

Report

Report to:	Climate Change and Sustainability Committee
Date of Meeting:	25 August 2021
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	COVID-19 Memorial – Tree Planting
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the paper is to: -

- ◆ Seek Committee approval for the planting of fruit trees in 13 locations across South Lanarkshire as a memorial to those who passed away due to COVID-19

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s): -

- (1) that the proposal to plant fruit trees at 13 locations across South Lanarkshire as a memorial to those who passed away due to COVID-19, funded from the £300,000 Food Strategy Fund be approved.

3. Background

3.1. Members may recall that as part of the 2021/2022 Revenue Budget approved on the 24 February 2021, £300,000 was allocated to promote alternative food growing within the Council area – Food Strategy Support Fund. As part of the wider Climate Change fund, it was agreed at the Climate Change and Sustainability Committee on the 28 April 2021 that proposals for the funds would be governed by the Climate Change & Sustainability Officer Steering Group which comprises senior officers from all Resources. At the meeting of the Steering Group on 6 June 2021, it was agreed that £15,000 of the £300,000 Food Strategy Support Fund be allocated to support a proposal that would combine alternative food growing and provide a memorial to recognise those who have passed away due to COVID.

4. Proposal

4.1. There has been a level of community interest in how best to recognise the loss of life due to COVID and given the sensitivities around such a matter there are undoubtedly a number of approaches to respectfully do this. This proposal before members today is not to the exclusion of others that may come forward from other parties however in developing the proposal it is hoped that it will provide a memorial local to communities for reflection and contribute to wider community objectives. In this regard the proposal is framed around the following:-

- ◆ officially recognise, on a local basis, those who have passed away during the COVID-19 pandemic
- ◆ highlight the importance of tree planting for the environment and future generations

- ◆ increase the level of tree canopy cover in South Lanarkshire as well as the overall environmental, social, and economic benefits tree planting brings and therefore carbon sequestration.
- ◆ compliment the work of the Council's Biodiversity objectives by supporting a range of actions around increasing biodiversity as reported annually through the Councils' Biodiversity Duty Implementation Plan.
- ◆ link directly into the aims of the food growing strategy and action plan and will contribute to the annual report in terms of alternative food growing provision

- 4.2. Consideration was given to planting trees in each and every settlement across the Council area. However, the view was reached that it would be more appropriate to concentrate planting within a larger park setting and the number of trees to be planted in each location would provide a degree of scale and presence, fitting of a memorial. On this basis it is proposed to plant fruit trees in 11 district parks and 2 Country Parks estimated to be 62 trees per location. A list of the locations is provided in Appendix 1.
- 4.3. Given that specific areas will require to be identified within each park the final number of fruit trees to be planted will be based on the number of registered COVID-19 deaths on 19 July 2021 (798), as being the date South Lanarkshire moved to Level Zero. It is appreciated that unfortunately there have been further deaths since that date however it was considered appropriate to select a date based on changes to restrictions.
- 4.4. The trees will not be dedicated to individual residents who have passed away rather it will be a general remembrance across a range of locations where relatives and family could attend and reflect. No memorials would be allowed in these planted areas to ensure they are accessible to all and complement activities already available in the parks.
- 4.5. The above approach is consistent with the report on Unauthorised Memorials and Commemorations in Parks and Open Spaces approved at the Community Resources Committee on 21 August 2007 that restricted memorials to Cemeteries and the Crematorium
- 4.6. Grounds Services have confirmed that they have ongoing contacts with local groups in 8 of the 13 proposed locations that actively participate in work within these parks and would propose to engage with them on approval by Committee to agree/discuss the details of the proposed locations. Discussion with South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture will take place regarding 3 of the remaining 5, leaving no obvious community groups in the remaining 2, however, investigations will continue in consultation with the Community and Engagement Team. A list of the groups is included in Appendix 1.
- 4.7. The provision of these orchards will be added to the agenda of the next meeting of the Good Food and Food Growing group, thereby ensuring that the groups represented are aware of the areas and can promote the availability of fruit in future years. Discussions will also be held with Education and Social Work Resources with regard to how schools and social work clients could be involved in the management of the sites and use of the fruit that will be produced.
- 4.8. It should also be noted that this proposal will provide fruit trees in Green Flag parks and the Country parks, which aligns with the original proposals for these funds. The remainder of the budget (£3,000) will be targeted at the other areas identified e.g. Eco Schools and in Social Work residential properties.

- 4.9. It is noted that consideration is being given to a further memorial at the Headquarters office in Hamilton and this will be reported separately when this is developed further.
- 4.10. Discussions will also be held with Corporate Communication on how the tree planting proposal can be promoted and could be aligned with any official memorial proposed at the Headquarters offices.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. The service is progressing with site visits to identify proposed areas within the 13 locations that could accommodate approximately 62 fruit trees and will progress the following if the proposal is approved:-
- ◆ Confirm with Corporate Communication a press campaign
 - ◆ Contact 8 groups, South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture and Community, Engagement Team regarding groups for the other 2 sites
 - ◆ Continue to investigate source 800+ trees
 - ◆ Link to Good Food Network and Food Growing Group to identify groups that could help manage locations and use fruit produced in future years
 - ◆ Consider how local groups/ schools/social work clients could be encouraged to take part in the planting programme
 - ◆ Consider how local groups/ schools/ social work clients could be involved in the harvesting process

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. Although there are no additional employee implications with regard to this proposal, staff will be required to be redirected to deliver/ support the tree planting programme across the 13 locations.
- 6.2. Council officers on the Good Food Network and Food Growing Group will promote this proposal with a view of encouraging community involvement in the management of these areas.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The 2021/2022 Revenue Budget was approved by members at the South Lanarkshire Committee on 24 February 2021. In particular, a package of investments totalling £10.054 million was agreed, which included an allocation of £300,000 for Food Strategy Support Fund.
- 7.2. It is proposed that £15,000 of the £300,000 is set aside for the expansion of fruit trees across South Lanarkshire, with £12,000 being used to fund this proposal with the balance being used to increase fruit trees provision within the Education and Social Work Resources estates.
- 7.3. Early indications suggest that it may not be possible to source fruit trees in 2021 and therefore the planting will be undertaken as early as possible in 2022.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. This proposal will contribute to the implementation of the Food Growing Strategy and also directly contribute to the implementation of the council Good Food Strategy.

- 8.2. It will also help to increase the proportion of tree canopy cover within South Lanarkshire and therefore carbon sequestration.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. The Council has received a number of queries regarding whether a COVID-19 memorial would be created within South Lanarkshire. Although this does not provide locations in every town/village it provides accessible areas across South Lanarkshire in defined areas, rather than informal memorials appearing across the Council area.
- 9.2. There is currently no availability of fruit trees within our existing frameworks and work is ongoing to source these. Timescales regarding availability and delivery are not known at this time.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy nor recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore, no impact assessment is required.

Michael McGlynn
Executive Director (Community & Enterprise Resources)

4 August 2021

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Improve and maintain health and increase physical activity

List of background papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like further information, please contact:-

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District Parks

	Park	Location	Consultation Group
1	Overtoun Park	Rutherglen	Friends of Overtoun Park / Grow 73
2	Cambuslang Park	Cambuslang	Friends of Cambuslang Park
3	Stonefield Park	Blantyre	Bonnie Blantyre
4	Bothwell Road	Hamilton	Bothwell Road Action Group (BRAG)
5	Town Centre Park	East Kilbride	N/A
6	James Hamilton Heritage	East Kilbride	SLLC
7	Alexander Hamilton	Stonehouse	Friends of Stonehouse Park
8	Strathaven Park	Strathaven	Friends of Strathaven Park
9	Biggar Public Park	Biggar	Friends of the Burnbraes
10	Lanark Loch	Lanark	N/A
11	Castlebank Park	Lanark	Friends of Castlebank Park

Country Parks

1	Chatelherault Country Park	Hamilton	SLLC
2	Calderglen Country Park	East Kilbride	SLLC