



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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Project Overview

Vision

The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) will see communities, charities, schools, youth groups, councils and landowners planting trees across the four nations to create a lasting legacy in honour of The Queen's leadership of the Nation, that will enhance our environment and the landscape for generations to come. This vision is captured in the QGC call to action, "Plant a Tree for The Jubilee".

Approach

The Platinum Jubilee offers a unique opportunity for people to unite in celebration of Her Majesty's lifetime of service. All across the United Kingdom, people will be encouraged to "Plant a Tree for the Jubilee", encouraged to plant healthy trees so that they thrive and grow to maturation. The emphasis here is on quality not quantity – our aim is to plant the right tree in the right place and at the right time.

Led by an Executive Team and supported by the charity Cool Earth, the Queen's Green Canopy will see all counties of the UK being invited to create a network of individual or specimen trees, tree avenues, copses and woodlands. Planting new trees may take the form of:

- A Platinum Jubilee Avenue of medium-sized or large trees. Ideal for cities, large estates, new housing developments and parishes.
- A Platinum Jubilee Copse on private land or land allocated by the County or Council.
- A Platinum School Tree - schools in the UK will be offered a tree for the students to plant (provided free of charge).
- Platinum Jubilee Community planting project for youth groups, Parishes, Residents Associations. Community planting packs are available through the Woodland Trust or community groups may wish to purchase trees from approved suppliers.
- Ancient Woodlands and Veteran Trees with historic links will also be conserved through dedication to The Queen's Green Canopy.

The majority of the work will be channelled through one of the following workstreams:

- Stewardship – to encourage a model of stewardship that ensures local communities take responsibility for afforesting public spaces.

- Conservation – to protect ancient woodland through a programme of permanent, living tree dedication.
- Urban Greening – to create prominent tree displays in towns, cities, and deprived urban communities, including majestic avenues.

The dual impact of the climate emergency and the Covid-19 pandemic are at the forefront of our planning and make this project particularly resonant.

Timeline

To build interest and maintain momentum in the lead up to the official Platinum Jubilee celebrations planned for June 2022, a phased campaign will be planned. This will comprise:

1. Soft launch (executed December 2020)
2. Official Launch – RHS Virtual Chelsea Flower Show (17-21 May 2021)
3. Community engagement phase (May 2021-October 2021)
4. Planting phase: (October 2021-April 2022)
5. Platinum Jubilee Official National Celebration Weekend (3/4/5/6 June 2022)
6. Planting phase: (October 2022-December 2022)

Partners

Collaboration is central to the QGC. We are proud to partner with the following charities, social enterprises and Government Departments to help us plant and protect trees across the UK.

Cool Earth

Cool Earth is the international climate charity working alongside communities living in the world's most threatened rainforest. Building on the successful Queen's Commonwealth Canopy (QCC) project, Cool Earth are the hosts of The Queen's Green Canopy, enabling the initiative through the provision of necessary infrastructure.

The Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust is the largest woodland conservation charity in the United Kingdom, with over 500,000 supporters. The Woodland Trust works in support of a UK rich in native woods and trees for people and wildlife. In addition to sharing their expertise, the Trust has committed three million free saplings to schools and communities across the UK as part of the QGC initiative.

The Royal Horticultural Society

Committed to inspiring a passion for horticulture, the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) is the UK's leading gardening charity. The launch of the QGC coincides with the start of the RHS's virtual Chelsea Flower Show. The RHS will also be supporting the QGC during the physical event in September. As Patron, The Queen typically visits the flower show alongside Members of the Royal Family.

Trees for Cities

Trees for Cities (TfC) is a national charity operating in towns and cities across the UK with the goal to create healthy, accessible, functional and resilient urban forests for today and for future generations. TfC will support the delivery of the QGC programme in urban areas, helping to target places of greatest social and environmental need.

The Forest Canopy Foundation

The Forest Canopy Foundation (FCF) is made up of independent private sector forestry companies who manage an innovative scheme, combining public and private finance and landowner interest to achieve woodland planting that all can be proud of. The FCF will provide expert advice for companies wishing to participate in the QC initiative, particularly those who wish to do extensive planting.

DEFRA

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) are the Government department responsible for safeguarding our natural environment, supporting our world-leading food and farming industry, and sustaining a thriving rural economy. Trees planted as part of the QGC initiative will contribute to the UK Government's tree planting and woodland creation commitments.

There are many other excellent tree planting and forestry organisations and charities that we have reached out to. We believe that people taking action in the places where they live and work is a powerful force for change so through all of our partnerships we look to achieve local impact.

Outcomes

1. Stewardship

What distinguishes the QGC from many tree-planting initiatives is the emphasis on stewardship. We believe that when you plant a tree you cannot merely plant that thing in isolation, but must also steward the environment around it, and within it, so that the larger world at that one place becomes more coherent, and more whole.

The goal is to plant many trees well in celebration of the Platinum Jubilee. The emphasis however is on quality not quantity. It is expected that each county will have at least one significant planting, such as a new majestic avenue or new woodland/copse in Her Majesty's name. The QGC website will display advice on how to plant, when to plant, and a list of accredited Plant Healthy tree nurseries which will supply disease and pest free trees.

Ultimately, the QGC will lead – not by simply supporting existing projects but by actively shaping new ones. To achieve this goal, we will invest in technical training and green apprenticeships. Ability, local knowledge and experience are all important.

Outputs

- To create a model of stewardship that advises on how to plant, when to plant, and what recommended soil type to use.
- To create a pilot tree planting and forestry training programme for unemployed young people aged between 16-24 through specialist environmental college Capel Manor College.
- To build confidence and technical know-how through tailored volunteering programmes.

2. Conservation

Ancient woodland, rare habitats, woodland floors and veteran trees are all irreplaceable. These natural wonders deserve protection, not merely for the sake of combating climate change, but also because of the great abundance of life thriving under the ancient canopy.

By dedicating 70 ancient and veteran trees to Her Majesty The Queen, we will encourage trusteeship of these precious habitats, channeled towards the maintenance of the natural environment.

Our aim is to pass on to future generations – and if possible to enhance – the natural landscape and ecology of which we are the temporary trustees. Such dedications are a source not only of enjoyment but also of pride: they create new landmarks to which visitors make their way because they can see the significance behind them. Dedications provide a foundation both for a celebratory approach to trees and a conservationist approach to the land.

Outputs

- Through the dedication of trees in honour of Her Majesty The Queen, the QGC will create the incentives to conserve, rather than to deplete, the natural resources on which we collectively depend.
- Each dedication will be marked by a special commemorative plaque and will be uploaded onto a map of the UK to track all QGC projects over the two-year period.

3. Urban Greening

Another focus of the QGC will be planting in cities and the most disadvantaged urban communities. The QGC will partner with Trees For Cities to work collaboratively on urban

greening projects. Now more than ever, people want to address the ills associated with congested, concrete-ridden neighbourhoods. From draping plants and skygardens, to pocket parks, to tactical urbanism, many cities have been eager to showcase new, unconventional and innovative solutions to urban sprawl

These are all small-scale projects, but they are meaningful, and could, if replicated more widely, change the face of the country for the better. Here, our long-term goal is to inspire more urban tree-planting, not just because trees are beautiful, but because cities realise that trees are an important part of resiliency, health, and happiness. This is something the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated compellingly, as we seek solace from the nature around our homes and in our cities.

Outputs

- To plant trees in urban areas, including majestic avenues with mature trees through business and on local authority parkland.