

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the coat of arms of the Government of British Columbia. The crest includes a crown with four maple leaves, a shield divided into four quadrants (top-left: saltire, top-right: stag's head, bottom-left: sailing ship, bottom-right: grizzly bear), and a motto scroll at the bottom with the text "ANNE FOR A".

Agenda Item 10

Forest Estate Plan – Implementation Update

Falkirk Council

Title: Forest Estate Plan – Implementation Update
Meeting: Executive
Date: 30 November 2021
Author: Acting Director of Development Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Executive on progress made implementing the Council's Forest Estate Plan, approved by Executive on 16th April 2019.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Executive:

- (1) notes progress on implementing the Council's Forest Estate Plan; and**
- (2) requests that officers continue to monitor funding availability from the Scottish Government's Forestry Grant Scheme and other sources for implementation of further Urban Woodland Management Plans.**

3. Background

3.1 On 16th April 2019, Executive:

- approved a suite of six Urban Woodland Management Plans (UWMP) which together comprised the Falkirk Council Forest Estate Plan;
- instructed officers to submit the six UWMP to Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) for approval;
- instructed officers to apply to the Scottish Government's Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) for Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) and Sustainable Management of Forest Grant (SMFG) and, depending on the outcome, commence the implementation of the Falkirk North UWMP in 2020; and
- instructed officers to continue to monitor funding availability from FGS and other sources and report back to Executive on progress and opportunities for implementation of the remaining UWMP in 2020.

4. Progress Update

- 4.1 The Falkirk North and Polmont UWMP has been submitted to and approved by Scottish Forestry (the new name for FCS) as instructed. The other 4 UWMP remain in draft form as previously approved by Executive and will be submitted to Scottish Forestry closer to their projected time of implementation.

4.2 Applications were subsequently submitted to the Scottish Government's Forestry Grant Scheme for the Falkirk North UWMP. The following levels of grant were approved:

•	WIG	£71,976.87
•	SMFG	£6,594.50
•	FGS Maintenance	£2,883.20
•	FGS (other)	£6,350.80
•	Total FGS grant funding	£87,805.37

4.3 This grant funding was matched with a £45k grant from EB Scotland (Scottish Landfill Communities Fund), £18k of planning obligations and £62k of capital funding to deliver woodland and access improvement works across 7 individual sites (Cobblebrae, Corrie Park, Coe Park, Finlay Russel Park, Camelon Cemetery, the Lade and Carron Dams) with a total value of £213k comprising:

- Thinning of 16ha of woodland
- Planting of 3089 new trees
- Tree safety surveys carried out on 2.37ha of woodland
- Upgrading of 5706m² of path
- Construction of 140m² of new paths
- Installation of 20 new signs
- Installation of 7 new benches

4.4 Works were carried out over the winter and spring of 2021 with the project completed in April 2021.

4.5 Work is currently ongoing to submit funding applications to FGS and EB Scotland to implement the woodland and access improvement works associated with the Polmont UWMP. Due to the scale of works proposed in this area (shown on the map at appendix 1), amounting to circa £480k, it will be necessary to implement this across 2 financial years (2021/22 & 2022/23) to maximise available funding. At the present time it is anticipated that match funding will be sought from EB Scotland, the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund and from planning obligations.

4.6 The 16th April 2019 Executive Report noted that the availability of WIG post 2020 was dependent on the review of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) which was, in turn, dependent on the basis of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. This review of the SRDP remains outstanding. It is understood that WIG funding is available in 2021/22 and 2022/23, but presently no commitment has been given that it will be available beyond that date. Officers will continue to monitor the funding situation.

5. Implications

Financial

- 5.1 Falkirk Council will be eligible for a maximum of £100,000 WIG in 2021/22 and 2022/23 but this is allocated on a first come, first served basis. The SMFG payments commence the following year to the WIG ones, i.e. 2022/23 & 2023/24.
- 5.2 The table below sets out the anticipated cost and income for the implementation of the Polmont UWMP

Financial Year	Cost of Works	Anticipated FGS Grant income	Nature Restoration Fund	Anticipated other external income	Planning obligations
2021/22	£227k	£98k	£40k	£40k	£49k
2022/23	£232k	£128k	£0	£40k	£64k
Future years	£22k	£11k	£0	£0	£11k
Total	£481k	£237k	£40k	£80k	£124k

Resources

- 5.3 Existing Council staff will be involved in the delivery of the future UWMP. It is anticipated that staff costs can be met from within existing budgets and income from funding partners.

Legal

- 5.4 None

Risk

- 5.5 There is a risk that available WIG funding for 2021/22 and 2022/23 may be allocated by the time grant applications are made. In that circumstance, full implementation of the UWMP is likely to be delayed and/ or reduced in scope according to available funding.
- 5.6 Implementation of the Forest Estate Plan will enable tree safety surveys to be undertaken on 67.47ha of Council owned woodland.

Equalities

- 5.7 The Plan has an effect on people so a full EPIA has been produced.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact:

- 5.8 The continued implementation of the Forest Estate Plan will have positive environmental effects through enhancing habitat value, increasing woodland cover, improving the quality of parks and open spaces, enhancing recreational opportunity impacts. It will also complement the Council's Climate Change Emergency declaration to reduce carbon emissions towards it's net zero target timeline.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 A significant amount of woodland across the Council area is Council owned. The Council has responsibilities to manage, maintain and improve this woodland but has a finite resource available to achieve this.
- 6.2 Officers will continue to work towards increasing the resources available to the Council to sustainably manage its forest estate and potentially unlock significant amounts of WIG funding from FGS to improve its woodlands.

Acting Director of Development Services

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Date: 18 November 2021

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Polmont UWMP Compartment Map

List of Background Papers:

Bo'ness Urban Woodland Management Plan
Bonnybridge Urban Woodland Management Plan
Denny Urban Woodland Management Plan
Falkirk North Urban Woodland Management Plan
Falkirk South Urban Woodland Management Plan
Polmont Urban Woodland Management Plan

A general prescription of litterpicks, paths maintenance, tree safety surveys, and invasive species removal will be applied to all applicable compartments. More detailed management is shown on individual compartment maps.

Total Area: 155.02Ha
 Total Forest Inventory Area: 65.04ha
 +20% Open Ground of Forest Inventory Area (13.01ha): 78.05Ha
 Eligible Area: 78.05Ha

