



Subject:	Update on the management processes and assessment criteria that are used by the One Million Trees Project
Date:	9 th February 2023
Reporting Officer:	Mura Quigley – Adaptation & Resilience Advisor (Climate Team)
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of the report is to give members an update on the One Million Trees programme and to respond to the request that officers come back to this committee with a report on the management procedures and policies of the One Million Trees project.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">I. Note the agreed site assessment criteria and process undertaken to identify if a site is suitable for tree planting including the expertise used across the Delivery Team and specialist expertise determined on a site by site basis;II. Note that the monitoring of planted sites by the Delivery Team includes surveys within the first three years of planting and identification of survival rates;III. Note that the programme has to date planted 63,500 trees with programme of community engagement underway that includes tree planting, business

	<p>involvement, schools engagement, give a tree a home events, hedgerow and ancient woodland restoration; and</p> <p>IV. Consider an invitation to by the Delivery Team to visit some of the sites already planted under the Million Trees Programme later this year.</p>
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Background</p> <p>In the Climate and City Resilience Committee on 8th December members requested a report on the management procedures of the One Million Trees project. In particular, a focus on any ecological assessments, site selection, bio security measure, monitoring work and who is sought for specialise and technical advice on such matters was requested.</p> <p>As members will be aware, the One Million Trees Programme has been running since 2020 and is a city-wide partnership and ambition to plant one million trees in Belfast by 2035. It is one of the ambitions of the Belfast Resilience Strategy, and has three key objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create an inclusive structure and processes which enable tree planting and the growth of green infrastructure and biodiversity in Belfast; • To plant at least one million trees within the next 15 years- delivering a step change in our approach to climate adaptation and environmental improvements; and • To protect the city and the people of the city by increasing carbon capture, reducing harms from air pollution, weather impact and loss of nature and improving health and well-being. <p>Since the project began 63,500 trees have been planted across the city. A programme of community engagement is underway that includes tree planting, business involvement, schools engagement, give a tree a home events, hedgerow and ancient woodland restoration.</p>
3.2	<p>Governance and implementation arrangements</p> <p>Belfast City Council agreed it would coordinate the initial phase of the project, liaise with partners and set out recommendations for project implementation. In terms of governance procedures, the Million Trees Steering Group leads the project and is made up of twenty one partners that meet on a biannual basis and agree the strategic direction of the project including to include processes and procedures. The delivery of the project is then taken forward by the Million Trees Delivery team which consists of Belfast Hills Partnership, The Woodland Trust, BCC Climate Team and BCC Trees Team.</p> <p>The Delivery Team meets fortnightly to coordinate activities under the programme and support the partners to bring forward sites for planting, offering expertise and specialist knowledge on trees, woodland and climate resilience.</p>
3.3	<p>Management procedures and site assessment process</p> <p>One of the key aims of the Delivery Team is to establish procedures, processes and ensure specialist knowledge and expertise is being used to identify, assess, prepare, plant and monitor sites that are being planted across the city by Million Trees partners.</p> <p>An agreed site assessment process is applied whenever a potential site comes forward and has been initially scoped for potential suitability by the Delivery Team. This is attached in Appendix 6.1. If the site is over 4 hectares, it is agreed that an Environmental Statement is prepared and in line with the EIA (Forestry) Regulations (NI) 2006. This ensures the impacts of planting the site have been fully identified and assessed before any planting is agreed.</p>

<p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p> <p>3.7</p>	<p>Should the site be identified as having special protections or statutory designations, specialist expertise and/or consultation around wildlife and protected species, habitats, invasive species is used. Along with the specialist expertise and knowledge within Belfast Hills Partnership, the Woodland Trust, and BCC City and Neighbourhood Services team, Million Trees has previously worked with The Conservation Volunteers, John Morris Aborcultural Consultant, Clive Richardson Ecological Consultant, Treeconomics, and RJ Woodland Services.</p> <p>Availability of sites for tree planting</p> <p>Whilst ancient woodland restoration works are ongoing at strategic sites such as Cave Hill, there have been limited sites coming forward for tree planting in Belfast City Council's Estate, with the majority mainly linking in with new capital works and planting existing green spaces and parks. Million Trees Programme is currently supporting the delivery of the Draft Tree Strategy, and it is intended that once this plan is in place that a list of potential sites for planting can be brought forward, appropriate assessments carried out, and planting plans produced. Council officers are currently scoping potential sites and will be working across CNS, Estates, Physical Programmes and Planning teams to bring forward potential sites by September 2023 in time for the next planting season.</p> <p>Supply of trees</p> <p>A current priority of the Million Trees programme is to establish a native and sustainable tree supply for Belfast to ensure provenance of trees can be traced and address biosecurity issues such as the spreading of disease. Grovelands tree nursery which was developed under the MT Programme currently supplies some planting on Council land, but this is not at the scale required to meet the targets of planting one million trees by 2035. Council is currently undertaking some work to scope the feasibility of re-establishing its tree nursery at Beechvale, to ensure trees are being grown locally from seeds, to reduce the risk of disease, improve tree health across the city and create a local supply chain that is resilient and climate proofed.</p> <p>Monitoring planted sites</p> <p>In terms of monitoring planted sites, the Delivery Team currently carries out 'beat up surveys' to check planted sites, monitor the rate of survival on sites and ensure accurate counting of planting numbers is achieved. These usually take place within the first 3 years of planting and are currently reporting an average of less than 5% failure of trees planted. Maintenance and monitoring on sites are the responsibility of the landowner once the site is planted. For any Council planted sites, Park Managers monitor whip planting, with the larger trees planted by the Tree unit maintained by BCC contractors and written into tender specifications from the outset.</p> <p>To monitor where trees are being planted across Belfast, an annual count is carried out at the end of each planting season with MT partners. The Climate Team is currently developing a Million Trees monitoring page so that trees planted are able to be mapped, logged and monitored across the city. This will be launched as part of this year's tree count and used ongoing as part of the Programme. As part of the Million Trees community engagement plan, best practice guides around planting and maintenance are planned for roll out in the next year.</p> <p>To aid with members engagement in the Million Trees Programme and to gain further information on the issues raised in the report, the Delivery Team can facilitate a half day site visit for members later this year to view some of the work of the Million Trees programme across Belfast and gain feedback from Members to help shape the future programme for Million Trees.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Financial & Resource Implications</p> <p>There are no financial implications</p>

5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications There are no direct equality and good relations implications.
6.0	Appendices
6.1	Site assessment criteria for Million Trees attached.