
Executive Decision

Tiny Forest Delivery in Leicester Schools and Parks, 2024-

Decision to be taken by: Assistant City Mayor -
Environment and Transport

Decision to be taken on: 23 December 2024

Lead director/officer: Jo Allen

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: four (4) (Aylestone, Eyres Monsell, Humberstone and Hamilton, Troon)
- Report author: Marc Tench
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- Report version number: 2

1. Summary

1.1 The Council has been successful with a funding application to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF) to the value of £158k, with no match funding required. This report proposes to note the acceptance of funding and to approve spend to deliver 5 Tiny Forests in Leicester and to replace trees which have been lost to disease, totalling 26 standards and 180 mixed tree types.

2. Recommended actions/decision

The Executive member with responsibility for Environment and Transport is asked to:

2.1 Note the acceptance of £158k from the Local Authority Tree Fund (LATF) to deliver 5 Tiny Forests in Leicester and replace trees which have been lost to disease before the end of the financial year 2024/25.

2.2 Approve the council entering into agreements and licences to permit five Tiny Forests to be delivered.

2.3 Approve the addition of £158k to the Council's capital programme, funded from the LATF.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

All schools in the city have been offered the opportunity to participate in this project. Councillor Whittle has been briefed on project aims and outcomes.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

4.1 The council has been successful with a funding application to the Local Authority Tree Fund (LATF). The value of the bid is £158k and no match funding is required. The funding application identified 5 Tiny Forests to be delivered in Leicester and replace trees which have been lost to disease during the planting season 2024/25 with funding to be spent no later than end of March 2025. Three school sites and 2 park sites have been shortlisted and have been through utility checks to ensure suitability. These are Montrose School, North Mead Primary Academy, Eyres Monsell Primary School, Featherstone Drive Open Space and Netherhall Open Space. The locations for 26 standard trees and 180 mixed tree types replacing those lost to disease, have been identified.

4.2 The first alternative option would be to not accept. If the grant funding were not accepted then this would provide no benefit to the city and it would not progress the council's Tree Strategy or Climate Ready Leicester Plan.

4.3 A Tiny Forest is a dense, fast growing native woodland around 200m² in size. Each forest contains 600 trees and follows a method of forest management developed in the 1970s by Dr Miyawaki. These miniature forests grow rapidly, becoming more biodiverse and impactful more quickly than mono-culture forests or isolated trees. They provide an ideal solution for dense urban areas where land is at a premium and hard to find. Tiny Forests contain native trees suitable to occupy high canopy, understory and shrub layer. The National Vegetation Classification will be used to select species according to suitable woodland types for the location. Metrics for the approach are: no chemicals (fertiliser or pesticides) are used, approximately 25 species per site, 3 trees per square meter, provide space for trees to grow undisturbed for at least 10 years (without tree thinning or timber harvesting) unless in exceptional circumstances (disease or safety), branches, leaves and dead trees are left to lie where they have fallen, at least 4m wide across the entire length with interruption (such as a path).

4.4 Through external funding Earthwatch has already delivered 25 Tiny Forests in primary, secondary and SEND schools, and 1 in a park location in Leicester.

4.5 The proposal is to deliver the 5 Tiny Forests in partnership with Earthwatch between December 2024 and March 2025 and replace trees which have been lost to disease. £125k will be used to deliver the Tiny Forests directly with Earthwatch, £25k will be used to deliver logistics and educational sessions internally by the Sustainable Schools Team. This is a bespoke business model specifically developed with Leicester City Council. The Trees and Woodlands team will be allocated £8k to replace trees which have been lost to disease across Leicester. This will be 26 standard trees and 180 mixed tree types.

4.6 The project aims to raise awareness in the local community and among young people to protect and enhance tree coverage in the city, with community involvement playing a key role. Projects include site planning and preparation, tree planting and monitoring events, project resources and project and working partnership management for 2 years, facilitated by the council and schools from year 3 onwards.

5. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

The report proposes to add £158k to the Capital Programme for the delivery of five Tiny Forests across Leicester, plus replacement trees. This is to be funded in full by the Local Authorities Treescape Fund grant.

Signed: Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance

Dated: 12th December 2024

5.2 Legal implications

It is understood that the Council has completed a subsidy assessment, reviewed the funding terms, and received advice on the matter. When using these funds, the Council must ensure compliance with any specified conditions attached to the funding and appropriately cascade responsibilities, particularly if the funds are used for commissioning services.

In commissioning services from Earthwatch, the process must comply with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, as well as the Public Contract Regulations 2015. This should be underpinned by a legal agreement, and both the Legal and Procurement Teams should be consulted and involved.

Legal advice and assistance to be sought as required.

Signed: Mannah Begum, Principal Solicitor (Commercial) Ext. 37 1423

Dated: 12th December 2024

5.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have statutory duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, decision makers must pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The report proposes to note the acceptance of funding and to approve spend to deliver 5 Tiny Forests in Leicester and to replace trees.

There are no direct equalities implications arising from the report. The initiative can help reconnect people with nature and enhance wellbeing and can provide habitat patches to support urban wildlife. Tiny Forest also provides an outdoor learning resource that complements classroom education.

Signed: Surinder Singh Equalities Officer Ext 37 4148

Dated: 12th December 2024

5.4 Climate Emergency implications

Following the council's declaration of a climate emergency and ambition to achieve net zero carbon emissions, nature-based projects have an important role to play in delivering this goal. Trees store a significant amount of carbon, therefore the planting of new trees through this project can make a small but important contribution to removing carbon emissions from the atmosphere. More widely, as well as benefitting biodiversity, trees can also contribute to climate change adaptation. This includes through reducing the risk of flooding during heavy and prolonged rainfall, as well as moderating the impact of heatwaves and providing shade.

Signed: Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

Dated: 12th December 2024

5.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

6. Background information and other papers:

None

7. Summary of appendices:

None

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?

No