

# PLYMOUTH & SOUTH DEVON COMMUNITY FOREST – Trees for Climate Grant Payments 1.0 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 11<sup>th</sup> Community Forest with the vision:

***A new 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

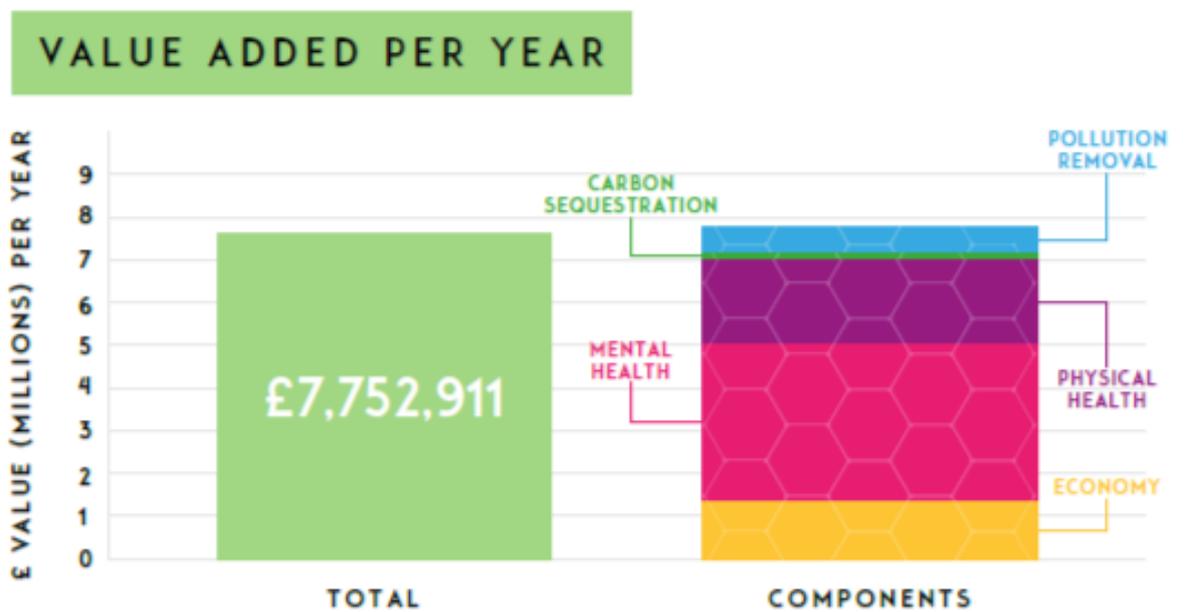
As lead partner of the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest, PCC's Community Forest Team processes all Trees for Climate funding applications within the Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest project area. Funding applications are processed and reviewed and scored by the Community Forest team, against the Community Forest's objectives and priorities, and value for money. Applications are then reviewed by the Community Forest assessment panel, comprising members of the project partnership and forestry advisors, before being submitted for Community Forest board approval. Approved applications enter landowner agreements with Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest, and are eligible for receipt of Trees for Climate capital funding.

Trees for Climate Grant Payments 1.0 2022-23 enables PCC to release Trees for Climate Funding to; National Trust, for the planting of 17.4 hectares of woodland; and private landowners, for the planting of 9.86ha of woodland at Avon Valley.

These schemes will be 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 Trees for Climate Grant Payments 1.0 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 the Community Forest's committed tree planting in this year, to contribute to the overall programme targets
2. to appropriately plan the planting pipeline and ensure 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 Trees for Climate Grant 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.

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

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

<b>Investment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fund attracting investment of targeted £100k per year through sale of carbon and biodiversity credits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Investment fund attracting ongoing and increased investment to sustain growth and management of PCF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ PCF investment fund and strategy established</li> </ul>
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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 authorisation for payments of Trees for Climate Grant Funding provided within the landowner agreements for National Trust, and Avon Valley landowners, totalling up to £338,400.00 and up to £148,584.00 respectively. The planting realised from the grant awards to the landowners will contribute 27.26 hectares of this year's 54 hectare target as part of Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest.

This grant funding will utilise 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.*