

**PLYMOUTH & SOUTH DEVON
COMMUNITY FOREST – Winter Tree
Programme 2022/23
BRIEFING PAPER**



Background

Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest is a partnership programme consisting of PCC, South Hams and West Devon, National Trust, and Woodland Trust. In 2020, a council project mandate was signed and the partnership submitted an expression of interest to England's Community Forests (ECF) team to access DEFRA's 'Trees for Climate' funding package to deliver new woodland and tree planting through March 2025. In 2021, DEFRA and ECF accepted Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest's proposal, and PSDCF has since become England's 11th Community Forest with the vision:

A new 21st century woodland network created by young people to inspire and support future generations of Plymouth and SW Devon. PCF will create space for nature, encourage enterprise, deliver a positive transition to net zero and enable young people to influence their futures.

Delivery against the ambition of 500 hectares of planting will see the project secure up to £8.830m from the Trees for Climate Fund through March 2025.

It accesses a significant and unrivalled source of funding for PCC and its partners to achieve objectives set out in the Joint Local Plan, Corporate Plan, Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) and Plymouth's Plan for Trees.

The Winter Tree programme 2022-23 enables PCC to fulfil its tree planting programme across the city in year 2 of the programme, contributing to the 500 hectare target of the Community Forest, utilising the DEFRA 'Trees for Climate' fund as its capital and revenue budget resource.

Benefits and risks

Many of the benefits of the Community Forest have been modelled and are significant, especially in terms of health and wellbeing value to local communities. This is shown in Figure 1 below.

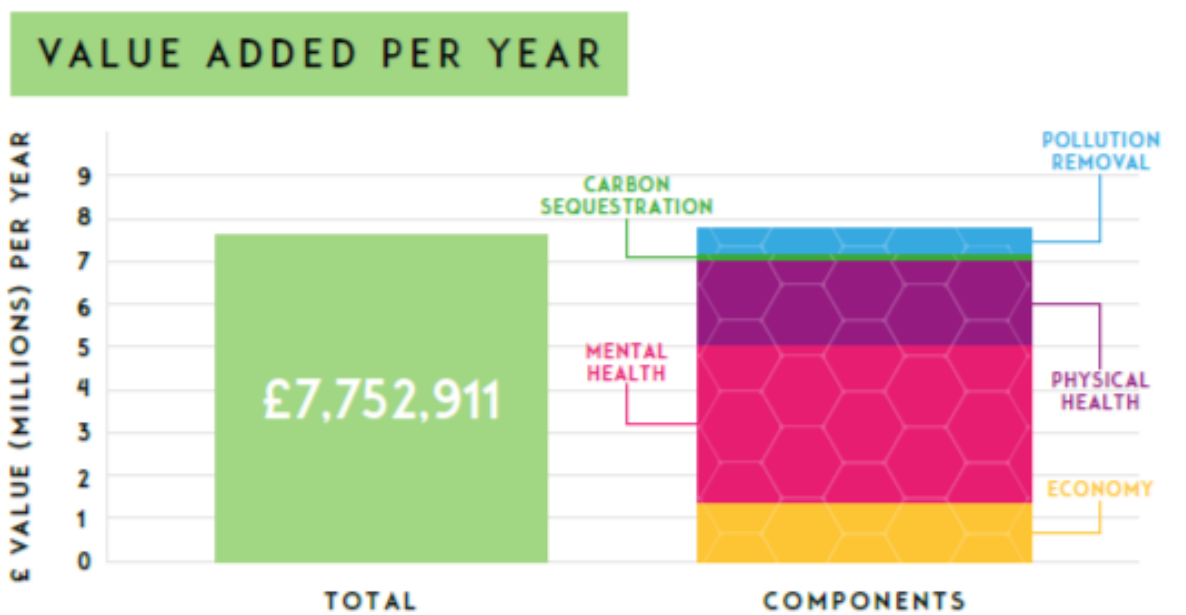


Fig 1. Monetary value added per year from PSDCF (Vivid Economics, 2021)

The objectives of the Winter Tree Planting 2022/23 as part of the Community Forest project are wide-ranging and capture social, economic and environmental outcomes. These are set out in Table 1 below.

The greatest risks/ challenges for the project now are:

1. to ensure it delivers Plymouth's committed tree planting in this year, to contribute to the overall programme targets
2. to appropriately plan the planting pipeline and ensure community buy-in and participation in all eligible planting schemes, within the annual tree planting season of November 22 – March 23.

Links to other areas of work

The PSDCF Plymouth Winter Tree Planting programme supports the delivery of a number of projects and areas of work including:

- **Habitat Banking** – linked to the new approach to biodiversity net gain required by the Environment Act. Funding secured through the sale of 'biodiversity units' as part of a developing habitat banking market linked to the new requirements of the Environment Act 2021.
- **National Marine Park** – the Community Forest is the green arc of the strategic natural space space encircling the city and complements the ambition of the NMP to have people at its heart.
- **Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs)** – potential payment scheme linked to a new approach to surface water management, delivering new SUDs features throughout the City.

5 year priorities for the Community Forest	Target Year 2025 (500 hectares)	Full establishment 2034 (1600ha)	Activities - how we will achieve the targets
Urban & rural regeneration	Local economy uplift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operational business model for PCF ▪ Estimated creation of 64.7 job years in forestry and 16.8 job years in services to building and landscape including 5 apprentices ▪ Business case for sawmill/firewood ▪ Included in 'Destination Plymouth' visitor strategy ▪ Recognisable branding of PCF as tourism destination 	Local economy uplift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 200 green jobs created ▪ £1,384,111 local property value uplift per year ▪ Destination for ecotourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training and education programmes targeted at local residents. ▪ Create high quality community forest which attracts inward investment. ▪ Sawmill/firewood Community Interest Company (CIC) ▪ Future Forester Apprenticeship programme in place ▪ Agroforestry enterprises ▪ Branding and marketing strategy developed ▪ Reintroduction of beavers and red squirrels ▪ Creation of suitable nesting sites for white-tailed eagle and osprey
Supporting local communities (Engagement & involvement & access)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 320ha publicly accessible woodland ▪ Intergenerational participation with emphasis on young people 	Health uplift Value: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mental health value £3,685,801 per year ▪ Physical health value £2,018,627 per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Network of cycle and walking paths ▪ Designated areas for recreation such as mountain biking ▪ Youth Panel steering creation and management of PCF

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduced health inequalities across the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Projected 300,000 recreational visits per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotion/marketing of PCF and ways to use it through comms strategy coordinated with partners ▪ Innovative interpretation and creation of art and culture trails
Carbon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local carbon sequestration monitoring framework in place ▪ PCF approved as seller of carbon credits ▪ Established and enacted impact monitoring programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase of 10,000 tons of carbon sequestered per year through PCF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Defined areas left to naturally regenerate to maximize carbon sequestration ▪ Increase in local goods and services to enhance the development of a low carbon circular economy for Plymouth
Improved habitats for wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 320 ha community woodland planted ▪ 110ha private woodland ▪ 70 ha urban woodland/street trees ▪ 2.5km hedgerow ▪ Improved connectivity between existing woodland habitats ▪ Enhancements to 100% existing woodland blocks ▪ Riparian buffer strips enhanced ▪ Improved water quality demonstrated by monitoring ▪ Establishment of priority habitat ▪ Established and enacted impact monitoring programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1100 hectares of additional native broadleaf woodland, orchards and hedgerow ▪ Rewilding principles being applied ▪ Species reintroduction programmes in place including Eurasian beavers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Combination of re-wilding, enhancing existing woodlands and tree planting ▪ Focus on enhancing riparian corridors

Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fund attracting investment of targeted £100k per year through sale of carbon and biodiversity credits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investment fund attracting ongoing and increased investment to sustain growth and management of PCF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PCF investment fund and strategy established
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Table 1 – Objectives for PSDCF

Summary and Recommendations

The opportunities presented by the partnership being able to access the Trees for Climate funding are significant and provide dedicated resource to meet a range of Corporate objectives linked to social, economic and environmental outcomes. There is a recognised need and ambition to achieve and this provides opportunity to realise this.

It is therefore recommended that the Strategic Director for Place:

1. Approves the contract award for this year's Winter Tree Planting programme to continue PCC's planting contribution to this year's 54 hectare target as part of Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest, utilising the £934,192 capital programme budget allocated from DEFRA and ECF

Reason: To enable the Council and its partners to maintain the Community Forest's participation in the 'Trees for Climate' delivery programme, and ensures PCC continues its progress to achieving net zero by 2030.
