

## **Calderdale MBC**

**Wards Affected     ALL**

**Cabinet: 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

### **Calder and Colne Landscape Links (CCALL)**

#### **Report of the Assistant Director - Strategic Infrastructure**

#### **1.     Purpose of Report**

- 1.1     The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for Calderdale Council to accept £750,000 of national government (Defra) funding for planning and designing nature-based solutions to deliver environmental benefits across the Calder and Colne river catchments. The ambition of the CCALL project is to create a rich, climate resilient mosaic of functionally connected habitats that link the valley towns with the moorland tops.

#### **2.     Need for a decision.**

- 2.1     Calderdale Council as the lead legal entity, in partnership with Kirklees Council, Calder and Colne Rivers Trust, Environment Projects in Kirklees (EPIKS) and Moors for the Future (MFTF), led a bid into Defra's Landscape Recovery Fund programme. We were notified the bid had been successful on 29 November 2023. The project team is working on the contract details with a target signing date of March 2024.
- 2.2     Cabinet approval is required to accept the grant to allow the grant funding agreement to be signed with Defra.

#### **3.     Recommendation**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Agree to accept the funding of £750,000 from Defra to facilitate the planning and designated nature-based solutions across Calder and Colne catchments.
- Delegate responsibility to the Assistant Director Strategic Infrastructure in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to finalise and agree the terms of the grant funding of £750,000 and all other relevant project documentation including partnership and other funding agreements which may be required to support the project.
- Authorise the Assistant Director, Strategic infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Climate Action, Active Travel and Housing, to agree any required changes to the project.

#### **4.     Background**

- 4.1 The Calderdale district has a strong history of partnership working across the borough and has seen good progress being made on improving flood protection, increasing resilience, enhancing biodiversity and reducing the local impact of the global climate crisis.
- 4.2 Notwithstanding this, historic management from the industrial era of the West Yorkshire landscape has left a legacy of modified, and disconnected habitats, unable to provide the ecosystem services needed for climate and biodiversity resilience.
- 4.3 An opportunity has arisen that would directly support delivery of the Council's priority of tackling the twin climate and biodiversity emergencies, by planning and designing nature based solutions over two years that would mitigate carbon emissions and contribute towards the Council's place based target to be carbon neutral by 2038; whilst reducing flood risk; increasing key species abundance; reducing moorland fire risk and providing more a connected species rich wildlife habitat.
- 4.4 A successful application was made to the Defra Landscape Recovery Grant scheme which has secured up to £750,000 to deliver The Calder and Colne Landscape Links (CCaLL) project. This will facilitate a business case for leveraging private and public investment at scale for peatland restoration; woodland and wildflower meadow creation and natural flood management.
- 4.5 The project will build on our existing work and provide a more climate resilient landscape and new health and wellbeing opportunities within nature for local communities. whilst introducing an alternative business model for future sustainable land management. The project will help develop an investable ecosystem service business model (water, carbon, biodiversity net gain) to secure unprecedented levels of private finance from business to enable implementation of plans and co-designs.
- 4.6 The CCaLL project proposes to plan and design landscape recovery measures to create a rich, climate resilient mosaic of functionally connected habitats that link the valley towns with the moorland tops within the district. By developing novel private finance access for landowners, the project aims to enhance habitats to support keynote species alongside local sustainable food production, provide climate resilience to communities from flood and wildfire risk amplifying the area's special qualities.
- 4.7 The plans will connect more people by improving access from neighbouring towns along the river and canal corridor to their surrounding areas and inspire a sense of stewardship and respect whilst promoting green and blue spaces by engaging local people with the moorland, river, and canal as a positive health and wellbeing experience.
- 4.8 This project has potential to deliver several Flood Action Plan actions, and significantly scale up the natural flood management work delivered to date across Calderdale. It will build CMBC funded work including the Calderdale Wildfire Severity Assessment Report and NFM opportunity mapping exercises

to deliver many elements of the 'Land and Nature' theme of The Climate Action Plan, as well and provide opportunity to deliver mitigations measures from the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain.

- 4.9 Timescales: a two-year project with potential to begin in April 2024, the project plan is currently in development and will be finalised once the CMBC based project delivery roles are in post. CMBC would retain full control on the allocation of the grant.

## **5. Options considered.**

- **Option 1** - Support accepting the grant funding – Recommended.

Accepting this funding would complement the existing work of the Flood Risk Partnership in delivering the Calderdale Flood Action Plan and also the Councils Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

- **Option 2** - Do not support accepting the grant funding – Not recommended.

If Cabinet choose not to accept this funding it is unlikely alternative funding will be secured to progress the actions and engagement identified in the bid. The opportunity to enter into a longer term funding agreement with Defra will also be lost.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 Approval is sought from Cabinet to accept £750,000 Defra grant funding over two years to plan and design nature-based solutions over 10,000 hectares or one quarter of Calderdale.
- 6.2 CCALL is national government funding (Defra) and grant funding is available to meet 100% of eligible revenue costs.
- 6.3 The grant funding retained by the Council would meet the revenue costs associated with the project and provide the opportunity for the Council to access further private and public sector investment for the Borough.
- 6.4 The grant will fund up to five full time equivalent positions based at CMBC for the duration of the project.
- 6.5 This project will facilitate a business case for leveraging private and public investment for landscape recovery at scale.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 Calderdale Council is the legal entity who will sign the grant funding agreement with Defra and be responsible for ensuring the conditions of the agreement are met.
- 7.2 Within the project plan funding has been allocated for legal advice (internal or external) on land management contracts as part of the project.
- 7.3 Memorandum of Understanding's with partner organisations are to be agreed with CMBC and project partners.

## **8. Human Resources and Organisation Development Implications**

- 8.1 Funding within the bid has been allocated for the Council to recruit up to five new fixed term full time equivalent employees to ensure the necessary resources are in place to support the project. The procurement of consultants, in accordance with Council policies and procedures, to deliver some elements of the project will also be required.

## **9. Consultation**

- 9.1 Councillor Patient, as Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Climate Action, Active Travel, has been consulted prior to the bid being submitted and a wide range of organisations and officers contributed to the successful bid.
- 9.2 The project will provide opportunity to work across Local Authority boundaries and river catchments to provide large scale landscape restoration across the region

## **10. Environment, Health and Economic Implications**

- 10.1 This project will accelerate action and directly support our corporate plan targets for the environment, health and economic regeneration. We will plan and design solutions that will reduce moorland fire risk; improve water quality; reduce flood risk and improve biodiversity of several key species across 10,000 hectares of Calderdale alone; open-up more opportunities for health and wellbeing from improved access and education for local communities and, develop an economic model for farmers and landowners that will help regenerate and strengthen the future rural economy in Calderdale.
- 10.2 This project has potential to deliver of Flood Action Plan actions, and significantly scales up the natural flood management work delivered to date across Calderdale. It delivers many elements of the 'Land and Nature' theme of The Climate Action Plan, as well and provide opportunity within our Biodiversity Net Gain agenda.

## **11. Equality and Diversity**

- 11.1 Equality and diversity considerations are integral to the project. Key issues and opportunities highlighted from our evidence will be addressed in our landscape designs.

## **12. Summary and Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

- 12.1. Agree to accept the funding of £750,000 from Defra to facilitate the planning and designated nature-based solutions across Calder and Colne catchments.
- 12.2 Delegate responsibility to the Assistant Director Strategic Infrastructure in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to finalise and agree the terms of the grant funding of £750,000 and all other relevant project documentation including partnership and other funding agreements which may be required to support the project.
- 12.3 Authorise the Assistant Director, Strategic infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Climate Action, Active Travel and Housing, to agree any required changes to the project.

For further information on this report contact

Edward Norfolk Corporate Lead - Flood Risk Management  
[edward.norfolk@calderdale.gov.uk](mailto:edward.norfolk@calderdale.gov.uk)

Documents used in preparation of this report:

The successful Landscape Recovery CCaLL bid