

**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
30 APRIL 2001**

REPORT ON: URBAN WOODLAND CONSULTANTS' SURVEY, DUNDEE 2000

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION

REPORT NO: 5-2001

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To summarise the main findings of the Phase I Urban Woodland Survey conducted by Eamonn Wall & Co between March and August 2000. Copies of the Phase I Survey Report are available for inspection in the Members' Lounges. Extracts from the Portfolio of Case Study Sites will be displayed on the night of the Committee.
- 1.2 To outline the next stages involved in preparing an Urban Woodland Strategy for Dundee, to assist ongoing regeneration of the City.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the Consultants' findings which will help to inform the process of developing an Urban Woodland Strategy for Dundee.
- 2.2 That a Phase II Study is carried out in-house to identify opportunities for increasing the coverage of woodland in the City Centre.
- 2.3 That the Urban Woodland Strategy is prepared alongside "Dundee's Tree Strategy", led by Leisure and Parks Department, to ensure connectivity and consistency of approach.
- 2.4 That a short life Steering Group is established to assist the Strategy formulation process, involving officers from relevant Council Departments. The Community Planning Sustainability Sub Group, Community Councils and representatives of the Social Inclusion Partnership Community Coordinating Groups will be invited to contribute to the activities of the Steering Group, as appropriate.
- 2.5 That a draft Urban Woodland Strategy is reported back to the Committee before the end of 2001, as part of the Dundee Local Plan Review.
- 2.6 That in the lead up to the city-wide Strategy being prepared, the Council considers opportunities for creating Urban Woodland on appropriate sites throughout Dundee, using Best Practice examples as guidance.
- 2.7 That this Report is submitted to Leisure Services Committee in May 2001, for information.
- 2.8 That the Consultants' key findings and methodology are submitted to professional Journals to assist the dissemination of current practice.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The survey was completed within budget at a cost of £9,802. Provision was made for £6,500 within the Planning and Transportation Department's 1999/2000 Revenue Budget. The Director of Corporate Planning also contributed £1,000 from the Local Agenda 21 budget 1999/2000. Scottish Natural Heritage provided grant assistance for the remainder of the costs from its 2000/2001 budget.
- 3.2 Further project Reports will be submitted to the Committee for site specific proposals, detailing the Revenue implications associated with maintaining urban woodland over its establishment phase.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Strategy will bring about social, economic and environmental benefits for the City, creating a legacy for future generations to enjoy and gain from. New woodland planting on a bold scale will enhance the City's environment, image and townscape. Urban Woodland also has potential as a reversible and cost effective treatment for long term redevelopment sites, and could form a more permanent feature on redundant or sterile areas of open space. In meeting these objectives, urban woodland will further contribute to nature conservation and biodiversity, health and wellbeing and local stewardship of environmental resources.
- 4.2 The following key themes of Dundee 21 are therefore of significance:
- Resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised.
 - Diversity and local distinctiveness are valued and protected.
 - Places, spaces and objects combine meaning and beauty with utility.
 - Health is protected by creating safe, clean, pleasant environments and health services which emphasise prevention of illness as well as care for the sick.
 - The diversity of nature is valued and protected.
 - Pollution is limited to levels with which natural systems can cope.
 - All sections of the community are empowered to participate in decision making.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A draft Strategy will be made available for public consultation as part of the Finalised Draft Dundee Local Plan Review to ensure that all sectors of the local community have an opportunity to participate in the Strategy development process. In preparing the Strategy and during its implementation stages, opportunities will be sought to involve target groups in communities and local neighbourhoods.
- 5.2 The Consultants' Survey addressed a number of design challenges associated with creating urban woodland, including the issue of personal security. The recommended planting specifications for the case study sites ensure that planting is set well back from existing formal footpaths and obvious desire lines to retain open

vistas. Similarly, various planting techniques can be applied to either create low density woodland or high density schemes that discourage access.

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 Eamonn Wall & Co was commissioned by the Director of Planning and Transportation in March this year to undertake a Phase I Urban Woodland Survey. Phase I (Part 1) sought to identify key trends relating to the amount, distribution, quality, species diversity and role of woodlands across the City. Although historic survey information was already held for most of the larger woodlands owned or maintained by the Council, records for many of the smaller and more recent woods were inconsistent. In addition, those records that were available were generally prepared in different years and to different standards by a range of different surveyors. In order to provide accurate baseline information for the Urban Woodland Strategy, a summary survey was carried out to assess woodlands owned or maintained by the Council within its administrative boundary.
- 6.2 Phase I (Part 2) assessed 20 sites in Dundee that the Council identified as having potential for urban woodland creation and or enhancement. These sites covered a range of land use allocations in the Dundee Local Plan 1998, including open space, proposed housing sites and employment land. These case study sites were specifically chosen to demonstrate real planting opportunities, whilst giving an insight into how urban woodland could be applied across the City.
- 6.3 A Client Steering Group was established to oversee the Survey, involving officers from Planning and Transportation and Leisure and Parks Departments, with input from Scottish Natural Heritage as a funding partner. The Survey was concluded in October 2000. The key findings are presented in "The Dundee Urban Woodland Report". A copy of this Report is available for inspection in the Members' Lounges. Extracts from the case studies, including summary data sheets, site survey maps and outline planting specification maps will be displayed on the night of Committee.
- 6.4 The key findings of the Phase I Survey are summarised in Appendix 1 to this Report.

The Way Forward

- 6.5 The inter-relationships between health and well being and the quality of the environment in which people live and work are well documented. Research over the last 20 years has demonstrated that the effects of urban woodland on healthy living are measurable and considerable. This is strongly supported by the National Urban Forestry Unity, the main driving force behind increasing the coverage of urban woodland in our towns and cities.
- 6.6 In relatively compact cities like Dundee, there is a strong case for creating new and enhancing existing greenspace close to where people live and work. In contrast to swathes of sterile grassed areas, urban woodland has the ability to enhance the quality, diversity and attractiveness of the urban environment. Although the initial costs to establish will be higher these tend to even out over time. Importantly, it can provide a reversible land use treatment for long term redevelopment sites and redundant open spaces that stem from housing demolitions. It can also improve the attractiveness of development sites that will be brought forward in the short to medium term. By applying appropriate planting specifications, urban woodland can

be safely accommodated without risk to personal or property security. The potential for urban woodland to contribute to the environmental, social and economic regeneration of the City is therefore significant.

- 6.7 The principle of establishing urban woodland is consistent with the Environment Policies of the Tayside Structure Plan, the Natural and Built Environment Policies of the Dundee Local Plan 1998, the Urban Nature Conservation Subject Local Plan 1995 and the provisions of the Draft Dundee and Angus Structure Plan. Similarly, it will support many of the key issues identified in the Corporate Plan 1999-2002, particularly with regard to Best Value, enhancing Dundee's image and encouraging active citizenship. Urban woodland will also support Dundee's Public Open Space Strategy, the Paths for All Initiative, the Community Regeneration Strategy, Dundee 21 : Planning for Sustainability and the Urban Design Strategy.
- 6.8 The opportunity now exists to build on the Consultants' Survey by developing an Urban Woodland Strategy for Dundee. This should take account of the baseline survey information provided by the Consultants and the key findings of the Phase 1 (Part 2) Survey. The Strategy should also use the case study examples as a broad guide to urban woodland planting and management techniques.
- 6.9 Although the case study sites provided a focus for the Survey, it is important that other opportunities are explored to meet the recommended 60 ha of new woodland planting over the period 2001-2020. The Urban Woodland Strategy should provide a framework for identifying and prioritising opportunities across the City over five yearly intervals, in order to achieve the recommended planting area target.
- 6.10 It is equally important that the Strategy is prepared to compliment "Dundee's Tree Strategy" led by Leisure and Parks Department, which will establish a broad framework for future tree management in the City. The Urban Woodland Strategy will therefore form a core part of this, focusing on the role of urban woodland as a reversible land use treatment across various land use allocations in the Development Plan.
- 6.11 A Phase II Survey will be carried out by Leisure and Parks Department to specifically assess urban woodland opportunities in the City Centre. This will achieve a broader spread of case study sites across the urban area, demonstrating the potential for expanding the woodland canopy within Dundee's Central Area.
- 6.12 A short life Steering Group will be established to take forward the Strategy development process, including officers from relevant Council Departments. The Community Planning Sustainability Sub-Group, Community Councils and representatives of the Social Inclusion Partnership Community Coordinating Groups will be invited to participate in the Steering Group, as appropriate. This will seek to ensure that the Strategy adopts a multidisciplinary approach and secures the delivery of economic, social and environmental benefits on a broad scale.
- 6.13 The Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme, the New Opportunities Fund (Greenspaces and Sustainable Communities strand) and the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme are three potential sources of external funding that may assist the implementation of the Urban Woodland Strategy. It is important that the Council explores other external funding opportunities in conjunction with key partnership

agencies and local communities to support the implementation of individual planting schemes.

- 6.14 A draft Urban Woodland Strategy will be prepared and reported back to the Committee before the end of 2001 as part of the Dundee Local Plan Review. In the lead up to the Strategy being drafted, the Council should consider opportunities for creating urban woodland on appropriate sites, using the Consultants' findings and the case study examples as a broad guide.
- 6.15 However, any site-specific recommendations put forward by Eamonn Wall & Co should be subject to wider consultation with Council Departments, statutory bodies, voluntary organisations and local community groups prior to implementation. Following consultation, a selection of these sites could be incorporated into a bid document for submission to external funding partners, as a potential first phase implementation programme for the Urban Woodland Strategy.
- 6.16 In the meantime, articles documenting the key findings and the methodology used in the Consultants' Survey will be submitted to professional Journals to assist the dissemination of current practice.

7 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Support Services, Director of Corporate Planning, Director of Education, Director of Housing, Director of Economic Development, Director of Environment and Consumer Protection (Dundee 21), Director of Leisure and Parks, Director of Neighbourhood Resources, Director of Arts and Heritage, the Legal Manager, and the Chief Constable have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Planning and Transportation Committee Report No 683/1999 provides the background to the Urban Woodland Survey exercise and the broader Strategy.
- 8.2 Committee Report No 2-2000 relates to the approval of tenders for the Phase I Consultants' Survey.

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Dundee City Council

30 March 2001

APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY FINDINGS OF THE PHASE I DUNDEE URBAN WOODLAND SURVEY 2000

1 KEY FINDINGS OF PHASE I (PART 1) SURVEY

- 1.1 The Phase I (Part 1) Survey information provides comprehensive baseline information on woodlands owned or maintained by the Council, to assist the preparation of the Urban Woodland Strategy. Likewise, it will provide useful reference material for the Council, statutory bodies, voluntary groups and local communities in taking forward other project initiatives and proposals. For the purposes of the Survey, woodland was defined as groups of established trees with a woodland character and generally over 0.2 ha in size. The survey generally excluded small treed areas within parks, street trees and garden trees.
- 1.2 The key findings of the Phase I (Part 1) Survey are summarised below:
 - 1.2.1 The Council has responsibility for 282 ha of woodland, covering 4.3% of the administrative area.
 - 1.2.2 The majority of large woodland is found in the western and northern fringes of Dundee. Much of this originates from the 19th Century, with the exception of more recent planting around the Technology Park. By way of contrast, woodlands within the built up area tend to be smaller and younger blocks of less than 5 ha in size.
 - 1.2.3 Young woodland¹ is relatively under represented in the City, amounting to only 11% of the woodland area. If the City's woodlands are to be sustainable, there should be an even age class distribution. This would require the establishment of approximately 60 ha of additional young woodlands over the next 10 to 20 year period – equivalent to expanding the existing woodland area² by 21%. The 60 ha would consist of a combination of new woodland planting on non-woodland sites and restocking of existing woodland areas, as appropriate.
 - 1.2.4 In terms of species composition, there is a fairly even split between coniferous and broad-leaved woodland in the City, with just over half of the broad-leaved woodland comprising native species. There should be a concerted effort to enhance the coverage of native broad-leaves across Dundee to comply with local and national biodiversity objectives, whilst having regard to the habitats of other priority species.
 - 1.2.5 Elm was identified as the dominant broad-leaved species in Dundee, accounting for an estimated 19% of all native broad-leaved species in the City. Again, the decline in Wych Elm through Dutch Elm disease places continued emphasis on encouraging native species within future planting schemes. Aside from Elm, there is a relatively good range and diversity of native broad-leaved species throughout Dundee.
 - 1.2.6 Approximately 25% of the City's woodland area is open ground. Although there may be opportunities to increase stocks in some woods, this should not be to the detriment of public access, amenity or other recreational provision. Open ground can enhance the biodiversity of woodlands, often providing a valuable habitat for other plant and animal species. Nature conservation improvements can often be made at little extra cost, by simply modifying management practices.
 - 1.2.7 On a related point, the access value of some woodland could be improved. Public access to established woodlands in urban areas enables citizens to experience the countryside on their doorstep, combining informal recreation with education and

¹ Includes staked standards, seedlings, sapplings and thicket stage woodland trees.

² Woodland area owned or maintained by the Council.

interpretation. However, it is not always appropriate to incorporate public access within urban woodland schemes, particularly where smaller scale projects are still in their establishment phase.

2 KEY FINDINGS OF PHASE I (PART 2) SURVEY

2.1 Part 2 of the Phase I Survey sought to assess opportunities for creating and or enhancing woodlands in the City by concentrating on 20 case study sites. These sites were selected by the Council to demonstrate real planting opportunities, using a range of urban woodland planting regimes for specific land use allocations. They included opportunities for:

- advance planting around the edge of proposed employment and housing sites in the adopted Local Plan;
- infill planting on employment and housing land allocations in the adopted Local Plan that are unlikely to be taken up in the next 10 years;
- areas of vacant land that are likely to remain unsuitable for redevelopment;
- redundant open space;
- enhanced planting in City Parks, Neighbourhood Parks and adjacent to recreational grounds;
- enhanced planting in school grounds;
- areas adjacent to water courses, to assist surface water disposal and help stabilise land at risk from flooding;
- using urban woodland as an alternative to gang mown grassland in areas of functional open space.

2.2 The main conclusions that can be drawn from the Phase I (Part 2) Survey are as follows:

2.2.1 There is a unique opportunity to develop and expand the urban woodland resource in Dundee as part of the ongoing regeneration of the City. The majority of the opportunity sites assessed are believed to be capable of supporting urban woodland.

2.2.2 While broad planting and design principles can be applied to generic site types, detailed site specifications need to be drawn up on a site by site basis to reflect specific site characteristics, rather than applying a textbook solution.

2.2.3 Each urban woodland proposal must have set objectives in order that an appropriate design specification can be prepared. These may include community-based objectives that seek to improve health and well being, or provide opportunities for informal access and recreation. Alternatively, they may focus on townscape enhancement, micro-climate control, air quality or biodiversity.

- 2.2.4 The case study sites revealed a host of design challenges that need to be addressed if urban woodland is to be established successfully in Dundee and its potential benefits are to be fully realised. These challenges include fire, vandalism, litter, property and personal security, soil compaction and public utilities. However, with careful project design, these issues can be successfully addressed.
- 2.2.5 New woodland proposals that meet the particular needs of a local community and obtain broad community support have a greater success rate than those designed and implemented by external parties. The need for consultation at the design phase is important, but a greater level of community involvement in site preparation, planting and maintenance can further engage local communities in active stewardship.
- 2.2.6 Generally, the larger the site and the higher the planting density, the lower the cost/ha for preparation and planting. Urban woodland may be used as an alternative to amenity mown grassland with a comparable maintenance cost, but this is dependant on the design and scale of the woodland and its intensity of maintenance.
- 2.2.7 The Woodland Grant Scheme administered by the Forestry Commission can help fund urban woodland establishment projects over a five year period. The Forestry Commission will normally reclaim grant monies paid, plus interest, in the event of failed establishment within 10 years of a project commencing.
- 2.2.8 Perhaps the most important ingredient in any urban woodland project is a commitment to adequate and sustained levels of maintenance over the initial years of the establishment phase at the very least. If the potential benefits of urban woodland are to be realised, then this commitment needs to be in place from the start of the project.

3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 In relatively compact cities like Dundee, there is a strong case for creating new and enhancing existing greenspace close to where people live and work. In contrast to swathes of sterile grassed areas, urban woodland has the ability to enhance the quality, diversity and attractiveness of the urban environment, often at similar maintenance cost than amenity mown grassland. Importantly, it can provide a reversible land use treatment for long term redevelopment sites and redundant open spaces that stem from housing demolitions. It can also improve the attractiveness of development sites that are likely to be brought forward in the short to medium term. The potential for urban woodland to contribute to the ongoing economic, social and environmental regeneration of the City is therefore significant.
- 3.2 The opportunity now exists to take forward the recommendations of the Consultants' Survey by developing an Urban Woodland Strategy for Dundee. This should take account of the baseline survey information provided by the Consultants and the key findings of the Phase I (Part 2) Survey. The Strategy should also use the case study examples as a broad guide to urban woodland planting and management techniques.
- 3.3 The views of relevant communities, Council Departments and partnership agencies should be accommodated in the Strategy, as appropriate to achieve a multi

disciplinary approach and encourage the delivery of economic, social and environmental benefits on a broad scale.

- 3.4 Community support is a key factor to be addressed in the Strategy. Prior to any draft Strategy being made available for wider consultation, community representatives should be invited to contribute to the Strategy development process.
- 3.5 Similarly, the site-specific recommendations put forward by Eamonn Wall & Co as part of the Survey should be subject to wider consultation with Council Departments, statutory bodies, voluntary organisations and local community groups prior to any implementation.