NEWARK & SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 18 February 2025

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Simon Forde - Climate & the Environment

Director Lead: Matt Finch, Director - Communities & Environment

Lead Officer: Matt Adey, Development Manager – Environmental Services Ext. 5253

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report / Key Decision
Report Title	Major New Woodland Planting Schemes in Newark & Sherwood
Purpose of Report	The purpose of this report of to appraise members of the potential for Newark & Sherwood to contribute to two, major tree planting schemes in Newark & Sherwood with the aim of increasing habitat connectivity and biodiversity, health and wellbeing and with a potential to help offset the Council's future carbon emissions.
Recommendations	That Cabinet: a) close the capital schemes in relation to climate change and PV solar panels realising a saving of £414,341; and b) invest £309,915 of the savings identified at a) in creating a new capital scheme in relation to the contribution to Nottinghamshire County Council for the two major, tree planting trees in the District.
Alternative Options Considered	Newark & Sherwood does not currently hold sufficient land to be able to deliver schemes of the size and scale being suggested within this report. This is not a project we could deliver in our own right. We could choose not to allocate funding to the project and this would leave a funding gap for NCC to fill. This would be met in time through NCC selling carbon offsets and would mean the scheme is likely to come to fruition in Newark & Sherwood without NSDC support. However, we would not have played a direct delivery role which would be at odds with aspirations within the Community Plan and mean we would not be able to claim 30% of the carbon as future offsetting.
Reason for Recommendations	In line with the objectives set out in the Community Plan, this is an opportunity to create 2 significant woodland areas in Newark & Sherwood and to offset some of our future carbon output. The schemes also protect and enhance the district's

	natural environment and green spaces and reduce the impact of climate change.

1.0 Background

1.1 Newark & Sherwood District Council's green aims are as ambitious as they are admirable.

1.2 In 2019 we announced that the Council would work towards a carbon net neutral date of 2035 backed up by our promise in the Community Plan to reduce the impact of climate change, where we also committed to protect and enhance the district's natural environment and green spaces. To achieve this, we committed to a continued programme of tree planting and annual free tree giveaways as set out in our Tree Strategy (2022). As part of that strategy, we promised to plant at least 6000 trees before 2032.

1.3 The Environmental Services Team have already beaten that target having planted or given away 6324 trees since 2022 (We've given away over 4,000 trees since 2019 and planted around 10,000 since 2019). Planting on our own land has mainly been funded through the Trees for Climate scheme which has been running since 2020. However, our own land capacity is limited and we have been working with partner organisations to try and increase canopy cover further.

1.4 One of our colleagues has been seconded to the Sherwood Forest Trust to help with the administration of the Trees for Climate scheme since 2023, and with our help Trees for Climate have planted over 70,000 trees in the Newark & Sherwood District area. Planting has taken place on farms, within horse paddocks, in private gardens and parkland, in public green spaces and urban areas.

1.5 Schemes have included hedgerows, small orchards, riparian planting, urban trees, rewilding projects, agroforestry schemes, low density parkland planting and new deciduous woodland. We were one of the first councils to adopt a formal tree strategy and our own green spaces (and many of the spaces we manage for others) are exemplar locations for habitat creation.

1.6 We have also begun work on a project with the Woodland Trust designed to improve canopy cover on the Hawtonville Estate, which has been identified as an area of low tree cover using the tree equity model.

1.7 It is against this background an exciting new opportunity has arisen to be part of the biggest woodland creation project in this region in decades. Nottinghamshire County Council, through the Trees for Climate project, has purchased 2 large parcels of land within Newark & Sherwood District. The scale of planting on these two sites completely dwarfs all our previous efforts.

Location and Scale

1.8 The first plot which has been acquired is at Little Carlton, comprising of around 18ha of former arable land. When planted this will accommodate around 27,000 trees (a full stock list and map of the site is attached).

Figure 1Approximate boundary of Little Carlton site

1.9 Site number two is Thorney Abbey Farm, near Southwell, which is a substantial site which lends itself to a range of habitat restoration. Once again, this site is predominantly farmland with some historic pond areas which may also be restored as part of the project. This is a much bigger area than Little Carlton, comprising of around 48ha. It is anticipated that the site will have planting space for over 87,000 trees.

1.10 Both sites are anticipated to be publicly accessible, and the Thorney Abbey site is accessible on foot via a network of public footpaths. The creation of a new woodland habitat will be conducted with this in mind with a viewpoint created at the top of the site to create a focus for the area.

1.11 A draft planting list for both sites is **attached**.

Figure 2 Approximate boundary of Thorney Abbey Site

1.12 Now the sites have been purchased, Nottinghamshire County Council are eager to get the land planted, however the Trees for Climate funding cap has been reached and new funding opportunities are being sought to ensure the site can be planted and maintained for at least the next 15 years. After this time the trees should be largely self-sustaining. The Woodland Trust have offered to fund the supply of trees for the Thorney Abbey site, but there is still a considerable shortfall to be found. The costs for planting and maintenance including tree shelters, guards and stakes and deer fencing etc. are essential to the success of planting on the site.

2.0 Proposal/Details of Options Considered

Environmental Gains

2.1 These schemes will result in increased habitat connectivity, joining several local woodland pockets. Both sites are expected to be open to the public, increasing public access to green space and there are also other natural capital benefits including air quality gains, natural flood management, noise reduction and buffering of priority habitats. Around 114,000 trees will be planted completely dwarfing our aims to plan 6,000 trees by 2032. Around 30% of these could be claimed against our own planting goals (approximately 34,000 trees or a 240% increase in our total planting levels since 2019).

Carbon Capture

2.2 If NSDC were able to fund 30% of the planting and maintenance work on these two sites, then we would be entitled to 30% of the carbon captured over the lifetime of the project.

2.3 Unfortunately, it is difficult to calculate the exact figures for the potential carbon capture and we have no way of knowing what the value of any carbon credits will be when the site reaches maturity.

2.4 This report does not look to replicate the information collated and shared by colleagues elsewhere, but it does highlight that the even if we implement all of the changes highlighted by the Carbon Trust in their 2020 report *Newark & Sherwood District Council Climate Emergency Strategy,* we will still have a carbon output of around 552 tCO2e per annum by 2035.

2.5 Subject to agreement at NCC and NSDC and then subject to contract between the two parties, the agreed funding would be transferred from NSDC to NCC (Greenwood Community Forest) in return for transfer of the carbon rights for the purposes of offsetting by NSDC from NCC to NSDC. Timing of the two transactions to be agreed between the parties in line with the above processes. Owing to the nature of the Carbon registration and validation process, Pre-Insurance Units will be issued to NSDC within 3 years of the planting being completed as the woodland matures these PIU's can be converted to carbon credits.

Budget Commitment

2.6 The contribution from NSDC towards the development of these two sites is **£309,915** with the total project costs being £1,033,053 for the two sites combined. This does not include land assembly which has been funded through Trees for Climate. In effect we would not be seeking new funding for this planting but utilising existing allocations which for varying reasons are no longer required.

2.7 We currently have a number of projects which have budget under spends which have not been allocated to any other projects:

Climate change (Capital Expenditure)	£168,300
PV Solar Approx underspend (Capital Expenditure)	£246,041
Capital Underspends	**£414,341**
Local Area Energy Plan (Revenue Expenditure)	£75,800
Revenue Underspend	**£75,800**
Total predicted underspend	**£490,141**

2.7.1 **The Climate Change Capital budget** was established on the back of the Council agreeing a carbon net neutral target of 2035 and action plan. It was recognised that investment would be required to deliver that target and the budget was established as means of funding, whole or in part, schemes which would help underpin that action plan.

£36,900 of the £205,200 has been spent prior to 2024/25 to support the Solar PV scheme, leaving an available balance of £168,300.

2.7.2 **Solar PV installation**. On the 25 November 2021 the Policy & Finance committee approved the capital investment of £685,250 for the installation of Solar PV arrays across 5 of our assets. Initially this included an installation at Southwell Leisure centre however this site was removed from the project due unforeseen circumstances and replaced with a much smaller array at Sconce & Devon Park. This alongside prudent project management has resulted in a significant underspend on the project as detailed in the table above. The figure detailed in the table above (£246k) is the underspend expected as at 13 Jan 2025.

2.7.3 **Local Area Energy Partnership (LAEP).** The LAEP was established in order to reduce the district-wide carbon footprint. £82,000 was allocated to finance this work which included forecast consultancy costs of £56,190.95 in addition to an annual subscription charge of £3100. However, However, it has recently been confirmed that the Office of the Mayor of the East Midlands Combined County Authority has stepped forward to pay for the LAEP consultancy work saving NSDC £56,190.95. The aim is for this saving to be recycled into other projects and initiatives that can reduce our CO2 footprint.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment below where appropriate.

Financial Implications (FIN24-25/5295)

3.1 The Council's contribution towards Nottinghamshire County Council's Capital expenditure is expected to be £309,915. The overall project costs are likely to be £1,033,053 which represents 30% contribution to the project.

3.2 As can be seen from the table at para 2.7 there is sufficient funding available from existing projects that have come to an end. As a result, the remaining funding from the two existing capital projects (£414,341) can be redirected towards this project and there will be a capital underspend of £104,426. Should the proposals be accepted, the budget will be added to the Capital Programme in 2025/26 and will be included in the Capital Programme budget report to Council on 6 March 2025.

3.3 The additional revenue savings of £56,190.95 from the contributions towards the LAEP can therefore be offered as savings towards the 2024/25 general fund revenue account and would be included in the next budget monitoring report.

Legal Implications (LEG2425/8391)

3.4 Cabinet is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report. Legal Services will need to be instructed in relation to the legal mechanism for transfer of funds, as referenced in paragraph 2.5 of the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

Appendix 1: Planting Stock List – Little Carlton

WOODLAND PLANT TABLE		Tree Size (cm)	B/L and Conifer	Woody Shrub	Low density	Totals	Plants to Order - rounded to nearest 10
Major broadleaf trees							
Pedunculate Oak	*Quercus robur*	40 - 60	5763	120	37	5920	5920
Silver Birch	*Betula pendula*	40 - 60	2305	120	0	2425	2430
Wild Cherry	*Prunus avium*	40 - 60	1153	120	0	1272	1280
Aspen	*Populus tremula*	40 - 60	1153	0	15	1167	1170
Hornbeam	*Carpinus betulus*	40 - 60	1153	0	15	1167	1170
Downy / White Birch	*Betula pubescens*	40 - 60	461	0	22	483	490
Rowan / Mountain Ash	*Sorbus aucuparia*	40 - 60	461	0	0	461	470
Small-Leaved Lime	*Tilia cordata*	40 - 60	461	0	0	461	470
Wych Elm	*Ulmus Glabra*	40 - 60	461	0	0	461	470
Alder (Common)	*Alnus glutinosa*	40 - 60	0	0	22	22	30
Minor broadleaf trees							
Field maple	*Acer campestre*	40 - 60	461	280	22	763	770
Crab Apple	*Malus sylvestris*	40 - 60	461	280	15	755	760
Bird Cherry	*Prunus padus*	40 - 60	0	280	0	280	280
Shrubs							
Hawthorn	*Crataegus monogyna*	40 - 60	0	799	0	799	800
Hazel	*Corylus avelllna*	40 - 60	0	799	0	799	800
Purple Willow	*Salix caprea*	40 - 60	0	399	0	399	400
Grey Willow	*Salix cinerea*	40 - 60	0	399	0	399	400
Blackthorn	*Prunus spinosa*	40 - 60	0	200	0	200	200
Holly	*Ilex aquifolium*	40 - 60	0	200	0	200	200
Conifers							
Douglas Fir	*Pseudotsuga menziesii*	40 - 60	4841	0	0	4841	4850
Western Red Cedar	*Thuja plicata*	40 - 60	3919	0	0	3919	3920
							27280

Appendix 6 PLANTING STOCK – Thorney Abbey Farm

Tree species		Size (cm)	Cell Grown / Bare Root	Origin	Number	
Trees & Shrubs						
Alder, common	Alnus glutinosa	40-60	CG/BR	UK	4175	
Aspen	Populus tremula	40-60	CG/BR	UK	2675	
Birch, silver	Betula pendula	40-60	CG/BR	UK	16700	
Birch, downy	Betula pubescens	40-60	CG/BR	UK	1600	
Pinus sylvestris	Scots pine	40-60	CG/BR	UK	7200	
Cherry, wild	Prunus avium	40-60	CG/BR	UK	2175	
Douglas Fir	Pseudotsuga menziesii	40-60	CG/BR	UK	8800	
Crab Apple	Malus sylvestris	40-60	CG/BR	UK	1350	
Wych elm	Ulmus glabra	40-60	CG/BR	UK	1350	
Hawthorn, common	Crataegus monogyna	40-60	CG/BR	UK	2700	
Hazel	Corylus avellana	40-60	CG/BR	UK	1850	
Holly	Illex aquifolium	40-60	CG/BR	UK	550	
Lime, small leaved	Tilia cordata	40-60	CG/BR	UK	2025	
Maple, field	Acer campestre	40-60	CG/BR	UK	1625	
Oak, English	Quercus robur	40-60	CG/BR	UK	15225	
Willow, grey	Salix cinerea	40-60	CG/BR	UK	1300	
Rowan	Sorbus aucuparia	40-60	CG/BR	UK	1350	
Willow, Goat	Salix caprea	40-60	CG/BR	UK	1350	
Hornbeam	Carpinus betulus	40-60	CG/BR	UK	6450	
Common beech	Fagus sylvaticus	40-60	CG/BR	UK	6600	
				Totals	**87050**	
Total Trees - Thorney Abbey Farm					**87050**	

Trees for Climate

G_0262 Little Carlton Fencing

Produced by: ABailey

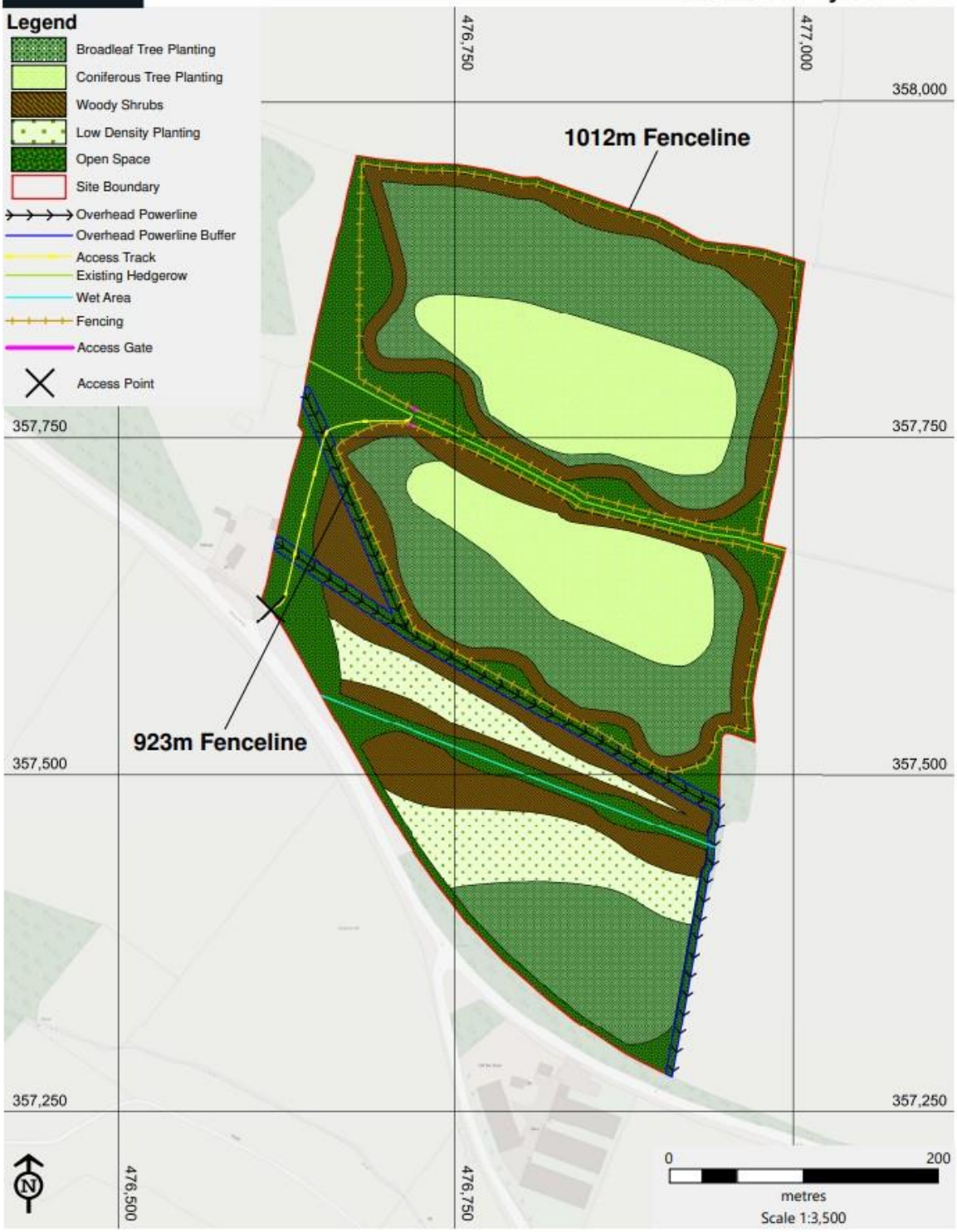
Date: 13/09/2024

6-Figure Grid Reference: SK768576

Greenwood

Working in Partnership with:

Nottinghamshire County Council



Trees for Climate

G_0263 Thorney Abbey Concept Plan

Produced by: ABailey

Date: 10/09/2024

6-Figure Grid Reference: SK670530

Greenwood

Nottinghamshire's Community Forest bringing Sherwood Forest to your doorstep

Working in Partnership with:

Nottinghamshire County Council