

Glasgow City Region Cabinet



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Clyde Climate Forest: Second Year Progress Report

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of the paper is to provide Cabinet with a report on the progress of the Clyde Climate Forest initiative in its second year since its launch in June 2021.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is invited to:

- Note and welcome the second-year report on progress of the Clyde Climate Forest initiative.

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1 Purpose of the Report

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2 Background

- 2.1 The Clyde Climate Forest was launched by GCR Cabinet in June 2021 with a headline target of “18 million trees over the next decade”. The aim of the Clyde Climate Forest is to enable and co-ordinate an approach that will deliver a major increase in tree planting across GCR by 2032 as a response to the Climate Emergency.

- 2.2 Trees, woodlands, and forests provide a range of nature-based solutions to the twin and linked challenges of a changing climate and ecological collapse:

- Urban trees – provide urban cooling in heatwaves, and surface water management for cloudbursts, whilst also providing some carbon storage and wildlife habitat;
- Native woodlands – provide essential ecosystem services and habitat for associated species and, when part of a wider network, allow those species to migrate as the climate changes;
- Plantation forests – are effective carbon sinks, can provide upstream natural flood management, provide construction timber to substitute for high emission steel and concrete and provide wildlife habitats.

- 2.3 Specific objectives for the Clyde Climate Forest are based on three ‘C’s:

- **Canopy:** to increase average urban tree canopy cover to 20%;
- **Connectivity:** to increase the average woodland habitat network area by 20%;
- **Carbon:** to increase forest and woodland land cover in the region to 20%.

- 2.4 This means that over the next decade the Clyde Climate Forest will facilitate and co-ordinate:

- tree planting in urban neighbourhoods where there are few trees, and which are susceptible to the impacts of a changing climate;
- new native woodlands in target locations which join up existing woodland habitats; and,
- a doubling of the current rate of forest and woodland planting in the region.

- 2.5 The Woodland Trust granted £400k and Scottish Forestry granted £150k to Clyde Climate Forest over the first two years which provided a ‘kick-start’ for the project.

- 2.6 A Programme Board provides oversight for the project which has been co-chaired by the Chief Executives of East Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire Councils, representing the GCR Partnership’s interests in the project. The Programme Board other members have comprised senior representatives from Scottish Forestry, Woodland Trust, TCV, Scottish Water and Strathclyde University. Some changes to representation on the Programme Board have recently been agreed and will be enacted at the next meeting.

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- 2.7 A Steering Group provides direction and co-ordination for the project's programme of work and is chaired by Scottish Forestry. The Steering Group comprises operational representatives from those organisations that have a role in delivering the Clyde Climate Forest's objectives, and representation of the GCR PMO.

3 Progress since the first-year report (August 2022)

- **Canopy – Urban Tree Planting**
 - 3.1 Sixteen “Target Neighbourhoods” have been identified across urban areas of GCR. These are the focus for urban tree planting activities for the CCF team. Target Neighbourhoods are characterised by having low levels of urban trees and high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.
 - 3.2 In the 2022/23 tree planting season the CCF team worked with council officers to facilitate urban tree plantings in four of the priority Target Neighbourhoods (Bellshill, Blantyre, Barrhead and Bishopbriggs). These projects received funding from the Woodland Trust, Trees for Cities and sponsorship from local businesses. TCV provided some of the projects with free trees. GCR Member Authorities also delivered their own CCF tree planting projects across the Region. It is estimated that more than 43,000 trees were planted because of these activities.
 - 3.3 For the upcoming 2023/24 tree planting season the CCF team has plans in place to see delivery of urban tree planting projects in 12 Target Neighbourhoods (Bellshill, Blantyre, Barrhead, Bishopbriggs, Foxbar & Brediland, North Motherwell, Rutherglen, Burnbank, Levern & District, Greenock Central and Clydebank East and Possilpark). The team is working with council officers to finalise plans and agree community tree planting events across the winter months. Funding support from the councils is being matched with funds and in-kind support from Woodland Trust, TCV, Trees for Cities and some local sponsorship. The planning and delivery of these projects is a fine example of collaboration between CCF Delivery Partners, the GCR Councils and local communities.
- **Connectivity – Targeted Woodland Planting**
 - 3.4 Over 200 areas have been identified across GCR where broadleaved woodland planting will make a significant contribution toward connecting the Region's existing woodland habitat networks and create a migratory corridor for wildlife.
 - 3.5 Over the last year the CCF team has completed desk-based research on landownership in our target locations for woodland creation and now has a good understanding of the range of landowner activities in those locations. The research also generated contact details for many of the landowners. In the autumn of 2022 direct mail was sent to around 100 farming landowner addresses which generated 11 landowner responses and consequently seven free Farm Woodland Assessments (funded by Scottish Forestry) were completed. Discussions are on-going with these landowners to encourage them to take up the opportunity that woodland creation would provide their farming business. Further rounds of direct mail have been sent in the June and October 2023 with further expressions of interest from landowners having been received.
 - 3.6 The CCF team also commissioned Woodland Creation Assessments for the landholdings of three GCR Councils (Inverclyde, West Dunbartonshire and South Lanarkshire), with funding from Scottish Forestry. These very detailed assessments

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have proven to be valuable in discussion between the CCF team and council officers and have led to potential new woodland creation projects. Further commissioned council landholding assessments are planned before March 2024.

- **Carbon – Doubling Forest Creation**

- 3.7 There is a significant growth of interest and activity in tree planting in GCR largely driven by investors, businesses and other organisations looking to acquire woodland derived carbon credits to offset their own emissions or to sell in a burgeoning carbon market.
- 3.8 In the 2021/22 tree planting season around 535 hectares of new forest and woodland were planted in GCR, amounting to over 1 million trees. Statistics collated in recent months for the 2022/23 season indicate a significant reduction in the total area of new forest and woodland planted in GCR at 58 hectares. This reflects the 'ups and downs' of year-on-year woodland creation activity through Scottish Government's Forestry Grant Scheme. The process of working with landowners across the Region to bring forward new woodland creation schemes continues and is spearheaded by Scottish Forestry's woodland creation officers and private forestry companies. The role of the CCF team is to amplify this woodland creation promotional activity. The high profile of the Clyde Climate Forest is seen as being beneficial to attracting new landowners toward the benefits of tree planting on their land.
- 3.9 Some major schemes of forest and woodland creation in GCR are in the Forestry Grant Scheme approval 'pipeline' which should see the tree planting statistics have significant 'spikes' in delivery in the next few years. The CCF team have been in discussions with forestry agents about potential planting schemes ranging from 50 hectares to several hundreds of hectares and in one case over 1000 hectares. These few projects alone have the potential to significantly move the tree planting count toward the 18 million trees in a decade target.

- **The CCF/GCR Concordat**

- 3.10 In May 2023 the GCR Cabinet signed the CCF/GCR Concordat which states what the CCF team and Delivery Partners will seek to provide and what the Councils will seek to provide in pursuit of the CCF objectives.
- 3.11 Framed on four sections, the Concordat provides: an acknowledgement of the role of trees, woodlands, and forests in GCR in the face of the climate and ecological crises; a recognition of the CCF concept and targets and the wider social, economic, and environmental benefits their delivery will provide; a commitment from CCF team and Delivery Partners to seek additional resources toward the delivery of targets; and a commitment from GCR Councils to actively participate in the realisation of CCF targets and support the work of the CCF team.
- 3.12 The Concordat is already helping to facilitate discussions between the CCF team and council officers.

- **CCF Staff Team**

- 3.13 The CCF team has been stable since the previous report, and they are making good progress with their respective tasks and building effective working relationships with

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council officers, public agencies, local communities, private landowners and businesses across the region.

- 3.14 The team is employed through several Delivery Partner organisations: TCV, Green Action Trust and Trees for Cities. This reflects the various funding-streams for the CCF, but also indicates the strong collaborative effort that underpins the CCF initiative.
- 3.15 The current Director will retire at the end of October. A new Director has been recruited by the Green Action Trust and will take up post in October.
- 3.16 Core funding for the CCF team through the Woodland Trust grant will be exhausted in October, however, a UKSPF allocation from each GCR Member Authority was approved by GCR Cabinet in May 2023. This funding will be in place by the beginning of November 2023 to support the CCF team through the end of March 2025.

4 Recommendation

- 4.1 The Cabinet is invited to:
 - Note and welcome the second-year report on progress of the Clyde Climate Forest initiative.