for the Nature for Climate fund. This puts Kirklees Council at the forefront of the development of community forestry. These national conversations have included DEFRA, Natural England and the Forestry Commission.



3.5 Trans regionally, Kirklees Council represents the Leeds city region (White Rose Forest) on the Northern Forest Board so conversations are ongoing with the Community Forest Trust (based in Manchester), The Woodland Trust and the other 3 community forests Mersey forest, Manchester City of Trees and Heywoods. The working relationship with HEYwoods (Hull and East Yorkshire) has intensified over the last 2 years. We are currently, looking at jointly developing a Pan - Yorkshire campaign called “**Trees for Yorkshire**”. This would allow us to promote our offer to landowners across West, North and East Yorkshire. Furthermore, we wish to extend (a phase 2 of the WRF carbon Study see above) the BlueSky Digitised coverage of trees and woodland to include North and East Yorkshire. This will enable us to have a fuller understand of the community forests potential to sequester carbon in the Yorkshire landscape. (NB South Yorkshire region does not have a Community Forest)

3.6 Regionally, Leeds city region local authorities have all set up District WRF Groups to help coordinate the implementation of the WRF Plan via the WRF Delivery Pathway locally. In addition to this, other organisations interested in tree and woodland creation have joined the joint venture. These include Tillhill Forestry Ltd, Forest Carbon Ltd, Westwood Landscapes Ltd, Yorkshire Dales National Park, River Connections Ltd, Zero Carbon Harrogate and the United Bank of Carbon (charitable trust working through University of Leeds). This growing partnership will want to support the collaboration between WRF Partners and the private business and independent sector. Once the Major Projects Service have secured an additional project manager (External Relations), work will begin on revising and managing the WRF website. The website has a donation facility which allows funding support to be directed to partner projects. It will also provide opportunities for businesses and community groups to join in planting and aftercare projects such as through “1000 tree challenge” events

Place Based Working

3.7 Kirklees Council provides a Geographic Information System platform called Kompass for its partners to understand the spatial qualities of a given project site. Data sets are mapped to indicate for example if a given place if planted with trees might help reduce flooding, strengthen biodiversity corridors or improve air quality where it matters. This background spatial information provides a starting point for the multi-disciplinary design process.

3.8 Our priorities for land search include a Leeds city region wide dataset called Green Streets which shows areas of deprivation (worst 10%), areas of key employment sites and the key route network transport corridors that link them. Targeting planting opportunities in these areas will greatly contribute to positive economic and health outcomes.

Climate Change and Air Quality

3.9 The WRF Carbon Group is currently undertaking a Leeds city region wide study to look at the carbon sequestration potential of the White Rose Forest landscape as well as what is current being sequestered by the existing 12 million trees in the White Rose Forest. A key driver for the

Nature for Climate fund announced in the 2020 budget was to use woodland creation to reduce by 10% the UK's residue CO2 emissions. The results of the study will provide Kirklees Council and the other authorities of the Leeds city region an evidence base to set realistic targets for sequestering CO2 in the landscape. This will not in itself reduce the need to decarbonise the economy but it is a part of the solution that offers a range of other benefits.

- 3.10 The other benefits include improving air quality through the careful selection of tree species along transport corridors. The wrong trees in the wrong place can over time make air quality worse so there is a need to apply the Green Streets principles during the design process.
- 3.11 The WRF Plan is a stated part of the Kirklees Climate Emergency response as approved November 2019 Cabinet.

#### Improving outcomes for children

- 3.12 The WRF partnership are looking to secure the funding for a **Trees for Learning** project co-ordinator for the Leeds city region. This post will support local WRF partners and local authorities in working with schools and their pupils to plant trees and woodland on school grounds and on local greenspaces. This work will include some learning about the importance of trees to human well being and nature as well as understanding what trees need to grow well.

#### Human Resources

- 3.13 All costs incurred to Kirklees as the accountable body for this "Trees for Climate" programme will be recouped from the DEFRA Nature for Climate grant should it be secured.

At this stage, the staff support will include contributions for

##### Major Projects Service

WRF Project Director (in post)

4 project managers and officers with skills in the areas of GIS, communications, finance and project management funded by a mix of core revenue and full costs recovery from external funds

##### Streetscene

Woodland creation officer (50% costs contribution)

- 3.14 Other revenue support for WRF partners will be subject to procurement rules. Initial advice from the Kirklees Procurement team for the potential of year one revenue support has suggested that there are a number of viable routes available to the Major Projects Service.

#### Legal

- 3.15 Advice from Legal Services has been received. The different elements have been teased out and informed the request for the Authorities in this report.

Legal will need to have an input into

- (i) A proposed grant agreement between DEFRA and Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) re capital expenditure re WRF (and other projects within the Northern Forest);
- (ii) The entering into a grant agreement re capital expenditure with CWAC (in its role as accountable body to DEFRA) re (a) Kirklees Council's role as a accountable body to CWAC for the WRF and (b) as a grant recipients for capital projects taking place on Kirklees Council land as part of the WRF;

- (iii) Kirklees Council as accountable body entering into capital grant agreements with the other parties to the WRF project;
- (iv) Kirklees Council as accountable body entering into grant agreements (15-20 in number) with non-local authority landowners for the planting of trees etc;
- (v) A variation to the existing WRF project agreement to provide for the substitution of the existing WRF Project plan (and I believe to provide for additional parties to join the project)

Item (i) - (Advice re DEFRA revenue expenditure grant agreement)	:	Completed and sent to Cheshire West and Chester
Item (ii) - (Entering into revenue expenditure grant agreement with CWAC)	:	8 July
Item (iii) – (Entering into revenue expenditure grant agreements with WRF partner local authorities)	:	Shortly after item (ii) is completed
Items (iv) & (v) – Entering into capital expenditure grant agreements with CWAC)	:	Autumn 2020
Item (vi) - Entering into capital expenditure grant agreements with WRF partner local authorities	:	Shortly after item (v) is completed
Item (vii) – Entering into third party grant agreements	:	TBC but clear after item (v) has been completed
Item (viii) – Revised Project Agreement	:	Cabinet authority to be sought in September and October to principle of revision of project plan and to enter into a revised project agreement – January scheduled to be when revised project completes
Items (ix) to (xi) – “renewal of grant agreements and third party grants	:	Each year during the duration of the White Rose Forest Project

Project Duration -Assuming the “Trees for Climate” capital programme is secured there will be instructions each year (2021/2 onwards) for:

- 1) A “renewal” of all the revenue grant agreements – both between Kirklees Council and CWAC and between Kirklees Council (as accountable body) and the other parties. (Strictly speaking the grant agreements will not be renewed as the revenue granted will change taking into account inflation changes in public expenditure profiling etc);
- 2) A “renewal” of all the capital grant agreements - both between Kirklees Council and CWAC and between Kirklees Council (as accountable body) and the other parties. (Strictly speaking the grant agreements will not be renewed as the capital granted will change taking into

account both DEFRA's priorities in the taking forward of the Northern Forest and the priorities within the WRF project);

- 3) Third party grants to non-local authority landowners (probably in the region of 15 – 20 per annum) to fund capital projects.

3.16 It is likely that if the “Trees for Climate” capital programme is secured over the 5 years of this Parliament, then there will likely be a need to secure the ongoing legal input into the project. Costs for this will be taken from the capital programme.

If the revenue costs are secured for this year, then the legal costs will be covered for revising the joint venture in early 2021.

Do you need an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)?

3.17 No.

3.18 The targeting, design and consultation work of urban tree planting schemes will provide overwhelming positive impacts for our priority communities. The multi-disciplinary design approach will ensure that any negative impacts are reduced.

For Forestry schemes over 2 hectares schemes will automatically require an Environment Impact Assessment.

#### 4 Consultation

##### Consultation on WRF Plan and Trees for Climate programme

Consultee	Name	Date	Comments
<b>National</b>			
Forestry Commission	Chris Waterfield	Ongoing	Positive support helping to shape WRF Carbon Study
DEFRA	Tim Hughs/Stephen Pendlington	Ongoing	Positive support helping to understand what Government are looking to achieve with Nature for Climate
Woodland Trust	Simon Mageean	Ongoing	Woodland Trust Director for the Northern Forest – Positive looking to compliment various funding streams
<b>Regional</b>			
Forestry Commission Yorkshire and Humber	Crispin Thorn	28 <sup>th</sup> April/Ongoing	Regular meetings held to discuss how the proposed Trees for Climate programme would be implemented within the WRF area as part of joined up package of landowner support. Issues identified include nature of contracts with landowners and the capacity of the Forestry Commission to process WRF schemes through the public register and Environment Impact assessment
Natural England	Victoria Manton	29 <sup>th</sup> January	Requesting support from Natural England for the Guiding Principles for Clough Woodland in the South Pennines. Positive outcome Natural England will sign Principle in July.

WRF Steering Group		30 <sup>th</sup> January	All day WRF Planning workshop with all key local authorities and partners present
Community Forest Trust	Iain Taylor	3 <sup>rd</sup> February	Looking to secure increased role of CFT in WRF partnership including as a/c body for the proposed Trees for Yorkshire team- Positive
DEFRA Network	Jon Follows / Luke Hemming/Chris Marshall	6 <sup>th</sup> February	Regional DEFRA team. Positive outcome.
WRF Districts Chairs Group	Chair Polly Cook Head of Sustainability Leeds CC	14 <sup>th</sup> February	All the WRF leads from the District WRF Groups met to review draft WRF and agreed to support WRF Carbon study. Very Positive
Yorkshire Wildlife Trust	CEO Rachel Brice	17 <sup>th</sup> February	YWT a leading WRF signatory. Positive outcome agreed to support WRF Plan and to focus on developing an exemplary project at Stirley Farm with Kirklees Council
Landscapes for water in the upper Calder catchment including Yorkshire Water, National Trust	Geoff Lomas, Craig Best	27 <sup>th</sup> February	Agreed to put forward upper calder catchment projects as part of WRF Plan. Identified need for extra resources in this sensitive landscape
York City Council	Cllr Paula Widdow	28 <sup>th</sup> February	York CC new WRF signatory. Very positive agreed to support WRF Plan including setting up a Landscapes for water project for the S.U.N.O catchment in North Yorkshire
West Yorkshire Combined Authority	Noel Collings	3 <sup>rd</sup> march	Positive. WYCA minded to join WRF joint venture and to help co-ordinate funding bids across the city region
Calderdale Council	Moy Cash	12 <sup>th</sup> march	Agreeing landowner engagement approach in Calderdale and to integrate Green Streets into their development processes
North Yorkshire County Council	Liz Small/Hugh Clear-Hill/Matt Millington	2 <sup>nd</sup> April	Positive, NYCC minded to join WRF and support WRF Plan.
WRF Carbon Group	University of Leeds/Leeds CC et al	16 <sup>th</sup> April	Positive. Shaping Carbon study to reflect needs of the local authorities target for carbon emission reductions on land available
Woodland Trust	Simon Mageean and Nick Sellwood	23 <sup>rd</sup> April	Looking for role of WT within WRF plan as part of Northern Forest project. Positive
<b>Kirklees District</b>			
Kirklees WRF Group	Angela Blake Chair includes Sue Proctor and Richard Hollinson	7 <sup>th</sup> April/Ongoing	Full briefing on Nature for Climate bid. Positive outcome. Karl Battersby aware and supportive.
	Rob Dalby	Ongoing	Positive, update on proposed investment into Streetscene for woodland creation on Kirklees land



Portfolio leads	Cllr Mather and Graham Turner	1 <sup>st</sup> June	Very Positive. Desire for Kirklees to take a strategic lead in the Leeds city region.
	Cllr Rob Walker	ongoing	Very positive. Discussions included shaping investment in wider Kirklees District.
Legal services	Mark Nicholson Susan Hadfield	22 <sup>nd</sup> May	Detailed discussion on legal implications of Trees for climate programme in relation to Kirklees Council as a/c body for WRF. Advised and drew up 4 key Decision Notice. Provided response to draft DEFRA contract which was forwarded to Cheshire West and Chester
Finance	Lynda Booth David Baxter	ongoing	Helping to shape requirements for receiving and distributing rev and capital grants to WRF Partners.
Procurement	Ben Hodgson	12 <sup>th</sup> June/ongoing	Advised on procurement options for the expected Rev grant from DEFRA

In addition to this, a WRF Plan draft consultation has been circulated to all WRF signatories and the comments received will inform the next version of the Plan.

## 5 Next steps and timelines

- 1) Respond to the expected contract from Cheshire West and Chester Council to secure any revenue funding expected July 2020 as laid out in the table above under legal implications for Kirklees Council.
- 2) Major Projects Service will lay out a procurement plan to distribute the revenue grant to WRF partners as laid out above.
- 3) Monitor progress of the Nature for Climate fund and report back to Council once we get confirmation of the 5-year capital programme expected in the Autumn.

## 6 Officer recommendations and reasons

- 6.1 The Officer recommends that the Cabinet grant authority to Kirklees Council as the accountable body for the WRF, for the four key decisions in respect to the "Trees for Climate" grant and revising the joint venture agreement namely
- (i) An authority for Kirklees Council to enter into grant agreements to receive both revenue and capital funding from Cheshire West & Chester (as the accountable body for the "Trees for Climate" programme) re White Rose Forest Project – both in Kirklees Council's capacity as the accountable body for the White Rose Forest and also as a grant recipient;
  - (ii) An authority for Kirklees Council to enter into grant agreements (in its capacity as accountable body) with the other parties to the White Rose Forest Project (from time to time) re both revenue and capital funding;
  - (iii) An authority for Kirklees Council to enter into grant agreements (in its capacity as accountable body) with third party landowners who are not party to the White Rose Forest Project joint venture agreement;

- (iv) An authority for Kirklees Council to vary the existing joint venture project agreement/enter a new joint venture project agreement for the White Rose Forest Project upon completion of the White Rose Forest Plan expected December 2020.

6.2 The Officer recommends that the Cabinet grant authority to Kirklees Council to take a leadership role across the geography of the White Rose Forest joint venture to deliver the White Rose Forest Plan as a way of tackling the climate emergency and a support a “green” economic recovery.

## **7 Cabinet Portfolio Holder’s recommendations**

7.1 The Cabinet Portfolio Holders recommends that the Cabinet grant authority to Kirklees Council as the accountable body for the WRF, for the four key decisions in respect to the Nature for Climate grant and revising the joint venture agreement namely

- (i) An authority for Kirklees Council to enter into grant agreements to receive both revenue and capital funding from Cheshire West & Chester (as the accountable body for the Trees for Climate programme) re White Rose Forest Project – both in Kirklees Council’s capacity as the accountable body for the White Rose Forest and also as a grant recipient;
- (ii) An authority for Kirklees Council to enter into grant agreements (in its capacity as accountable body) with the other parties to the White Rose Forest Project (from time to time) re both revenue and capital funding;
- (iii) An authority for Kirklees Council to enter into grant agreements (in its capacity as accountable body) with third party landowners who are not party to the White Rose Forest Project joint venture agreement;
- (iv) An authority for Kirklees Council to vary the existing joint venture project agreement/enter a new joint venture project agreement for the White Rose Forest Project upon completion of the White Rose Forest Plan expected December 2020.

7.2 The Cabinet Portfolio Holders recommends that the Cabinet grant authority to Kirklees Council to take a leadership role across the geography of the White Rose Forest joint venture to deliver the White Rose Forest Plan as a way of tackling the climate emergency and support a “green” economic recovery.

## **8 Contact officer**

Guy Thompson Partnership Manager White Rose Forest  
[guy.thompson@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:guy.thompson@kirklees.gov.uk)

## **9 Background Papers and History of Decisions**

n/a

10

**Service Director responsible**

Angela Blake Service Director - Economy and Skills  
[angela.blake@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:angela.blake@kirklees.gov.uk)