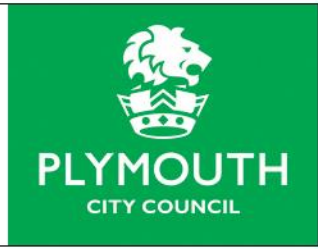


BRIEFING REPORT - PART I

Plymouth's Natural Grid – Nature-based Solutions



I. PROJECT BACKGROUND

A partnership between Plymouth City Council and The National Trust, Plymouth's Natural Grid Nature-based Solutions is funded with £966,000 from Natural England. It aims to invest in nature-based solutions for climate change on 541.78ha of land, targeting 99.7ha of priority habitat for biodiversity and carbon sequestration improvement. The sites selected represent a diversity of habitats and will be monitored by Natural England to assess the carbon sequestration that has occurred as a result of the works carried out. The work will also enhance our current green financing development through biodiversity and carbon credits as the associated governance structure for this is already in place.

The project will start in November 2021 and runs until the end March 2024.

Plymouth's Natural Grid - Nature-based Solutions aims to contribute to climate change mitigation through positive interventions on urban green spaces across the city, and to engage with local communities, raising awareness of the issue of climate change and demonstrating practical solutions.

This will be achieved by:

- improving 541.78ha of land via direct interventions on 99.7ha, for the benefit of people and wildlife, including rewilding and nature conservation/restoration, with resulting increases in carbon sequestration.
- providing six new jobs including apprenticeships.
- providing opportunities for local communities to get involved in practical nature-based solution delivery.
- providing 250 hours of engagement activities across the project sites

The Nature-based Solutions (NbS) proposal has been informed by evidence gathered in the [Plymouth Open Space Assessment 2017](#) and is part of the city's wider strategy to ensure high quality wildlife-rich space for all our residents that deliver vital natural services – embedded in our Climate Emergency Response, Joint Local Plan and Covid Recovery Plan. Our ambition can be seen [here](#).

2. OUTCOMES & BENEFITS

Financial

Natural capital of the city's urban forest increased – Plymouth's trees contribute £4.6 m of benefits to the city per year and provide £3.5 billion in amenity value.

Ecosystem services to the city increased and long term cost savings through; urban cooling, surface water attenuation, increased property values of tree lined streets, carbon capture and storage.

Ten years' maintenance cost savings on the six NbS sites as the project team will undertake works normally completed by Plymouth City Council Street Services as part of BAU.

Green finance. This project will allow PCC to further develop its habitat banking vehicle through biodiversity net gain, flood management solutions and carbon credits.

Non-financial

- improving 541.78ha of land for people and wildlife, including rewilding and nature conservation/restoration.
- providing six new jobs including apprenticeships.
- Providing the opportunity for Natural England to carry out research on the most effective methods of sequestering carbon through habitat management, informing best practice in the future and building climate change resilience in the city.
- providing opportunities for local people to engage with the project, to increase their understanding of climate change mitigation and how local action can have an impact on a global scale.
- Improving health and well-being benefits (mental and physical) through improvements to accessible urban green spaces.

3. RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES

Risks

This project is a low risk to the Council as it is fully grant funded with a healthy (9%) contingency for the capital and revenue costs associated with the project.

The highest risk is the short time frame for capital works to be delivered and completed (March 2024). This has been mitigated by ensuring the project team is suitably resourced with a dedicated Project Manager and technical specialism within the team to be able to realise the project objectives in the time set out.

Opportunities

The project presents a number of opportunities for the Council:

- To continue to lead the way in developing knowledge and data to inform new Green Finance funding streams for long term enhancement and management of the city's natural spaces
- To consolidate the partnership working approach with National Trust under the Urban Pioneer Partnership banner and Plymouth Natural Grid project
- To offset existing Council budget commitments for maintenance of green space sites for 10 years. Expected to average £20k p.a.
- To provide continued opportunity for community engagement in managing green space sites
- To deliver climate resilience and understand opportunity for carbon sequestration on green space sites to link into Plymouth's CEAP.