

Glasgow City Region Cabinet



Report by Councillor Gordan Low, Leader of East Dunbartonshire Council and Land Use and Sustainability Portfolio Lead

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Clyde Climate Forest: First Year Progress Report and Concordat

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of the paper is to provide a report on the progress of the Clyde Climate Forest (CCF) initiative since its launch and to propose that a Clyde Climate Forest Glasgow City Region Concordat is endorsed by Cabinet.

Recommendations

The Cabinet is invited to:

- a) Note and welcome the first-year report on progress of the Clyde Climate Forest initiative and the development of the CCF/GCR Concordat;
- b) note that Clyde Climate Forest will seek approval of the Concordat from the individual local authorities in order to maintain local democratic oversight; and
- c) endorse the Clyde Climate Forest Glasgow City Council Concordat.

1. Purpose

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2. Background

- 2.1 The Clyde Climate Forest was launched by GCR Cabinet in June 2021 with a headline target of “18 million trees over the next decade”. The aim of the Clyde Climate Forest is to enable and co-ordinate an approach that will deliver a major increase in tree planting across GCR by 2032 as a response to the Climate Emergency.
- 2.2 Trees, woodlands, and forests provide a range of nature-based solutions to the twin and linked challenges of a changing climate and ecological collapse:
- Urban trees – provide urban cooling in heatwaves, and surface water management for cloudbursts, whilst also providing some carbon storage and wildlife habitat;
 - Native woodlands – provide essential ecosystem services and habitat for associated species and, when part of a wider network, allow those species to migrate as the climate changes;
 - Plantation forests – are effective carbon sinks, can provide upstream natural flood management, provide construction timber to substitute for high emission steel and concrete and provide wildlife habitats.
- 2.3 Specific objectives for the Clyde Climate Forest are based on three ‘C’s’:
- **Canopy**: to increase average urban tree canopy cover to 20%;
 - **Connectivity**: to increase the average woodland habitat network area by 20%;
 - **Carbon**: to increase forest and woodland land cover in the Region to 20%.
- 2.4 This means that over the next decade the Clyde Climate Forest will facilitate and co-ordinate:
- tree planting in urban neighbourhoods where there are few trees, and which are susceptible to the impacts of a changing climate;
 - new native woodlands in target locations which join up existing woodland habitats; and,
 - a doubling of the current rate of forest and woodland planting in the Region.
- 2.5 The Woodland Trust granted £400k and Scottish Forestry granted £150k to Clyde Climate Forest over the first two years which provides a ‘kick-start’ for the project. A Programme Board provides oversight for the project which is co-chaired by the Chief Executives of East Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire Councils, representing the GCR Partnership’s interests in the project. The Programme Board other members comprise senior representatives from Scottish Forestry, Woodland Trust, TCV, Scottish Water and Strathclyde University.
- 2.6 A Steering Group provides direction and co-ordination for the project’s programme of work and is chaired by Scottish Forestry. The Steering Group comprises operational representatives from those organisations that have a role in delivering the Clyde Climate Forest’s objectives, and the Partnership Manager for the GCR Partnership.

3. Progress since June 2021

CCF Staff Team

- 3.1 A Director and two Engagement Officers were recruited in June 2021. In January 2022 both Engagement Officers moved on to other jobs and a restructuring of the team was agreed with funders. Recruitment for the new positions has been difficult but an Operations Coordinator and a Development Manager are now in-post employed by TCV and the Green Action Trust. In addition, Trees for Cities is funding and recruited an additional 'Urban Tree Canopy Coordinator' post which brings additional capacity to the team.

Canopy – Urban Tree Planting

- 3.2 In the 2021/22 tree planting season the CCF team worked with council officers to facilitate urban tree plantings. Statistics for these projects are still being collated but it is estimated that more than 60,000 trees have been planted across the Region because of these activities.
- 3.3 Sixteen "Target Neighbourhoods" have been identified across urban areas of GCR. These will be the focus for urban tree planting activities for the CCF team over the coming years. Target Neighbourhoods are characterised by having low levels of urban trees and high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. The CCF team are working with council officers and CCF Delivery Partners to deliver tree planting projects in some of the Target Neighbourhoods in the 2022/23 season. These projects will receive funding from the Woodland Trust grant and sponsorship from local businesses.

Connectivity – Targeted Woodland Planting

- 3.4 Over 200 areas have been identified across GCR where broadleaved woodland planting will make a significant contribution toward connecting the Region's existing woodland habitat networks and create a migratory corridor for wildlife. Based on CCF's innovative analysis, Scottish Forestry has created a new 'Target Area Payment' which is additional funding to the Forestry Grant Scheme payment to landowners that create broadleaved woodlands in the CCF connectivity target areas. This will be an important incentive to landowners to plant "the right trees in the right places".
- 3.5 The CCF team have had several discussions with landowners in target areas and currently one project is in development in North Lanarkshire.

Carbon – Doubling Forest Creation

- 3.6 There is a significant growth of interest and activity in tree planting in GCR largely driven by investors, businesses and other organisations looking to acquire woodland derived carbon credits to offset their own emissions or to sell in a burgeoning carbon market. Scottish Forestry report that some major schemes of forest and woodland creation in GCR are in the Forestry Grant Scheme approval 'pipeline'. Statistics on this activity are reported annually in June by Scottish Forestry and will be made available at the meeting.
- 3.7 The CCF Team looks to amplify the woodland creation promotional activity that Scottish Forestry and the wider forestry sector undertake in GCR. The high profile of the Clyde Climate Forest is seen as being beneficial to attracting new landowners toward the benefits of tree planting on their land. Discussions are ongoing with several landowners in this regard.

4. A CCF/GCR Concordat

4.1 Glasgow City Region is an important stakeholder in the Clyde Climate Forest. The Council Leaders have shown enthusiastic support for the initiative. The Councils are also significant landowners and vital partners in helping the initiative to deliver its objectives.

4.2 Over the course of its first year those actively involved in the Clyde Climate Forest have learned that there are great opportunities that could be pursued arising from the initiative. However, there are some barriers to realising the opportunities. To allow GCR Councils to fully play their role in the initiative there is a need to clarify the role of the Clyde Climate Forest team (and its Delivery Partners) and the role of the councils – particularly in relation to the urban canopy aims of the initiative. The CCF/GCR Concordat seeks to provide that clarification by stating what the CCF team and Delivery Partners will seek to provide and what the Councils will seek to provide in pursuit of the CCF objectives.

4.3 The draft Concordat (Appendix) is framed on four sections:

- i. **An acknowledgement of** the significant challenge that the climate and ecological emergencies present to GCR; the need for additional and sustained effort across the region as a response to the challenge; and the role of trees, woodlands, and forests in this endeavour.
- ii. **A recognition of** the concept and targets of the CCF; the wider social, economic, and environmental benefits their delivery will provide; and Scottish Government support for the CCF.
- iii. **A commitment from CCF team and Delivery Partners to** seek additional resources toward the delivery of targets; promote Council activities and interests toward trees; and an alignment of CCF and GCR communications.
- iv. **A commitment from GCR Councils to** actively participate in the realisation of CCF targets and support the work of the CCF team; ensure the CCF is embedded in plans and policies; manage, protect, and enhance Council trees; identify opportunities for tree planting on Council owned land; work with the CCF team to increase urban tree canopy cover in target neighbourhoods; promote and celebrate trees so that they are cherished and protected.

4.4 The draft Concordat has been shared with many relevant council officers with favourable feedback. It is hoped that a high-level recognition of the role of the Councils working in partnership with the CCF team and Delivery Partners will facilitate an uplift in the delivery of “the right trees in the right places” on Council managed land across the Region.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The Cabinet is invited to:

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