

**Report title: White Rose Forest -Trees for Climate programme [2026-2030]**

<b>Meeting</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> March 2026
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cllr Turner
<b>Key Decision Eligible for Call In</b>	Yes Yes

**Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval to accept a new funding agreement for the delivery of the Trees for Climate programme, over the 2026 to 2030 period, across West and North Yorkshire to support the delivery of the White Rose Forest (WRF) Strategic Plan.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Note the contents of this report and attached appendices 1-6.
2. Approve / Accept grant funding of approximately £47m of capital and £2.6m of revenue from Cheshire West and Chester Council to implement and deliver a new Trees for Climate programme for 2026-2030.
3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Place, in consultation with the Service Director for Finance and Service Director for Legal, Governance and Commissioning and with the Portfolio Holder for Finance Regeneration to:
  - 3.1. Enter into both capital and revenue funding agreements with Cheshire West and Chester Council (the accountable body for the national Defra funded programme).
  - 3.2. Implement and deliver the Trees for Climate programme for West and North Yorkshire (and a wider geography, where appropriate and feasible) including recruitment and procurement of the resources required to deliver the programme objectives including the ongoing monitoring of the outcomes, over multiple years, working in partnership with the Community Forest Trust, and England's Community Forest network.
  - 3.3. receive both capital and revenue funding from the Trees for Climate [2026-2030] programme funders both as the accountable body for the WRF and to make offers of grant funding in order to pass funds on to eligible project applicants.
  - 3.4. Pursue other funding including match-funding opportunities, private sector donations and sponsorships to support the delivery of the WRF strategic objectives and where appropriate enter into funding agreements with funders.
4. Cabinet delegate authority to the Service Director Legal, Governance and Commissioning to enter into on behalf of the Council, any external funding agreements including with Cheshire West and Chester Council as accountable body for DEFRA; any funding agreements to pass down funding with third party landowners and /or other ancillary legal agreements /legal instruments/land management service agreements to implement the above recommendations in accordance with Finance Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules.

### Reasons for Recommendations

To enable Kirklees Council to accept a new multi-million pound Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) grant allowing the WRF to expand its current programme of tree planting activity beyond the end of its initial six year funded [2020-26] programme. This will support the objectives of the new WRF Strategic Plan (2025-2050) approved by Cabinet in July 2025 to increase woodland cover across North and West Yorkshire, and for the WRF to pursue additional funding to help sustain the programme beyond 2030 and become less dependent on one single source of public funding.

### Resource Implication:

The full cost of the WRF team will be met through Trees for Climate funding. There is no obligation for Kirklees Council to make a financial contribution to meet the cost of resources.

An existing team will be retained for this new programme. They are employed by Kirklees Council and the Community Forest Trust (CFT) - a national organisation acting on behalf of all England's Community Forests, including the WRF.

Both revenue and capitalised funding will be used to meet staff salary costs. The WRF plan to retain some of the available capital funding to meet the cost of resourcing the monitoring activity up to 2045.

**Date signed off by Executive Director & name**

David Shepherd – 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026

**Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?**

Kevin Mulvaney – 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026

**Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)?**

Samantha Lawton – 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026

**Electoral wards affected:** All - the White Rose Forest works with key regional partners and covers North and West Yorkshire including the Yorkshire Dales and North Yorkshire Moors National Parks.

**Ward councillors consulted:** No

**Public or private:** Public

**Has GDPR been considered?** Yes. No personal data

### 1. Executive Summary

Kirklees Council has been the lead organisation and accountable body for the delivery of the White Rose Forest [WRF] since 2002. The White Rose Forest (WRF) is the community forest for North and West Yorkshire. Its core partners are the local authorities, combined authorities and national park authorities of that geography (see Appendix 1 – WRF Map).

For the last six years Kirklees Council through its WRF partnership, has been a significant contributor to the successful delivery of Trees for Climate part of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs [Defra] funded Nature for Climate programme. Creating 2,200ha of new woodland across West and North Yorkshire to date (200ha within Kirklees) (see Appendices 2 & 3 for locations of WRF projects to date).

The WRF administers its Trees for Climate programme as a grant programme offering funding, expertise and support to partners and landowners to deliver new woodland creation schemes. Although the planting element of this first programme has now reached its final stages, with tree planting funds ending this planting season (April 2026), the WRF team will continue to monitor the establishment of all the newly created woodland for a further 15 years.

In November 2025 further funding for a second Trees for Climate programme [2026-30] was confirmed with an expectation by Defra, that the WRF partnership will continue to be a key delivery partner. Expanding its tree planting programme across West and North Yorkshire up to 2030.

## **2. Information required to take a decision**

### **2.1. Background**

As a local authority-based Community Forest the WRF works in partnership with other West and North Yorkshire local authorities, Combined Authorities, national parks and with the support of other organisations and groups. It is one of fifteen English Community Forests (ECFs) some of which, like WRF, are supported by the Community Forest Trust [CFT], a 'not-for-profit' organisation with the aim of supporting, enabling and championing the work of Community Forests across England.

Defra and the ECF network consider WRF a fundamental delivery partner in its efforts to achieve government tree planting targets. This reputation is based on a successful track record of tree planting across West and North Yorkshire over the last six years. The WRF is expecting to achieve -

- over 2,600 hectares [ha] of new woodland by 2026, approximately 30% of the overall achievements of the national, six year programme.
- 240 hectares of new woodland within Kirklees, 4% of the overall achievements of the national programme.

Over the last six years the Trees for Climate funds have been the main source of tree planting funds for the WRF. This has been supplemented with funds from other Defra programmes such as Grow Back Greener (Northern Forest), Urban Tree Challenge Fund and private sector funding e.g. Northern Gas Network. All have contributed to the delivery of the WRF's tree planting programmes, supporting tree planting in both rural and urban areas. All existing programmes will end in March 2026 with limited funding available to support the establishment of Trees for Climate projects.

The White Rose Forest Strategic Plan [2025-50] provides the overarching tree and woodland strategy for North and West Yorkshire and is the long-term strategic document governing development of the WRF and its partnership. It sets out the vision, aspirations and targets for trees and woodlands to be delivered through a series of five-year Action Plans.

The Strategic Plan aims to achieve the following -

- Increase tree and woodland cover in West & North Yorks by 16.5%

- ensure 70% of woodland is sustainably managed
- 5% of households live close to accessible woodland
- engage 16,000 people in the work of the White Rose Forest each year
- secure up to 50% of its future funding from non-public sector sources

The Plan is based on a strong collaborative commitment by its partner organisations including Defra, local and combined authorities, national park authorities, national landscape organisations, charities, businesses and community enterprises.

This next phase of the Trees for Climate programme will offer significant financial support to the delivery of the objectives listed above. The funding will either be offered to landowners with eligible projects or used for direct delivery by the WRF team ensuring the continuation of a highly successful programme of landowner supported new woodland creation and urban tree planting across the WRF geography.

To deliver greater benefits for communities across North and West Yorkshire WRF will target woodland creation as part of two key WRF programmes

1. Landscapes for Water – provides a strategic approach to natural flood management to reduce flood risk for communities and businesses downstream (see Appendix 4 – WRF Priority Area -Landscape for Water)
2. Green Streets® - focusses on urban planting and aims to improve air quality, make our urban spaces more attractive for businesses and encourage the uptake of active travel, linking areas of deprivation to education/employment sites (see Appendix 5)

## **2.2. Cost breakdown**

Confirmation of a new national Nature for Climate programme (worth up to £400 million per year) was announced in the November 2025 government budget. The programme has an overall target to create 8,600 hectares [ha's] of tree planting across England by March 2030. Defra expect the ECF network, the National Trust and Woodland Trust to deliver this programme of tree planting.

Each of the 15 Community Forests including the WRF will be allocated funding based on an allocation of hectares of new woodland to be delivered, these are yet to be finalised, but estimations are provided below.

### Capital funding

The WRF allocation across the 4-years of the programme is expected to be c£47million based on a target of 1,683ha of new woodland creation (approx. 21% of the total ECF programme). Allocation is likely to be higher in year 1 and reduce slightly across each year of the programme.

### Revenue funding

The WRF allocation across the 4-years of the programme is expected to be c£2.6million based on a target of 1,683ha of new woodland creation.

The methodology for calculating revenue funding for the entire lifespan of the programme has been agreed by the ECF network and will be based on an offer of a baseline of approx. £50,000 per annum plus an additional £1,295 for every hectare allocated to WRF.

It is estimated, based on the above hectare allocation, the WRF team will cost approx. £5.3m over the 4 years of the programme. Therefore, the total revenue funding of £2.6m will not cover the full costs.

However, the remaining staff cost will be recovered from;

1. the capital funding on eligible work areas (in agreement with Kirklees finance and audit procedures and those of the accountable body for the ECF programme (CWAC).
2. Unspent revenue grant funding from previous years [2020-26].
3. Income from other funding sources.

### **2.3 Timescale**

The new Nature for Climate fund is set to run from 2026 to 2045, with the first four years (2026/2027 to 2029/2030) assigned to tree planting and the remainder to the further support and monitoring required to ensure the successful establishment of the new woodland.

This new programme will be delivered alongside the monitoring activity required of the earlier 2020 – 2026 Trees for Climate programme.

### **2.4 Expected Outcomes**

As mentioned above, the WRF's new targets have not yet been finalised but are expected to be 1683ha of new woodland. WRF expects the first year's tree planting target to be 452ha which given the current healthy pipeline of 1,400 ha of projects in development, suggests a high confidence of delivery.

### **2.5 Expected Impact /outcomes**

- Increase tree canopy across West and North Yorkshire
- Increases accessibility of woodland and green space to residents of West and North Yorkshire
- Growth in expertise, knowledge, skills and participation in tree planting by partner organisations, communities and landowners.

### **Benefits**

- Offers a further four years of financial stability in delivering WRF objectives
- Helps retain expertise of current WRF staff team
- Offers the necessary funding solutions needed to unlock a significant pipeline of 'ready to deliver' landowner planting schemes
- Supports the delivery of WRF partner organisations targets e.g. Kirklees Council's 21% woodland canopy target by 2050.
- Provides partnership and community capacity to engage more people in tree planting across WRF geography
- Further raises the national profile of the WRF and community-based tree planting projects
- Offers new skills and career opportunities to the sector

### **Key Risks – [mitigation of these risks are addressed at 3.5]**

- Not securing the expected allocation of Trees for Climate funds
- Not achieving the required allocation of hectares of tree planting (impact on funding especially through capitalising of staff costs)
- Unable to retain expertise in the team and in WRF partner organisations
- Key delivery partners fail to deliver against their targets.

### **2.6 Evaluation**

The ECF network has a single database, used by all the Community Forests, that enables Trees for Climate reporting requirements to be managed locally and nationally.

WRF provides weekly reports to CWAC and Defra to monitor progress of programme delivery with a formal annual evaluation of performance across the ECF network at the end of each planting season to confirm funding and support grant claims.

There is a national ECF Trees for Climate conference including key partners and is used as a platform for evaluating past achievements and identifying future improvements. In addition, individual landowner projects are used as widely available case studies to highlight specific successes, issues etc.

All of the above activity will continue to operate during the delivery of the new programme.

## **2.7 Sustainability**

The expansion of the governments funded tree planting programme offers stability to the WRF partnership and its core team activity. The Defra agreement will commit funds for; tree planting up to 2030 and establishment of new woodlands up to 2045. Kirklees Council will continue to receive yearly funding agreements from the programme's accountable body with agreed targets to achieve.

The new WRF Strategic Plan (2025-2030) also outlines its intentions to become less reliant on Defra funding and makes a commitment to sourcing alternative funding to secure its sustainability, one of its objectives is 'to secure up to 50% of funding from non-public sector sources by 2050'. This work is underway with the appointment of a WRF Development Manager whose role will be to progress this priority over the next 4 years.

## **2.8 Services & agencies involved**

- a) Some internal Kirklees services already support the delivery of the WRF programme e.g. legal, financial, audit etc. Good service arrangements already exist with these departments which will aid a seamless transition into the delivery of the new programme.
- b) The Community Forest Trust [CFT], is a limited company with charitable status, set up to support the work of all England's Community Forests, including the White Rose Forest. It is named as a strategic partner in the Defra Trees for Climate grant agreement and acts as accountable body for some other regional and national tree planting funding streams e.g. National Gas Network and One Tree Planted, passing funds on to Kirklees/WRF in exchange for the delivery of specific schemes. It currently employs some of England's Community Forest staff including 10 FTEs for the WRF team and provides a recruitment service when WRF have been unable to recruit new staff to Kirklees Council. The grading and pay scales of the WRF staff employed through CFT are aligned to those of Kirklees Council. CFT provides a unique service to the sector including a direct conduit to key government departments like Defra. It charges the WRF an average fee of £43,000 per annum [c4.5% of WRF current revenue budget] for its employment services. This is considered well within market averages for similar services, however before the next programme begins the service arrangement including its fee structure will be fully reviewed to ensure it remains justifiable and legitimate.

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

This report is recommending that Kirklees Council commits to a further four years of WRF tree planting across West and North Yorkshire. It will also need to continue to

provide the resources for monitoring newly created woodland for a further 15 years extending the original programme activity to 2045.

This activity will be treated as a continuation of the delivery of the first programme which Kirklees Council agreed to deliver back in 2020. It already has a team in place to deliver this and the new programme activity. It has budgeted for the ongoing monitoring required of the original programme. The legal, financial and resource implications and risks are outlined in the sections below.

### 3.1 Council Plan

Delivering a second Trees for Climate programme will contribute to the [2026-2029] Council Plan;

- Shared Outcome; '**Clean and Green**' and
- Priority: 'Enabling everyone to thrive and have successful lives' by providing a more sustainable environment with a focus on low carbon energy sources, warm homes **as well as care for our natural environment**'

WRF tree planting schemes will also contribute to the key indicator - 'People in Kirklees experience a high quality, clean and green environment, described on 'Our People' Strategy.

Additionally, the planned tree planting will support the delivery of Kirklees' Environment Strategy theme 'Nurturing nature' by contributing to the following headline targets.

- Target no. 3. Nature in recovery by 2030
- Target no. 5. Increase Kirklees tree canopy cover to 21% by 2050
- Target no. 6. All people who live, work and study in Kirklees to have access to high quality green / blue space within 5-10 minutes /500m walk by 2038.

Landowners, businesses and local communities' participation and support in local tree planting will continue to be at the heart of all the WRF programmes. One key priority of the WRF Strategic Plan is to 'Engage more people, communities and businesses in the planning, design, planting, management and use of trees and woodland.'

An important element of the new WRF Trees for Climate programme will be further urban tree planting through the Green Streets programme. The focus will be on integrating tree planting into the planning of urban areas and transport corridors to create greener and healthier environments in towns and cities. These funded schemes will continue to be delivered by Kirklees Council and local authority partners across West and North Yorkshire.

### 3.2 Financial Implications

#### Match funding

As with the initial Trees for Climate programme this next phase of woodland creation and tree planting will be fully funded by Defra - the funders. No match funding from Kirklees Council is required to fulfil any contract obligations.

#### Financial management of landowner grants

The WRF will continue to deliver the programme primarily as a landowner grant programme with the possibility of some direct delivery of schemes e.g. WRF procure contractors to plant trees on behalf of a landowner.

They will pass funds onto landowners via a Trees for Climate grant agreement following applications being successfully assessed and approved, a process that evaluates the benefits and cost of each proposed scheme (and where relevant formal approval via forestry regulations).

The grant awards will be issued each planting season between 2026 and 2030, based on the availability of programme funds each year. Whilst WRF agreements aim to cover 100% of the project costs there will be a limit to the amount of grant a landowner can be awarded to ensure that funding is available to cover relevant WRF staff costs.

Due to the longevity of the programme [15 years] an element of each capital award will be held back but ringfenced for the scheme. This will allow the team to release funds in phases over the lifetime of the programme, with the initial grant payment to the landowner paid after completion of the tree planting. Further payments will be released at the discretion of the WRF team to support the ongoing establishment of the woodland. This offers the team some flexibility to manage the capital budget over many years rather than commit all the funds to landowners at the beginning of their project.

Resource costs will be met through a mix of revenue and capital funding, at no cost to Kirklees Council (see 2.2 above).

Redundancy costs will also be factored into the programme's budget to ensure the cost of any possible redundancies can be covered from WRF resources, so no financial risk to Kirklees Council.

Future sustainability  
(See 2.7 above)

### **3.3 Legal Implications**

This report recommends Kirklees Council continues its role of accountable body for the WRF delivery of this next phase of Trees for Climate programme. This will come with legal obligations set out in the Funding Agreement with CWAC.

This request mirrors the recommendation made in 2020 for the original programme. Kirklees has performed this role for the last six years and is obliged to continue monitoring the current Trees for Climate programme for a further 15 years. The programme is governed through a grant agreement with CWAC (accountable body for the national programme). CWAC has a separate agreement with Defra.

We expect a new but very similar agreement to be issued by CWAC once the full programme targets and funding are agreed upon and allocated across the Community Forests. We envisage an agreement being issued to Kirklees between April and June 2026.

The terms and conditions described in these agreements must be adhered to by all parties/stakeholders therefore landowner grant agreements, drafted by Kirklees legal team, are designed to pass these on to grant recipients/landowners. This reduces the financial risks for Kirklees as any breach of T&Cs can result in funds being clawed back. The WRF plan to continue with this approach and will continue to engage Kirklees legal team in reviewing the new funding agreement once drafted by CWAC.

The WRF will not issue any new programme landowner grant agreements until Kirklees has accepted its own funding agreement with CWAC. Therefore, no financial commitments will be made until Kirklees has secured its new funded programme.

Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the council the power to do anything an individual generally may do and would permit the Council to enter into the aforementioned funding agreements provided it is reasonable in public law terms to do so.

The Council must comply with its Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules, and the Procurement Act 2023 when procuring supplies such as trees and works or services above specified thresholds.

The Council must comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and statutory guidance when accepting and providing subsidy which includes grants.

### **3.4 Climate Change and Air Quality**

#### **Contribute to KC and other WYCA**

Trees and woodlands contribute to providing the following climate change mitigations

- Sequestration in CO<sub>2</sub> – approx. 24KtCO<sub>2</sub> sequestered between 2021 and 2025 worth £6.8m to North and West Yorkshire
- Reduction in pollution – trees help reduce pollution especially in our towns and cities
- Reduction in flood risk – over 1,400ha of new woodland in high-risk areas providing £0.3m of flood reduction to date.
- Biodiversity – woodland planted expanded the ecological networks by over 3,000ha

A new Trees for Climate programme will continue to increase the delivery of the above benefits.

### **3.5 Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), Human Resources**

#### **Risk**

The risk exposure to the Council in delivering this proposed programme of tree planting remains the same as those of the first programme [2020-2026]. These risks have been monitored regularly through a WRF Risk Register. This is used to report risks to the WRF Strategic Board, ensuring risks are identified and mitigated at a senior governance level.

New risks for Kirklees will be-

- how effectively it manages two programmes running in tandem for the next 15 – 18 years. Some of this can be mitigated against by retaining the current team of experts in the WRF team. Staff costs for the whole lifetime of the two programmes have been budgeted for so the Council is well prepared for the financial costs of this long-term programme.
- underachieving our targets could result in; less revenue and capital funding being available for staff costs and in funds being clawed back if paid in advance of outcomes being delivered. Unless alternative funding options can be secured this will require reductions in the team.

- losing expertise from the current team could have an impact on the WRF's reputation. Fixed term employment contracts end shortly (Sept 26). We expect to be able to extend these contracts as soon as a new funding agreement is received which will offer the staff confidence in their future employment.
- key delivery partners contributing to WRF target fail to deliver their own programme impacting on their own sustainability and contributions to the wider WRF programme. Close monitoring of their performance will be required throughout the delivery period.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)**

None of the impacts of the WRF tree planting programme will directly impact on any PSED '*protected characteristic groups*'.

WRF tree planting activity will have a positive impact on the environment and communities in Kirklees and other areas of West and North Yorkshire, including urban areas and areas of deprivation. In particular, the WRF's Green Streets® programme will help to reduce pollution, provide shade and increase biodiversity. Providing communities with increased access to an environment that supports good health and wellbeing.

### **Human Resources**

The WRF team comprises 17 full time equivalent [FTEs] staff, 7 employed by Kirklees Council and 10 with the Community Forest Trust.

Most staff have fixed term employment contracts which end in September 2026, the remaining staff, recruited in the first few years of the original programme have permanent Kirklees employment contracts.

Once the new Trees for Climate funding agreement is accepted by Kirklees the FTE contracts will be extended. Retaining the current team will help with a smooth transition into the new programme.

Continuing to employ some staff through CFT reduces some of the employment risks for Kirklees.

The cost of the ongoing staff team has been addressed in the Financial Implication section of this report which outlines the intention to use some capital funding for salaries as well as revenue.

Recruitment of staff vacancies will continue as before, either through the Kirklees recruitment process or CFT.

## **4. Consultation**

A structured consultation process of key stakeholders was adopted during the development of the WRF Strategic Plan [2025-2050]. This consultation included Local Authorities [LAs] across West & North Yorks, Combined Authorities, National Park Authorities & Landscape Authorities, Defra and associated bodies, local and national charities. All the Strategic Board representatives have approved the WRF Plan, thereby confirming their commitment to the WRF partnership.

Their ongoing participation, engagement and collective action is key to the success of the WRF partnership and will be crucial to the delivery of the actions within the WRF Strategic Plan and the next Trees for Climate programme over the coming years.

Wider consultation of the proposed next phase of Trees for Climate programme has also taken place over the last year with Defra [the funders] and the wider ECF network to agree upon the programme's outputs and financing.

As part of the delivery of individual projects formal consultation is also a required. Any planting scheme over two hectares is subject to the Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA] regulations and all projects are subject to due diligence that includes consultation takes place with key stakeholders e.g. Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, National Parks, Natural England, Historic England, archaeological and ecological record centres and the public.

## 5. Engagement

For the WRF partnership to work effectively regular engagement with communities, businesses and landowners is essential.

Adopting a wide partnership approach based on good long-term relationships has enabled the WRF to build a network of stakeholders with connections to tree planting and woodland creation. These include Local Authorities [LAs], across West & North Yorks, Combined Authorities, National Park Authorities & Landscape Authorities, Central Government departments, Environmental and NGOs.

Regular engagement takes place through the WRF governance channels including

- WRF Strategic Board made up of LAs, Combined Authorities and National Park Authorities.
- WRF Programme Management Group involving different representatives of the wider woodland sector
- WRF's District Groups which offers direct engagement within each LA area.
- WRF Community Forum a platform for regular engagement with the wider tree planting community, including smaller not-for-profit organisations and community groups.

The WRF also has representation at

- the national Trees for Climate Board
- England's Community Forest national network,

Both of which facilitates direct engagement with other community forests and Defra.

Ongoing engagement with private landowners, local communities and regulatory organisations [e.g. Forestry Commission, Natural England etc.] is embedded in WRF processes, as these play a key part in the planning and design of tree planting schemes. No engagement with Council Leaders or political groups will take place until Kirklees Council has formally received its Trees for Climate [2026-2030] grant agreement.

## 6 Options

### 6.1 Options Considered

#### a) Decide not to accept the new funding offer

This option is **not recommended** as it would almost certainly terminate any future WRF supported tree planting as the Trees for Climate funding is the main source of funding for the WRF. The loss of capital and revenue would result in fewer trees being planted, outcomes of the Council Plan and Environment Strategy not being delivered and reputational damage to Kirklees and WRF. The only way to continue to employ the team

and support tree planting schemes would be to source other external funding but this would take a considerable length of time. It would be difficult to retain the staff team and landowner interest in WRF tree planting would dissipate.

b) Decide to scale down the new programme and accept a smaller funding grant

This option is **not recommended** as it would substantially reduce the team's ability to make an impact across West and North Yorkshire, inhibiting the development of a currently healthy pipeline of pending tree planting projects. A priority selection process would have to be introduced which would only allow some projects to proceed. The capacity and status of the WRF as a leading community forest would also be diminished. This option would almost certainly terminate any future WRF supported tree planting as the Trees for Climate funding is the WRF main source of programme funding. The only way to continue to employ the team and support tree planting schemes would be to source other external funding but this would take a considerable length of time. It would be difficult to retain the staff team and landowner interest in WRF tree planting would dissipate.

c) Decide to accept the full grant offer [the preferred option]

Accepting the full grant offer will allow the WRF to sustain its current position as a - leading organisation for tree planting not only across West and North Yorkshire but across England. The funds will offer employment stability to the current team, helping retain tree planting expertise and skills in the region. It also offers time to source alternative funding which will be needed beyond 2030.

## 7. Next steps and timelines

- 1) Respond with the assistance of Kirklees legal team, to the expected grant agreement from Cheshire West and Chester Council to secure the Trees for Climate [2026-30] capital and revenue funding. The agreement is expected between April and June 2026.
- 2) Arrange to extend Fixed Term employment contracts once the funding has been secured and recruit to any vacant posts. June 2026.
- 3) New Trees for Climate programme commences; tree planting applications are taken through the regulatory stage, assessed and awarded grant funding if successful. May/June 2026 onwards.
- 4) Continue to progress the current WRF pipeline of landowner planting schemes in anticipation of the start of the next programme. April – June 2026.
- 5) Finalise the delivery of the first Trees for Climate tree planting schemes. March – April 2026 and move activity from the first programme from planting into monitoring stage. April 2026 onwards.

## 8. Contact officer

Iwan Downey, White Rose Forest Programme Director.

## 9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

Kirklees Council Cabinet reports – 8 Jul 2025 [WRF Strategic Plan], 14 Dec 2021 [Northern Forest & Urban Tree Challenge], 13 Jul 2020 [Tree for Climate].

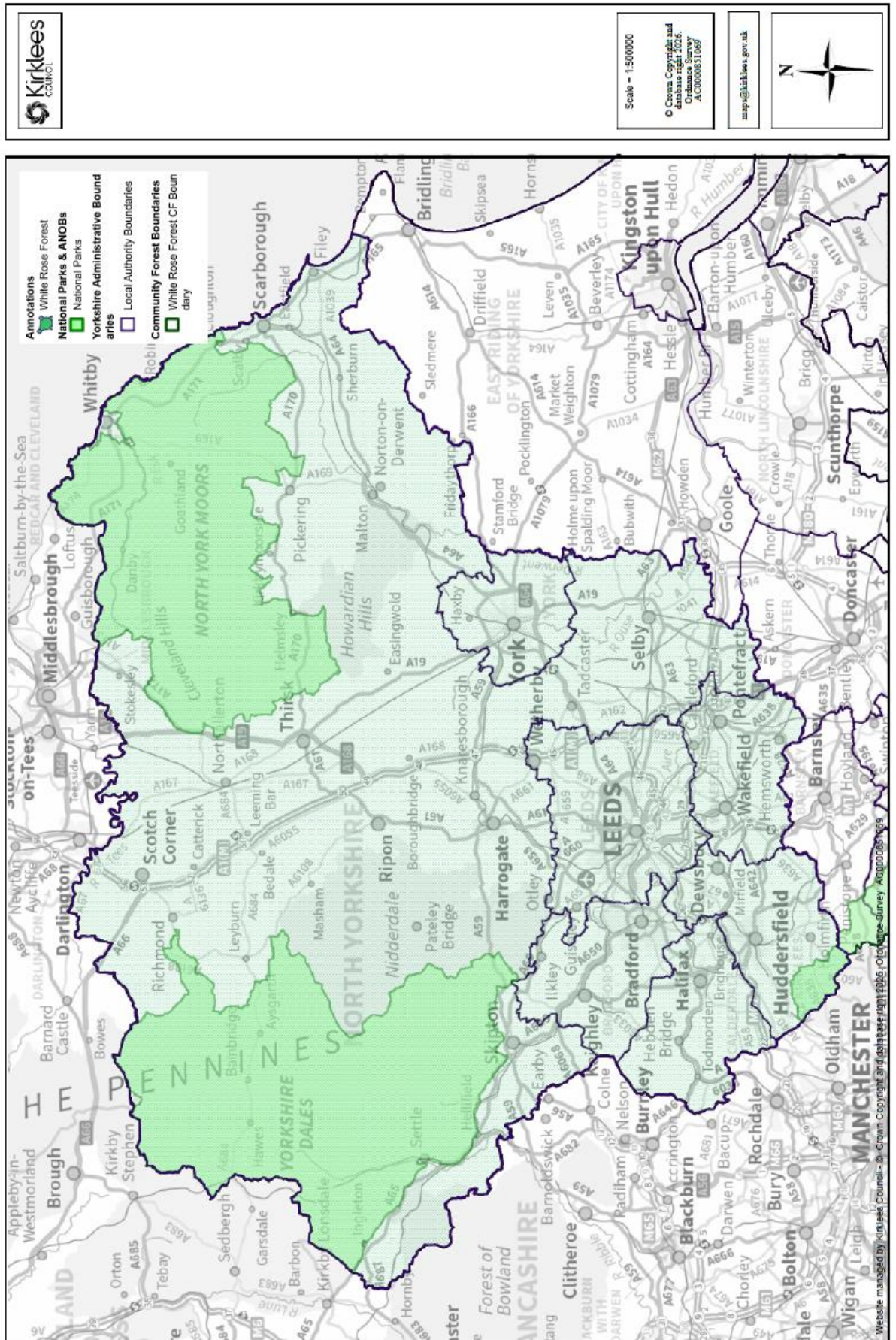
**10. Appendices**

1. White Rose Forest Map
2. Location of WRF Projects To Date
3. Location of WRF Projects in Kirklees To Date
4. WRF Priority Areas – Landscapes for Water
5. WRF Priority Areas – Green Streets®
6. Letter of indicative allocation from Cheshire West & Chester Council

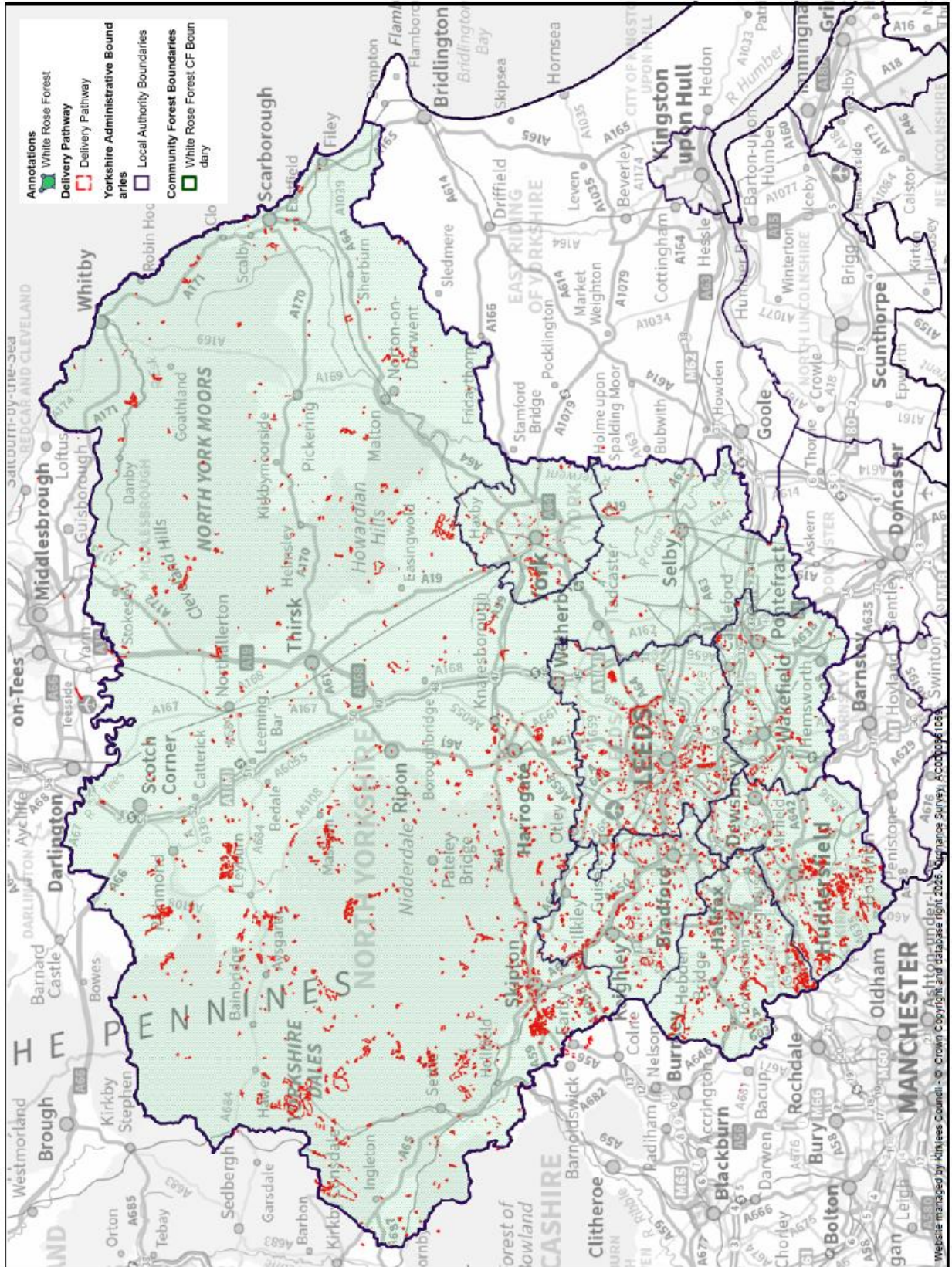
**11 Service Director responsible**

David Wildman – Service Director for Regeneration & Skills

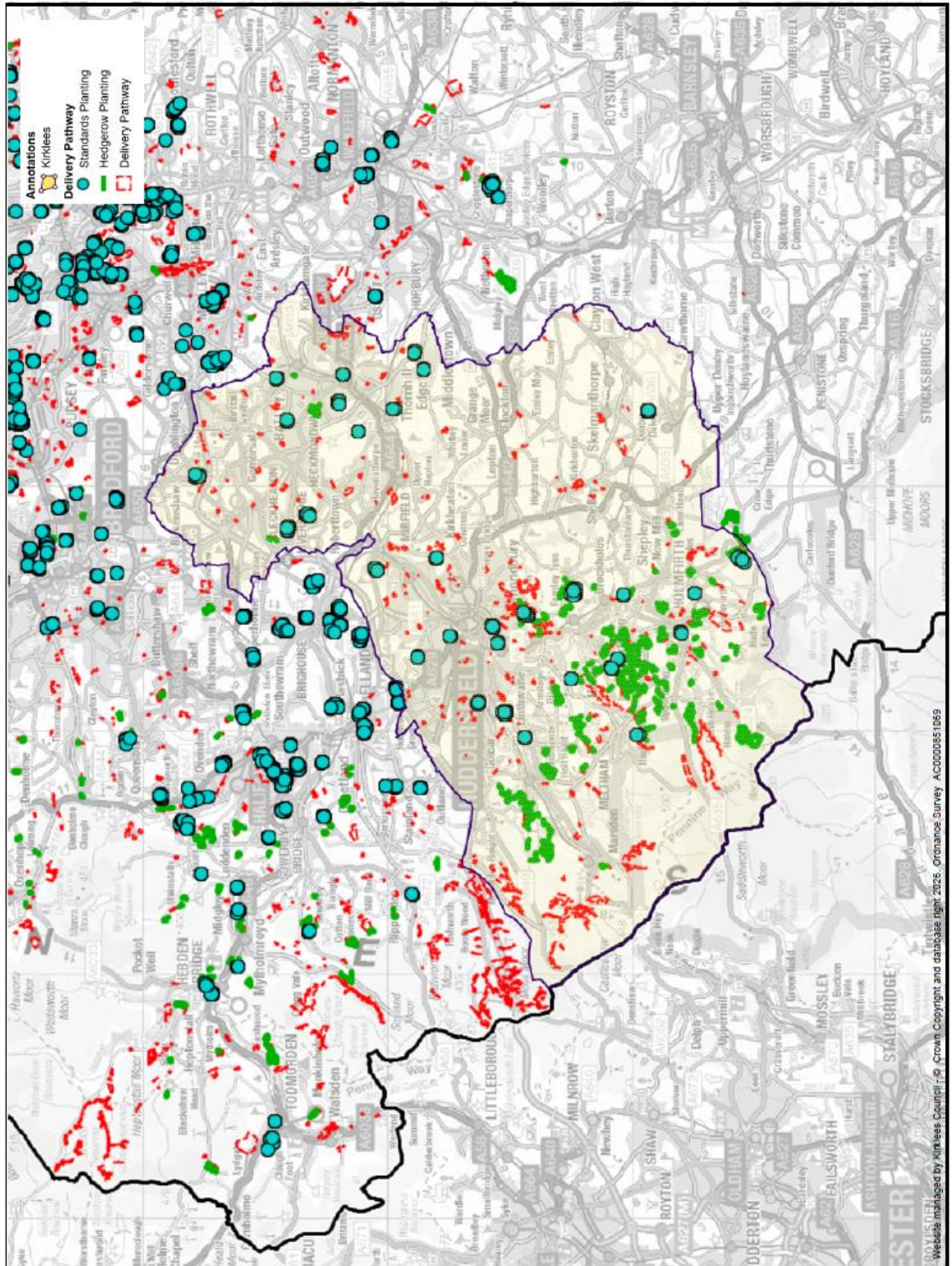
Appendix 1 - White Rose Forest Map



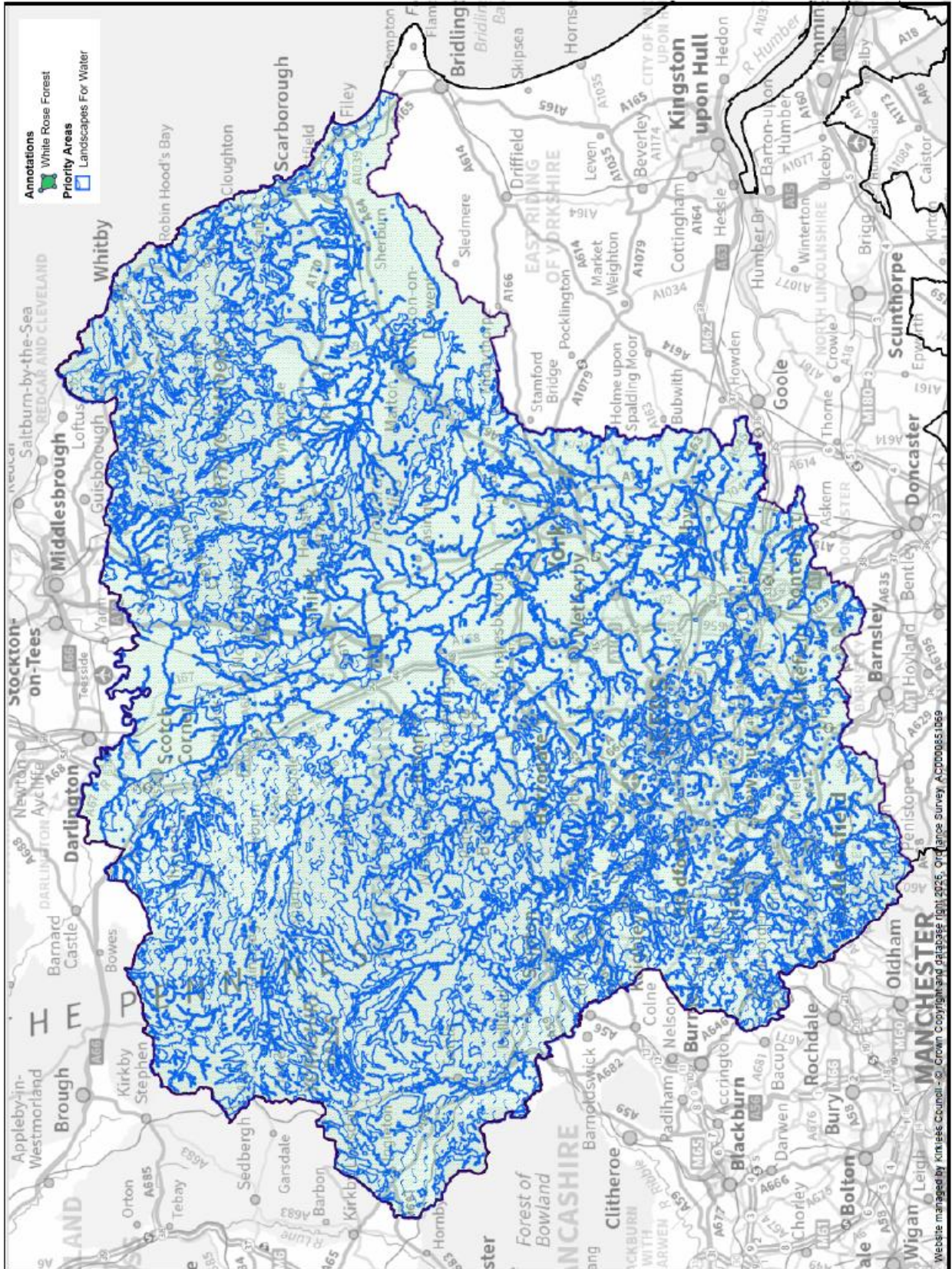
Appendix 2 - Location of WRF Projects To Date



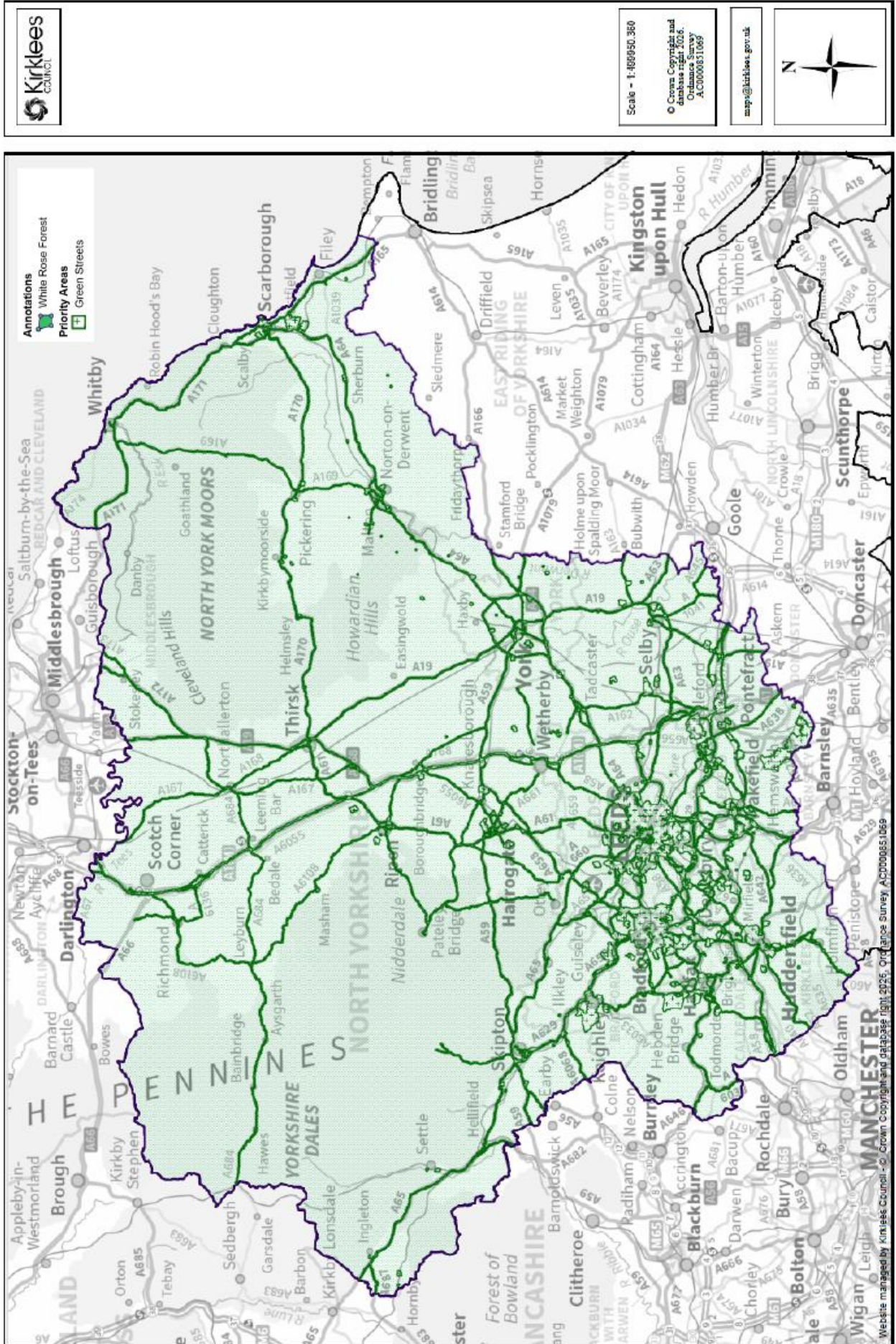
Appendix 3 - Location of WRF projects in Kirklees To Date



Appendix 4 - WRF Priority Area - Landscapes for Water



Appendix 5 - WRF Priority Area - Green Streets



To TFC2 delivery partner

Trees for Climate successor programme has been developed by the Community Forests with the support of the Community Forest Trust, National Trust, Woodland Trust and the Accountable Body, Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWACC), over the past 2 ½ years.

The final settlement for the Programme is not yet known, so no definitive figures or funding commitments can be given by the Accountable Body.

The likely timeline for decisions leading to the issuance of Grant Funding Agreements is shown below.

Milestone Description	Date
S31 Received from Defra.	31/03/2026
GFAs issued to Partners, signed and returned to PMO	30/04/2026
MOU for the successor Programme approved	30/04/2026
Receive payment from Defra – RDEL and CDEL (first instalment)	31/05/2026
POs issued to Partners – RDEL and CDEL (first instalment)	31/05/2026
Invoices received from Partners processed.	31/05/2026

During the course of developing the successor programme, the Council has requested feedback from respective delivery partners on possible delivery targets. Based on the information you have submitted, and the allocation process undertaken recently the current allocation for White Rose Forest is:

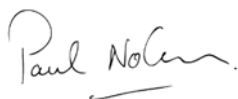
£14,134,312 – CDEL for 402 Non-NT Hectares, 50 NT Hectares and 44 WT Hectares

£635,113 - RDEL

The figures above relate to financial year 2026/27 only. The final figures for all strands of funding will be communicated to White Rose Forest as soon as possible once Defra have made their decisions. In the meantime, we, the PMO, will keep all partners informed of any information that may significantly alter the estimated allocations shown above.

For the avoidance of doubt, CWACC, as the accountable body, is not able to make any commitment to any level of funding until it has all the funds provided for in a contract with Defra and the Council is in receipt of funds into its account.

Yours Sincerely,



Paul Nolan  
Programme Director