

Report to: Climate, Energy and Environment Committee

Date: 19 October 2021

Subject: **White Rose Forest Action Plan**

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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To seek endorsement for the White Rose Forest (WRF) Action Plan 2021-25 due for release in November 2021, including an update on a possible scenario for 2050 for tree canopy coverage in the WRF area.

2. Information

- 2.1 The White Rose Forest (WRF) is one of four community forests which span the width of England from Liverpool to Hull. It is the delivery vehicle for the Northern Forest in West and North Yorkshire, which has backing of £5.7 million from government and a further £10 million from the Woodlands Trust.
- 2.2 The WRF is also part of the England's Community Forest Network made up of 12 community forests which has been awarded 2020/21 £11.1 m from DEFRA's Trees for Climate fund, part of the Nature for Climate programme.
- 2.3 The WRF and the development of the WRF Action Plan is identified in the Leeds City Region Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy as one of 12 key actions. It recognises the multiple benefits that trees can generate including

flood alleviation, improved physical and mental health. Trees also have an important part to play in the region achieving its target of being net-zero carbon by 2038.

- 2.4 The White Rose Forest Partnership is formed through a joint venture between partners across West and North Yorkshire, including local authorities, national organisations and government agencies like Forestry Commission, the National Trust and the Woodland Trust, and local organisations like Groundwork, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, and community tree planting groups. Full details of the partners is available on the [WRF website](#).
- 2.5 The WRF Partnership is now well established. The Steering Group oversees delivery of the WRF Action Plan and the work of a number of thematic groups formed from representatives from all WRF partners.
- 2.6 Kirklees Council plays a leading role as the accountable body for delivery of the WRF, and a core team has been established within Kirklees Council on behalf of the partners, which reports to a WRF Management Group.

Progress to date

- 2.7 The WRF Carbon Group has assembled a group of regional and national experts in field of forestry and carbon to undertake a study to assess the potential level of carbon sequestration across the WRF and help set a tree canopy expansion target for the WRF region .
- 2.8 The WRF partnership has laid out some planting targets between 2021 and 2025, the end of the Nature for Climate programme. In addition to this, the WRF Action Plan 2021-25 (attached) sets out a possible scenario of what could be achieved by 2050 including its potential impact on residue carbon dioxide emissions.
- 2.9 These proposals for 2050 will start a conversation with wider partners and stakeholders in North and West Yorkshire to inform a full WRF Plan 2025-2050 to be published in 2025. The WRF Plan is envisaged as a 25-year plan and aims to establish a vision for how the Forest will develop into a large scale varied treescape across North and West Yorkshire.
- 2.10 The WRF Action Plan 2021-25 has been developed over the last few years and chimes well with the England's Tree Action Plan 2021-24 published in May 2021. Recent work of the WRF partners has focussed on identifying the canopy expansion and carbon sequestration targets, developing proposals for the set up and resourcing of a multi-partner WRF Delivery Pathway.
- 2.11 The WRF Action Plan 2021-25 announces our WRF Delivery Pathway which aims to manage and process site data for all WRF projects, supporting regulatory approval and design processes and allows multiple funding options to be presented to landowners for their schemes. This co-ordination of funding will be achieved via the WRF Funders' Group (chaired by the Forestry Commission) and is regarded nationally as a pilot for a new way of working to

achieve landscape scale change. The Combined Authority is an advisory member of the WRF Steering Group.

- 2.12 Although WRF local authority partners have been undertaking assessments of the level of tree planting that is achievable within their areas, a certain amount of uncertainty remains as a result of government policy on land management, which is still being developed and will influence the likely amount of tree planting that can be achieved across the region
- 2.13 The continued support by Directors of Development of their respective District WRF Groups across North and West Yorkshire chaired and hosted by the Local Authorities with support from the WRF Core Team (originally agreed in June 2017) is another key element to the successful operation of the WRF Delivery Pathway. It allows for WRF partners and the local authorities to co-ordinate third party landowner engagement.
- 2.14 The WRF Partners propose to launch the WRF Action Plan 2021-25 in November 2021 with the West Yorkshire Mayor. A revised standalone WRF website sets out the vision for the Forest, the principles of community and stakeholder engagement and the proposed WRF Delivery Pathway model
- 2.15 A final WRF Plan for North and West Yorkshire would be produced by 2025, when government policy is expected to be confirmed and when all partners will be able to confirm expected planting potential within their areas, and firm targets can be set for planting rates and carbon sequestration potential.

2.16 Summary planting targets for 2021- 2025

WRF Programme	Hectares	Numbers of trees
Green Streets®	1000	2,000,000
Landscape for Water - Aire	930	1,860,000
- Calder	670	1340,000
- Swale, Ure, Nidd and Ouse	400	800,000
Other Rural	500	1,000,000
Total	3500	7,000,000

2.17 Summary 2050 scenario to begin a wider conversation

Proposal for consultation	Additional Hectares	Additional Trees
Increase tree cover from 11% to 19%	80595	160,000,000
Bringing 90% of known ancient woodlands into management	18,000 protected	

- 2.18 If the tree cover for the WRF area were to be increased to 19% by 2050, a total of potentially 9,775 kilo tonnes of carbon dioxide would have been sequestered into new woodland. This would mean by 2050, 931 kilo tonnes of carbon dioxide could be sequestered annually equating to up to 50% of expected residue carbon dioxide emissions.
- 2.19 The capital for the 3,500 hectares will come from a range of funding streams including Trees for Climate and Northern Forest Grant Agreement 2 (both via

Kirklees), Forestry Commission England's Woodland Creation Offer, the Woodland Trust's Grow Back Greener, private sponsorship e.g. Northern Gas Network and the internal resources of the larger local authorities.

- 2.20 The National Forest and Community Forests offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns and cities, by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife. The National Forest Strategy and an approved Community Forest Plan may be a material consideration in preparing development plans and in deciding planning applications. Any development proposals within the National Forest and Community Forests in the Green Belt should be subject to the normal policies for controlling development in Green Belts.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 The WRF Action Plan 2021-25 is a clear statement of intent for WRF partners in North and West Yorkshire to take practical steps at a landscape scale to dramatically increase the rate of woodland creation to 1) begin creating a sizeable carbon store and 2) to provide meaningful adaptation measures such as a flood reduction and cooling of urban areas.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 The WRF Green Streets® programme looks to work with landowners in priority community and employment areas. We will be undertaking an analysis of the Woodland Access Standard to ensure we can target tree canopy expansion within communities that do not meet the access to woodland standard

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Staffing Implications

- 8.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

9. External Consultees

- 9.1 Extensive WRF partner involvement across North and West Yorkshire in the development of the WRF Action Plan

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 That the Committee endorses the WRF Action Plan 2021-25, ahead of its planned launch in November.
- 10.2 That the Committee endorses the proposal for WRF partners across North and West Yorkshire, including the Combined Authority, to continue to work in partnership to develop a full White Rose Forest Plan 2025-50 that will have recognised status in the national planning policy framework.

11. Background Documents

None

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – White Rose Forest Action Plan 2021–25.