

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	
1	Title of decision: Acquisition of strategic area of land in Plymouth for woodland and wider habitat creation.
2	Decision maker: Councillor Tudor Evans OBE, Leader of the Council
3	Report author and contact details: Peter Hawking-Sach (Natural Infrastructure Officer) peter.hawking-sach@plymouth.gov.uk
4a	Decision to be taken: 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.
5	Reasons for decision: 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.
6	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.
7	Financial implications and risks:

<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>				
8	Legal Implications and risks: Should the offer for the land be accepted then Legal due diligence will be undertaken as part of the acquisition process.			
9	Is the decision a Key Decision? (please contact Democratic Support for further advice)	Yes	No	Per the Constitution, a key decision is one which:
			X	in the case of capital projects and contract awards, results in a new commitment to spend and/or save in excess of £3million in total
			X	in the case of revenue projects when the decision involves entering into new commitments and/or making new savings in excess of £1million
			X	is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the local authority.
9b	If yes, date of publication of the notice in the Forward Plan of Key Decisions			
10	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: Making Plymouth a fairer, greener city Green Investment , 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			
11	Please specify any direct environmental implications of the decision (carbon impact) 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 Democratic Support 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:			
Consultation				
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	
Sign-off				
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	

		Corporate property (if applicable)	N/A					
		Procurement (if applicable)	N/A					
Appendices								
17	Re f.	Title of appendix						
	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						
Confidential/exempt information								
18 a	Do you need to include any confidential/exempt information?	Yes	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 18b below.				
		No						
		Exemption Paragraph Number						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18 b	Confidential/exempt briefing report title: 250709 Land acquisition at Merafield Capital Business Case			X				
Background Papers								
19	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.							
Title of background paper(s)		Exemption Paragraph Number						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Valuation and Risk Advice Report & Appendices– Plymouth, Land at Merafield Road				X				
Cabinet Member Signature								
20	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		