



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY LIASON COMMITTEE

16th JULY 2021

**BRIEFING NOTE ON THE
QUEEN'S GREEN CANOPY PROJECT 2021-22**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the Queens Green Canopy Project (QGC) following consideration by the Council's Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group and the Cabinet.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Consider and comment on the implementation of the project in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 2.2 Consider whether the individual Community and Town Councils would wish to work with the Council on taking forward the project in their areas.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To enable the County, Town and Community Councils to consider the opportunities to participate in this national tree planning 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 \(queensgreencanopy.org\)](http://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 Members may be aware that about a third of the County Borough is already wooded and that protecting existing woodland, including ancient woodland is a priority for the QGC. 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 Councils 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/Community regeneration, contributing to COVID recovery and climate change objectives.
- 4.7 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 on 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 the Resilience and Global Responsibility goals of the legislation.

5. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Following internal discussions within the Council, officers have been asked to prepare a list of potential sites for possible inclusion in the QGC. These sites will include parks, recreation grounds, schools and cemeteries. The intention would be to promote these sites on the Councils website and members of the public encouraged to choose a site in their community.
- 5.2 Schools have an important role to play in the QGC. School grounds would be less prone to vandalism if smaller saplings were to be planted. However, maintenance is essential to ensure success. Watering, removal of plastic tubes, removing failed saplings and avoiding strimmer damage will be important as the young trees establish. In the fullness of time there would also need to be some thinning carried out to ensure the long-term health of what will become an urban forest for RCT.
- 5.3 In the case of parks, recreation grounds and cemeteries larger trees would be needed to reduce the risk of vandalism. There will be opportunities to plant both individual trees and avenues for future generations to enjoy. Parks in particular would give local communities opportunities to get involved by volunteering to help plant trees.
- 5.4 Ancient woodland is also a priority for the QGC. Council officers are working on a list of sites and there is potential for the local nature reserves (LNR) at Glyn cornel and the Craig yr Hesg woodland in Pontypridd to be put forward as candidates for the 70 ancient woods to celebrate the Queens Jubilee.
- 5.5 There will also need to be consideration of sites/locations that are not suitable for tree planting. The County Council would want to avoid roadside planting in grass verges, principally due to the Highways maintenance issues. There is also the issue of trees requiring a certain amount of room for their roots to fully develop and proximity to waterproof highways is detrimental to the long-term viability of trees.
- 5.6 The Council would also recommend that tree planting schemes on green hillsides are not considered. The long-term aim is to allow these locations to regenerate naturally and not to interfere with valuable habitats that have emerged since the end of the mining industry. These habitats will play a role of increasing importance in helping with carbon sequestration to combat climate change

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

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

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

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

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 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.

- 8.2 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.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 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.

- 9.2 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.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 Participation in this national tree planting project offers a good opportunity for the Councils, the public and community groups to get involved in a sustainable programme that would make a contribution to the Council's climate change priority and to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee.

Contact Officers

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