

**Oversight and Governance**

Chief Executive's Department

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## Delegated Decisions

### Delegated Executive/Officer Decisions

Notice of call-in for non-urgent decisions must be given to the Democratic Services Team by 4.30 pm on Thursday 13 November 2025. Please note – urgent decisions and non-key Council Officer decisions cannot be called in. Copies of the decisions together with background reports are available for viewing as follows:

- on the Council's Intranet Site at <https://modgov/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx>
- on the Council's website at <https://tinyurl.com/3hwmppzp>

The decision detailed below may be implemented on Friday 14 November 2025 if it is not called-in.

## **Delegated Decisions**

### **I. Councillor Tudor Evans OBE (Leader of the Council):**

- I.a. L13 25-26 Acquisition of strategic area of land in Plymouth for woodland and wider habitat creation **(Pages 1 - 30)**

# EXECUTIVE DECISION

## made by a Cabinet Member



### REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY BY AN INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

Executive Decision Reference Number – L13 25/26


Decision	
<b>1</b>	<b>Title of decision:</b> Acquisition of strategic area of land in Plymouth for woodland and wider habitat creation.
<b>2</b>	<b>Decision maker:</b> Councillor Tudor Evans OBE, Leader of the Council
<b>3</b>	<b>Report author and contact details:</b> Peter Hawking-Sach (Natural Infrastructure Officer) <a href="mailto:peter.hawking-sach@plymouth.gov.uk">peter.hawking-sach@plymouth.gov.uk</a>
<b>4a</b>	<b>Decision to be taken:</b> 1. Approve the Business Case; 2. Allocate £0.272m for the project into the Capital Programme funded by DEFRA - Trees for Climate fund; 3. Authorises the acquisition of the land set out in the Business Case up to a maximum value of £0.187m to acquire the land and £0.085m to deliver the woodland related habitat improvements.; 4. Delegates the award of the contract to Service Director for Street Services.
<b>5</b>	<b>Reasons for decision:</b> To take advantage of opportunity to acquire strategic area of land, providing potential for new publicly accessible greenspace and provide local carbon offsetting scheme and biodiversity net gain unit creation through woodland creation.
<b>6</b>	<b>Alternative options considered and rejected:</b> <b>1. Do not engage with acquisition process.</b> No risk to PCC but the Council misses low risk, low-cost generational opportunity to take ownership of strategic parcel of land. Rejected due to Climate Emergency – doing nothing not an option. <b>2. Engage with agent and express interest in being in contact with new landowner regarding Community Forest grant offer for woodland creation.</b> Low risk to PCC, no cost but does not provide control over future land-use, delivering opportunity for carbon off-setting and potential revenues arising. Rejected due to lack of control over future land-use and ability to realise opportunities relative to preferred option. <b>3. Proceed with acquisition using PCC capital funds.</b> Enables control of land and future use and associated revenues but creates budget pressure on PCC Corporate borrowing. Rejected because equally viable and lower risk to PCC option exists.
<b>7</b>	<b>Financial implications and risks:</b>

<p>It is proposed that the cost of acquisition £180k + £7k contingency is funded wholly through external DEFRA Trees for Climate funding which PCC can access as lead partner for Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest. A proposal for this funding has been submitted to the England Community Forest leadership team (decision received 29/07/2025) and will be presented to the Trees for Climate Programme Board following acquisition for final approval.</p> <p>There is a low risk that the DEFRA funding does not come through to fund the acquisition, this can be mitigated by stopping the acquisition process or through re-sale of the land to recover the cost to PCC.</p> <p>The cost of the planting, £85k will be supported through additional DEFRA funds and the habitat improvements generated will provide a range of Biodiversity Net Gain units which we have assessed as being in demand across the city. The revenues arising from the sale of these units will fund the long-term maintenance of the site.</p> <p>Total DEFRA – Trees for Climate grant £272k</p>				
<b>8</b>	<b>Legal Implications and risks:</b>  Should the offer for the land be accepted then Legal due diligence will be undertaken as part of the acquisition process.			
<b>9</b>	<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> (please contact <a href="#">Democratic Support</a> for further advice)	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Per the Constitution, a key decision is one which:</b>
			X	in the case of <b>capital</b> projects and contract awards, results in a new commitment to spend and/or save in excess of <b>£3million</b> in total
			X	in the case of <b>revenue</b> projects when the decision involves entering into new commitments and/or making new savings in excess of <b>£1million</b>
			X	is <b>significant</b> in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising <b>two or more</b> wards in the area of the local authority.
<b>9b</b>	<b>If yes, date of publication of the notice in the <a href="#">Forward Plan of Key Decisions</a></b>			
<b>10</b>	<b>Please specify how this decision is linked to the Council's corporate plan/Plymouth Plan and/or the policy framework and/or the revenue/capital budget:</b>  Making Plymouth a fairer, <b>greener city</b> <b>Green Investment</b> , jobs, skills and better education PLY61 – Development in Plymouth's urban fringe DEV27 – Natural Environment & Green Spaces GRO6 – Delivering Plymouth's Natural Network GRO7 - Reducing carbon emissions and adapting to climate change INT6 – Enhancing Plymouth's 'Green City' credentials			
<b>11</b>	<b>Please specify any direct environmental implications of the decision (carbon impact)</b>  The intention post acquisition is to create a new woodland on the site to act as local carbon offsetting scheme verified through the Woodland Carbon Credit scheme and/or creation of BNG units verified through LPA and Natural England.			

**Urgent decisions**

12	Is the decision urgent and to be implemented immediately in the interests of the Council or the public?	Yes		(If yes, please contact <a href="#">Democratic Support</a> for advice)
		No	X	(If no, go to section 13a)
12a	Reason for urgency: N/A			
12b	Scrutiny Chair signature:		Date	
	Scrutiny Committee name:			
	Print Name:			
<b>Consultation</b>				
13a	Which Cabinet Member's portfolio does this decision relate to?	Councillor Briars-Delve – Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change		
13b	Date Cabinet Member consulted	03 July 2025		
13c	Are any other Cabinet members' portfolios affected by the decision?	Yes	X	
		No		(If no go to section 14)
13d	Which other Cabinet member's portfolio is affected by the decision?	Councillor Penberthy – Cabinet Member for Housing, Co-operative Development and Communities		
13e	Date other Cabinet member(s) consulted	25 July 2025		
14	Has any Cabinet member declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision?	Yes		If yes, please discuss with the Monitoring Officer
		No	x	
15	Which Corporate Management Team member has been consulted?	Name	Glenn Caplin-Grey	
		Job title	Strategic Director for Growth	
		Date consulted	15 July 2025	
<b>Sign-off</b>				
16	Sign off codes from the relevant departments consulted:	Democratic Support (mandatory)	JS28 25/26	
		Finance (mandatory)	ITG.25.26.077	
		Legal (mandatory)	LS/00001312/3/AC/24/7/25	
		Human Resources (if applicable)	N/A	

		<b>Corporate property (if applicable)</b>	N/A						
		<b>Procurement (if applicable)</b>	N/A						
<b>Appendices</b>									
<b>17</b>	<b>Re f.</b>	<b>Title of appendix</b>							
	A	250721 Breifing Report – Land acquisition_Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest							
	B	250709 Land acquisition at Merafield Capital Business Case							
	C	Equalities Impact Assessment							
	D	Climate Impact Assessment							
<b>Confidential/exempt information</b>									
<b>18 a</b>	<b>Do you need to include any confidential/exempt information?</b>		<b>Yes</b>	x	If yes, prepare a second, confidential ('Part II') briefing report and indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box in <b>18b</b> below.				
			<b>No</b>						
			<b>Exemption Paragraph Number</b>						
			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>18 b</b>	<b>Confidential/exempt briefing report title:</b>  250709 Land acquisition at Merafield Capital Business Case				X				
<b>Background Papers</b>									
<b>19</b>	Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below.  Background papers are <u>unpublished</u> works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based. If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.								
<b>Title of background paper(s)</b>			<b>Exemption Paragraph Number</b>						
			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Valuation and Risk Advice Report & Appendices– Plymouth, Land at Merafield Road					X				
<b>Cabinet Member Signature</b>									
<b>20</b>	I agree the decision and confirm that it is not contrary to the Council's policy and budget framework, Corporate Plan or Budget. In taking this decision I have given due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not. For further details please see the EIA attached.								

Signature		Date of decision	05/11/2025
Print Name	Cllr Tudor Evans OBE, Leader		

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# LAND ACQUISITION

## Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest



### 1. BACKGROUND

An opportunity on the open market has arisen to acquire strategic area of land in the city, providing potential for new publicly accessible greenspace and provide local carbon offsetting scheme and biodiversity net gain unit creation through woodland creation.

The Council has external funds for acquisition for this purpose available from DEFRA's Trees for Climate programme and its partnership with Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest and England's Community Forests network.

### 2. PROPOSED CHANGES AND REASONS

It is proposed that the Council acquires and plants this land with available external funds and utilises opportunity to generate Biodiversity Net Gain units and Woodland Carbon units to fund the longer term maintenance of the site – minimum 30 years.

### 3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Alternative options considered and rejected:

1. Do not engage with acquisition process. No risk to PCC but the Council misses low risk, low-cost generational opportunity to take ownership of strategic parcel of land. Rejected due to Climate Emergency – doing nothing not an option.
2. Engage with agent and express interest in being in contact with new landowner regarding Community Forest grant offer for woodland creation. Low risk to PCC, no cost but does not provide control over future land-use, delivering opportunity for carbon off-setting and potential revenues arising. Rejected due to lack of control over future land-use and ability to realise opportunities relative to preferred option.
3. Proceed with acquisition using PCC capital funds. Enables control of land and future use and associated revenues but creates budget pressure on PCC Corporate borrowing. Rejected because equally viable and lower risk to PCC option exists.

### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISK

It is proposed that the cost of acquisition is funded wholly through external DEFRA Trees for Climate funding which PCC can access as lead partner for Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest. A proposal for this funding has been submitted to the England Community Forest leadership team (decision made 25/07/2025) and will be presented to the Trees for Climate Programme Board following acquisition for final approval.

There is a low risk that the DEFRA funding does not come through to fund the acquisition, this can be mitigated by stopping the acquisition process or through re-sale of the land to recover the cost to PCC.

The cost of the planting will be supported through additional external funds and the habitat improvements generated will provide a range of Biodiversity Net Gain units which we have assessed as being in demand across the city. The revenues arising from the sale of these units will fund the long-term maintenance of the site.

### 5. TIMESCALES

The land is currently on the market so an offer will be made immediately following the approval and planting and habitat works on the site will take place from November 2025 – March 2027.

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The following relates to exempt or confidential matters (Para(s) 3 of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Govt Act 1972). Any breach of confidentiality could prejudice the Council/person/body concerned & might amount to a breach of the councillors /employees codes of conduct.

Document is Restricted

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# EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ACQUISITION OF STRATEGIC AREA OF LAND IN PLYMOUTH FOR WOODLAND AND WIDER HABITAT CREATION

## SECTION ONE: INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSAL

<b>Author(s):</b> The person completing the EIA template.	Peter Hawking-Sach	<b>Department and service:</b>	Growth, Street Services	<b>Date of assessment:</b>	29 July 2025
<b>Lead Officer:</b> Head of Service, Service Director, or Strategic Director.	Kat Deeney, Head of Environmental Planning	<b>Signature:</b>		<b>Approval date:</b>	29 July 2025
<b>Overview:</b>	<p>Plymouth City Council is lead partner in the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest Programme (PSDCF). PSDCF, as part of England's Community Forests network, delivers Defra's Trees for Climate programme, creating woodland and planting trees at scale across England to enhance biodiversity, combat climate change, and to provide myriad benefits to local communities.</p> <p>Defra's Trees for Climate fund provides additional funding for the acquisition of land for the purposes of woodland creation and biodiversity enhancement.</p> <p>Plymouth City Council has the opportunity to acquire a strategically important area of land for these purposes, enhancing existing adjacent ancient semi-natural woodland at Hardwick wood, and increasing the recreational and amenity benefit of the site for members of the public.</p>				
<b>Decision required:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve the Business Case;</li> <li>2. Allocate £0.272m for the project into the Capital Programme funded by DEFRA - Trees for Climate fund;</li> <li>3. Authorises the acquisition of the land set out in the Business Case up to a maximum value of £0.187m to acquire the land and £0.085m to deliver the woodland related habitat improvements.;</li> <li>4. Delegates the award of the contract to Service Director for Street Services.</li> </ol>				

## SECTION TWO: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING TOOL

<b>Potential external impacts:</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	X
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Does the proposal have the potential to negatively impact service users, communities or residents with protected characteristics?				
<b>Potential internal impacts:</b> Does the proposal have the potential to negatively impact Plymouth City Council employees?	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	X
Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? (if you have answered yes to either of the questions above then a full impact assessment is required and you must complete section three)	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	X
If you do not agree that a full equality impact assessment is required, please set out your justification for why not.				

SECTION THREE: FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Protected characteristics (Equality Act, 2010)	Evidence and information (e.g. data and consultation feedback)	Adverse impact	Mitigation activities	Timescale and responsible department
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<b>Age</b>	<p>Plymouth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 16.4 per cent of people in Plymouth are children aged under 15.</li><li>• 65.1 per cent are adults aged 15 to 64.</li><li>• 18.5 percent are adults aged 65 and over.</li><li>• 2.4 percent of the resident population are 85 and over.</li></ul> <p>South West</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 15.9 per cent of people are aged 0 to 14, 61.8 per cent are aged 15 to 64.</li><li>• 22.3 per cent are aged 65 and over.</li></ul> <p>England</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 17.4 per cent of people are aged 0 to 14.</li><li>• 64.2 per cent of people are aged 15 to 64.</li><li>• 18.4 per cent of people are aged 65 and over.</li></ul> <p>(2021 Census)</p>			
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<p><b>Care experienced individuals</b></p> <p>(Note that as per the Independent Review of Children's Social Care recommendations, Plymouth City Council is treating care experience as though it is a protected characteristic).</p>	<p>It is estimated that 26 per cent of the homeless population in the UK have care experience. In Plymouth there are currently 7 per cent of care leavers open to the service (6 per cent aged 18-20 and 12 per cent of those aged 21+) who are in unsuitable accommodation.</p> <p>The Care Review reported that 41 per cent of 19-21 year old care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to 12 per cent of all other young people in the same age group.</p> <p>In Plymouth there are currently 50 per cent of care leavers aged 18-21 Not in Education Training or Employment (54 per cent of all those care leavers aged 18-24 who are open to the service).</p> <p>There are currently 195 care leavers aged 18 to 20 (statutory service) and 58 aged 21 to 24 (extended offer). There are more care leavers aged 21 to 24 who could return for support from services if they wished to.</p>			
<p><b>Disability</b></p>	<p>9.4 per cent of residents in Plymouth have their activities limited 'a lot' because of a physical or mental health problem.</p> <p>12.2 per cent of residents in Plymouth have their activities limited 'a little' because of a physical or mental health problem (2021 Census)</p>			



<b>Gender reassignment</b>	0.5 per cent of residents in Plymouth have a gender identity that is different from their sex registered at birth. 0.1 per cent of residents identify as a trans man, 0.1 per cent identify as non-binary and, 0.1 per cent identify as a trans women (2021 Census).			
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	40.1 per cent of residents have never married and never registered a civil partnership. 10 per cent are divorced, 6 percent are widowed, with 2.5 per cent are separated but still married.  0.49 per cent of residents are, or were, married or in a civil partnerships of the same sex. 0.06 per cent of residents are in a civil partnerships with the opposite sex (2021 Census).			
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	The total fertility rate (TFR) for England was 1.62 children per woman in 2021. The total fertility rate (TFR) for Plymouth in 2021 was 1.5.			

<b>Race</b>	<p>In 2021, 94.9 per cent of Plymouth's population identified their ethnicity as White, 2.3 per cent as Asian and 1.1 per cent as Black (2021 Census)</p> <p>People with a mixed ethnic background comprised 1.8 per cent of the population. 1 per cent of the population use a different term to describe their ethnicity (2021 Census)</p> <p>92.7 per cent of residents speak English as their main language. 2021 Census data shows that after English, Polish, Romanian, Chinese, Portuguese, and Arabic are the most spoken languages in Plymouth (2021 Census).</p>			
<b>Religion or belief</b>	<p>48.9 per cent of the Plymouth population stated they had no religion. 42.5 per cent of the population identified as Christian (2021 Census).</p> <p>Those who identified as Muslim account for 1.3 per cent of Plymouth's population while Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish or Sikh combined totalled less than 1 per cent (2021 Census).</p>			
<b>Sex</b>	<p>51 per cent of our population are women and 49 per cent are men (2021 Census).</p>			
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<p>88.95 per cent of residents aged 16 years and over in Plymouth describe their sexual orientation as straight or heterosexual. 2.06 per cent describe their sexuality as bisexual, 1.97 per cent of people describe their sexual orientation as gay or lesbian. 0.42 per cent of residents describe their sexual orientation using a different term (2021 Census).</p>			

SECTION FOUR: HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

Human Rights	Implications	Mitigation Actions	Timescale and responsible department

SECTION FIVE: OUR EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

Equality objectives	Implications	Mitigation Actions	Timescale and responsible department
<b>Work together in partnership to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ promote equality, diversity and inclusion</li><li>▪ facilitate community cohesion</li><li>▪ support people with different backgrounds and lived experiences to get on well together</li></ul>			
<b>Give specific consideration to care experienced people to improve their life outcomes, including access to training, employment and housing.</b>			
<b>Build and develop a diverse workforce that represents the community and citizens it serves.</b>			
<b>Support diverse communities to feel confident to report crime and anti-social behaviour, including hate crime and hate incidents, and work with partners to ensure Plymouth is a city where everybody feels safe and welcome.</b>			

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# 250806 Land acquisition at Merafield Road

## Project details

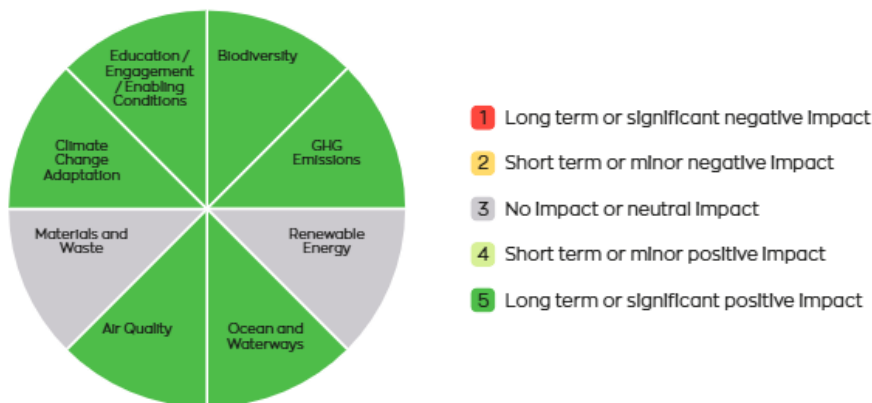
### Assessment author

Peter Hawking-Sach

### Project summary

PCC has identified the opportunity to purchase land at Merafield Road, with further opportunity to create woodland at the site, enhancing adjacent woodlands at Hardwick Wood, and to increase biodiversity contributing Net Zero targets, carbon sequestration, and the potential for future enhancements

## Summary of assessment



The delivery of tree planting and woodland creation on this site will provide multiple benefits and lasting positive impacts across numerous Climate Assessment criteria

## Assessment scores

### Biodiversity

#### Score

(5) Long lasting or extensive positive impact

#### Score justification

The creation of new woodland and tree planting at this site will significantly increase habitat enhancement and biodiversity

## GHG Emissions

### Score

(5) Long lasting or extensive positive impact

### Score justification

Creation of new woodlands and tree planting alongside other habitat enhancements will create a net positive contribution to carbon sequestration and emissions mitigation

## Renewable Energy

### Score

(3) No impact or neutral impact

### Score justification

There is neutral impact on renewable energy provision through the delivery of new treescapes at this site

## Ocean and Waterways

### Score

(5) Long lasting or extensive positive impact

### Score justification

This project has the potential to slow and halt runoff in the area due to the steep aspect of the proposed planting site. This has the potential to impact storm overflows and pressure on existing sewer systems

## Air Quality

### Score

(5) Long lasting or extensive positive impact

### Score justification

Tree planting at this location will have a long lasting impact on air quality, with proximity to the A38 increasing these benefits for adjacent residents.

## Materials and Waste

### Score

(3) No impact or neutral impact

### Score justification

There will be consistent review of any materials used to deliver tree planting at this site. There is a commitment to ensuring appropriate materials and methods are employed which deliver the least harm and detrimental impact and waste

## Climate Change Adaptation

### Score

(5) Long lasting or extensive positive impact

### Score justification

This project will contribute greatly to climate change adaptation. It will enhance air quality, it will reduce flood risk, it will reduce the impact of Urban Heat Island effects in the city, it will sequester carbon.

## Education / Engagement / Enabling Conditions

### Score

(5) Long lasting or extensive positive impact

### Score justification

This site will provide enhanced access to woodland for residents, and through its design and delivery there is the potential to directly engage residents with the benefits of the scheme in the context of the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis. It will support the direct residential areas with climate change adaptation through the benefits of flood mitigation, air quality improvements and cooling effects.

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