



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

14TH JUNE 2021

THE QUEEN'S GREEN CANOPY PROJECT 2021-22

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND
COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET'S
CLIMATE CHANGE CHAMPION (CLLR RHYS LEWIS)**

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Community Services & Elizabeth Dean, Environment Planner**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform the Steering Group about the Queen's Green Canopy Project and seek support for the Council to participate in the initiative to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Steering Group:

- 2.1 Consider and comment on the proposal set out in this report.
- 2.2 That the feedback from the Steering Group is reported to Cabinet for consideration.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To enable the Steering Group to consider the opportunities for the Council, Businesses, Community Groups and Individuals in Rhondda Cynon Taf to participate in the national tree planting initiative, which aims to create a sustainable legacy in honour of the Queen.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 To mark the platinum Jubilee in 2022, Her Majesty the Queen has recently launched the Queen's Green Canopy (QGC), to celebrate 70 years of service to the Nation. [The Queen's Green Canopy \(queensgreencanopy.org\)](https://queensgreencanopy.org)

- 4.2 The campaign is focused on the role of trees and woodlands in enhancing our environment and includes elements of sustainable planting and the protection of ancient woodland and veteran trees. An Overview of the Project by the Queen's Green Canopy Board is provided in Appendix 1. Individuals, schools, communities, groups, businesses, and local authorities are being encouraged to get involved.
- 4.3 The QGC Project was officially launched on the 17th May with the Community Engagement phase running between May and October 2021 to coincide with the commencement of the tree planting season between October 2021 and April 2022. An Official National Celebration Weekend for the Platinum Jubilee will take place between the 3-6th June 2022 and a further tree planting phase will commence in October 2022 until the end of the Jubilee Year.
- 4.4 From the 'Nature's Assets' report to this Steering Group on the 16th November 2020, members will be aware that about a third of the County Borough is already wooded and that protecting our existing woodland, including ancient woodland is a priority. <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/ClimateChangeCabinetSteeringGroup/2020/NaturesAssets> The preference for new planting in RCT is to focus on urban areas, where the greatest 'climate' benefits for local residents can be achieved, without threatening other important carbon storing and biodiverse habitats in the countryside. This approach should be maintained while participating in QGC.
- 4.5 An initial search of Council owned land to establish the extent of ancient woodland (sites that were wooded in 1600) is underway and these could be a focus for community and Council action. A procedure to assess applications to plant trees on Council owned land is also proposed. This would ensure sustainable planting notably; '*the right tree in the right place*', the longevity of the proposed tree, as well as ensuring that the maintenance and management implications for the Council have been considered and that there is community support.
- 4.6 The Council may wish to consider planting a civic tree to commemorate the Jubilee. Careful site selection would be required to enable a long lived and eventually large specimen tree to be accommodated. If a suitable site can be identified this could be a focal point for Town Centre regeneration, contributing to COVID recovery and climate change objectives.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 5.1 There are no equality, diversity or socio-economic implications arising from this report.

6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no welsh language implications arising from this report.

7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 A fundamental aspect of QGC, is public and community engagement to maximise participation in the project, to raise environmental awareness and the extent of tree planting achieved. It is proposed that the Council would establish engagement with residents and groups through use of the new engagement Tool- [Let's Talk RCTCBC](#) . This platform could be used to promote the tree planting locations identified from the work outlined in paragraph 4.5 and to encourage public participation in organised tree planting activities at these locations. This will ensure the location of all green projects is managed and that they are compatible with the wider climate change objectives.

- 7.2 A wider communication strategy including use of social media networks would ensure broader awareness of QGC and encourage participation through the range of resources available on the QGC website and through the Partners to the Project. Communication approaches could specifically target Schools to promote the involvement of future generations in the Project.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 There may be financial implications from participation in the Queen's Green Canopy Project, which will be determined by the extent of involvement planned. In order to be sustainable and complimentary to the green infrastructure approach previously set out by the Council, any tree planting should comprise larger trees and species that are appropriate for each location, which may be more expensive than planting saplings.

- 8.2 Community Groups and Schools may be able to secure sapling trees free of charge from the Woodland Trust, which is a partner of the QGC Project. This approach can present increased, ongoing management and aftercare costs for the Council however while the trees become established and they have a higher risk of natural failure.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

10.1 Participation in this Project would build on the Nature's Assets proposals previously reported to this Group and to Cabinet. It would also contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, in particular the goals linked to ensuring RCT is a sustainable County Borough.

10.2 As a legacy Project, QGC is by its nature a long term programme being delivered collaboratively across the UK and with the aim of enhancing our natural environment and protecting a network of 70 ancient woodlands. To that end it will demonstrate the five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, while also contributing to the Resilience and Global Responsibility goals of the legislation.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 This Council has already set out its commitment to increase our green infrastructure as part of the wider Climate Change Strategy. Participation in this national tree planting project offers a good opportunity for the Council, public and community groups to get involved in a sustainable programme that would make a contribution to the Council's climate change priority.

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