



<b>Subject:</b>	Belfast One Million Trees and Upsurge Project update
<b>Date:</b>	7 April 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Richard McLernon
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Richard McLernon

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on two key projects within the Climate Unit portfolio – the Belfast One Million Trees Programme and the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the project update.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	The Climate Unit leads the delivery of two major projects for which external funding has been secured. Both projects work with a wide range of stakeholders locally and across the UK, EU and globally. Belfast One Million Trees Programme is the city tree planting initiative, which Belfast City Council coordinates and delivers on behalf of a range of city partners,

	<p>working closely with delivery partners including the Woodland Trust, Belfast Hills Partnership, the National Trust, and The Conservation Volunteers.</p> <p>The Horizon 2020 funded UPSURGE project is focused on nature-based solutions, improving the condition of soil for the purpose of growing plants and produce, the development of a community garden in an unused area of Belfast City Council's estate, engagement with and education for local stakeholders, and applying learning at a range of satellite sites likely to be focused on Council community gardens and allotments. Initially the project is a partnership with EU partners led by Slovenia, with a close working relationship between BCC and QUB driving the work of the Belfast demonstration. Belfast is one of five demonstration cities within the overarching programme of work.</p>
	<p><b>Belfast One Million Trees Programme</b></p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>Belfast One Million Trees Project is a 15-year city partnership and programme of activity led by Belfast City Council aimed at increasing tree planting, maintenance and management in the city, with key outcomes being increased climate resilience, support for public health and wellbeing, support for biodiversity, reduction in water runoff, improvement in air quality and reduction in urban heat island effects. The project is one of 30 foundational projects contained in the Belfast Resilience Strategy and aligns with city strategies such as the Living with Water Programme, Open Spaces Strategy, and Local Development Plan. We have three overarching aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an inclusive structure and processes which enable tree planting and the growth of green infrastructure and biodiversity in Belfast.</li> <li>• Plant at least one million trees within the next 15 years- delivering a step change in our approach to climate adaptation and environmental improvements.</li> <li>• Protect the city and the people of the city by reducing harms from air pollution, weather impact and loss of nature and improving health and well-being.</li> </ul>
<p>3.3</p>	<p>The initial proposal for the Belfast One Million Trees Programme was received by Council from the Belfast Metropolitan Residents Group. The motion came through People and Communities Committee which approved the role for Council to coordinate and manage the initiative and updates are periodically brought back to People and Communities Committee for approval. Programme management is led by the Climate Unit within Council, working closely with colleagues in City and Neighbourhood Services, and across the Council.</p>

3.4	<p>A Belfast One Million Trees steering group was established in early 2020 which includes partners from statutory bodies, government departments, community organisations and conservation organisations. Over the course of several meetings a process was agreed whereby each year sites would be identified, assessed and planting plans put in place for the annual planting season which takes place between November and April. The city steering group sets the work programme and receives an update twice yearly. A delivery group was established early in the project which is made up of Belfast City Council, the Woodland Trust, National Trust and Belfast Hills Partnership. This group meets fortnightly and is responsible for workplan delivery. Furthermore, a communication group has been established which meets quarterly with communication representatives from Belfast City Council, the Woodland Trust and National Trust. The Communications Group created a communication plan and assets which have been adopted by the steering group and all partners.</p> <p>In parallel an internal group was established within Belfast City Council which looks at the Council contribution. That group has made recommendations such as the establishment of a tree nursery on BCC land which has resulted in the Grovelands site being developed into a tree nursery, the development of a Belfast Tree Strategy which is now underway part funded by Belfast One Million Trees funding and the development of engagement events which include the ‘Give a tree a home’ events which we have now run on two occasions in partnership with The Conservation Volunteers – once in Ormeau Park and once in Waterworks Park.</p> <p>In December 2020 the Belfast One Million Trees Programme launched officially, and at the same time the Yoursay Platform launched with a Million Trees section that includes tools such as a map which members of the public can drop a pin into to indicate preferred locations for trees. To date there have been approximately 3,000 interactions with the Yoursay Million Trees page.</p>
3.5	<p>A number of workstreams are in progress through the Belfast One Million Trees Programme which include a rolling programme of business engagement which has resulted in 19 businesses being engaged in total around volunteering, sponsorship, and partnership. A total of £17,000 has been secured in partnership with businesses to date.</p> <p>A supply line of native trees has been established through a contract with the Conservation Volunteers, who will also provide seed collection, tree planting and tree maintenance workshops for the Belfast One Million Trees Project.</p>

	<p>As mentioned, we have developed a pilot tree nursery in the Grovelands site at Musgrave Park which will see trees supplied to Belfast City Council and into the city project.</p> <p>We are currently planning a city tree count and land call which will be repeated annually, and we are working proactively to align with existing and new initiatives such as the Queens Green Canopy, Trees for Cities, Greenways, Planning – Section 76 developer contributions, A Bolder Vision among others.</p> <p>A key piece of research is in the final draft stage – the Belfast I-TREE ECO report, which sets out the value of the existing tree cover in Belfast in carbon storage and sequestration, avoided water run-off, and amenity value. This has been undertaken by Treeconomics and Forest Research who are also forecasting the benefits of additional tree planting for the city journey to net zero. Findings of the report include identifying 83 species in Belfast, the most common being Ash, Sycamore and Beech. Belfast’s urban forest’s trees sequester an estimated 8,893 tonnes of carbon per year, has an associated value of £8 million. Overall, the trees in Belfast's urban forest store an estimated 318,626 tonnes of carbon, which has an associated value of £290 million. The trees within Belfast's urban forest reduce runoff by an estimated 317,000 m<sup>3</sup>, which is equivalent to approximately 127 Olympic swimming pools of surface runoff being averted every single year with an associated value of £593,000.</p>
3.6	<p>External funding was secured in 2020 from the Woodland Trust Emergency Tree Fund (289k over a 3-year period) which includes targets including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a new Belfast Tree Strategy</li> <li>• Plant a minimum of 35 hectares per year</li> <li>• Plant a minimum 1000 metres of hedgerow planted/restored per year</li> <li>• Plant 10,000 trees outside woods per year</li> <li>• Identify at least 2 strategically important sites per year (Cavehill)</li> <li>• Produce 5 x farm plans per year</li> <li>• Commission an I-Tree ECO project which will form the evidence base for the Belfast Tree Strategy and support the implementation of the Belfast One Million Trees Programme</li> <li>• Minimum of 2,500 people engaged per annum through the programme</li> <li>• We want to run a programme of community engagement which will commence early in 2021</li> <li>• Hold 10 x woodland workshops and produce 2 x good practice guides</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance community/micro-nursery coordination and support</li> <li>• Assist and support 5 organisations with volunteer programmes (100 volunteers annually)</li> <li>• Market our achievements and promote good practice, enabling public participation</li> </ul>																																																
3.7	<p>Draft tree planting targets for the initiative are with the steering group for approval but we have recommended the following:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Target</th> <th>Actual</th> <th>Year</th> <th>Target</th> <th>Actual</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>21/22</b></td> <td>15,000</td> <td>39,000</td> <td><b>28/29</b></td> <td>95,000</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>22/23</b></td> <td>20,000</td> <td>24,000*</td> <td><b>29/30</b></td> <td>100,000</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>23/24</b></td> <td>30,000</td> <td>0</td> <td><b>30/31</b></td> <td>90,000</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>24/25</b></td> <td>50,000</td> <td>0</td> <td><b>31/32</b></td> <td>85,000</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>25/26</b></td> <td>70,000</td> <td>0</td> <td><b>32/33</b></td> <td>80,000</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>26/27</b></td> <td>75,000</td> <td>0</td> <td><b>33/34</b></td> <td>75,000</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>27/28</b></td> <td>85,000</td> <td>0</td> <td><b>34/35</b></td> <td>70,000</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Target	Actual	Year	Target	Actual	<b>21/22</b>	15,000	39,000	<b>28/29</b>	95,000	0	<b>22/23</b>	20,000	24,000*	<b>29/30</b>	100,000	0	<b>23/24</b>	30,000	0	<b>30/31</b>	90,000	0	<b>24/25</b>	50,000	0	<b>31/32</b>	85,000	0	<b>25/26</b>	70,000	0	<b>32/33</b>	80,000	0	<b>26/27</b>	75,000	0	<b>33/34</b>	75,000	0	<b>27/28</b>	85,000	0	<b>34/35</b>	70,000	0
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3.8	The official title of the UPSURGE project is ‘City-centred approach to catalyse nature-based solutions through the EU Regenerative Urban Lighthouse for pollution alleviation and regenerative development’																																																
3.9	<p>The project is led by Maribor in Slovenia who coordinate a consortium which Belfast is one element of. The overarching work packages are:</p> <p>WP1 Management - E-Institute          WP2 Overall NBS Assessment - LEITAT          WP3 Environmental Verification with Multimodal Sensing - OPERATE          WP4 Digitalisation and Connectivity with Citizens and Stakeholders - OC          WP5 NBS Demonstrations - QUB          WP6 Regenerative Assessment Enabling Regenerative Transition GCE          WP7 European Regenerative Urban Lighthouse - ICLEI          WP8 Quintuple-Helix based Verification, Communication and Dissemination - IETU          WP9 Ethics requirements - E-Institute</p> <p>Belfast is one of five demonstration cities, with the Belfast work programme being managed by Belfast City Council. A total of 660,000 euros was secured for Belfast which includes infrastructure works, staff time, sensors and data platform, community engagement and training, and travel.</p>																																																
3.10	People and Communities Committee approved the use of Lower Botanic Gardens as the key hub in the UPSURGE initiative and the use of learning from the hub at associated satellite sites in the city, which are likely to be Council allotments and community gardens.																																																

3.11	A steering group meets every three weeks which is made up of a team from QUB and BCC staff, to agree the Belfast work programme and to link back into overarching project meetings which happen of each of the work packages. An internal group within BCC has been established to advise and feed into the project.
3.12	To date we have undertaken a stakeholder mapping exercise and we are currently planning several stakeholder engagement and co-design workshops focused on the Lower Botanic Gardens site. A site visit and initial soil sampling has commenced, with the intention of developing an agroecology hub focused on research, training, engagement and also incorporating multiple uses in the wider site such as health and dog walking for example. The aim is to create a multipurpose space which benefits local people and the wider city.
3.13	A series of discussions have also taken place in relation to procuring sensors, data platform and wireless network, with Digital Services supporting this workstream and leading on the procurement which will be based on a specification developed by one of the workstreams for all cities use.
3.14	The UPSURGE project is a four-year project which is in year 1 at present. It is planned that the infrastructure works will take place in 2023, with stakeholder engagement and co-design taking place in 2022, along with sensor deployment.
<b>4.0</b>	<b><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></b>
4.1	All activities are financed through previously approved internal and external funding.
<b>5.0</b>	<b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications</u></b>
5.1	Any good relations or equality implications will be identified as part of the Council's screening process.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
4.1	None