

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

15

3 OCTOBER 2019

Report Title	USE OF LAND AT SALMON SPRINGS, STROUD FOR THE PLANTING OF WOODLAND AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LOCAL CARBON OFFSETTING SCHEME.
Purpose of Report	To seek the agreement of committee that 5 acres of land in Council ownership at Salmon Springs near Stroud should not be re-tenanted for agricultural grazing but instead planted to form woodland and to seek other opportunities to do similar.
Decision(s)	<p>Strategy and Resources Committee RESOLVES:</p> <p>a) To repurpose land at Salmon Springs for the planting of woodland to store carbon, reduce the rate of surface water runoff, enhance biodiversity and provide a local amenity.</p> <p>b) To instruct the Head of Property Services to identify other areas of land within Council ownership to provide for further climate change mitigation and adaptation schemes.</p> <p>c) To bring forward proposals for the establishment of a locally based offset fund to provide further opportunities.</p>
Consultation and Feedback	The opportunity has been discussed with representatives of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, the National Trust and Severn Trent (who have access to funds to support the planting). The response is overwhelmingly positive to both the single opportunity at Salmon Springs but also to the longer term potential.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	<p>Funding for the tree planting is expected from external sources. In the unlikely event there is any shortfall the Council will use the climate change reserve and report that use back to this Committee.</p> <p>Andrew Cummings, Interim Director of Resources Tel: 01453 754115 Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk</p>

Legal Implications	There is no proposal for the disposal of any part of the land or any legal interest in it. There is no restriction or covenant in the title which would be in conflict with the recommendation. Consequently, no legal implications would arise from adopting the recommendations Alan Carr, Solicitor Tel: 01453 754357 Email: alan.carr@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Barry Wyatt, Director of Development Services Tel: 01453 754210 Email: barry.wyatt@stroud.gov.uk
Options	The District Council has voluntarily declared a Climate Change Emergency, agreed to work with communities to achieve a carbon neutral district by 2030 (CN2030) and to support adaptive actions in response to the inevitable consequences of a changing climate. Consequently the actions recommended by this report, whilst not mandatory, do support these earlier decisions. There is no blue print as to how a local authority should respond to the challenge of achieving CN2030 and adaptation and there are a myriad of approaches, the recommended action is one contribution.
Performance Management Follow Up	The performance of any sequestration activity is ultimately measured by assessing the amount of carbon that is likely to be stored and the contribution made to the overall target.
Background Papers/ Appendices	Appendix A - site plan of land at Salmon Springs

INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

1. The storage of carbon by the planting of woodland is a well-recognised approach to mitigating climate change by offsetting unavoidable emissions. There are other benefits that can also be secured through the design and appropriate implementation of suitable schemes, these include:-
 - The provision of habitat that supports species that are at risk or are declining as a result of the effects of climate change.
 - Reducing flood risk stemming from an increase in incidence of extreme weather events as a consequence of climate change through the ability of woodlands to reduce the rate of surface water run-off and thereby reducing peak flood flows.
 - The provision of a local amenity that, in the case of Stroud District, could reduce the impact of increasing recreation on the nearby Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) being Rodborough and Minchinhampton commons.

2. As Part of the Council's and communities approach to support the achievement of a Carbon Neutral District by 2030 and to address some adaptation challenges associated with a changing climate, the planting of woodlands and the creation of other areas such as wetlands and unimproved grassland will be necessary in order to achieve the objectives.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3. **Salmon Springs Grass Keep** -The land at Salmon Springs is in council ownership as it was part of the former Stratford Park Estate. Given the separation of the land (defined at appendix A) by the Painswick Road the land has not been able to be practicably enjoyed as part of the Park and consequently has been subject to relatively short term agricultural tenancies.
4. The land is steeply sloping grazing land of approximately 5 acres. It is outside the settlement boundary of Stroud and adjacent to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Given its topography, designation and prominence in the local landscape its potential for development is low. It is bounded by the Painswick Road, Wick Street and the Salmon Springs commercial estate. Access is from Wick Street.
5. The rental income from the land has been very modest at circa £300pa and moving forward it is unlikely that the land possess any greater potential.
6. While the potential carbon sequestration from 5 acres is modest it has the opportunity to highlight the potential of such approaches both on Council land and land that could be purchased or gifted for the development of further schemes. Local knowledge held within communities and Town and Parish Councils will be important in the identification of further opportunities
7. Initial discussions have taken place with Severn Trent Water Ltd as they have the ability to access some funding for planting. Unfortunately, it appears that this would not be available until April 2020. Opportunities will be explored for other funding sources so that planting could take place in the next planting season.
8. The long term management is likely to be modest but still necessary and depends on the focus for the final scheme as set out under paragraph 1. The opportunity will exist to combine it within the Stratford Park grounds contract or to discuss options with other organisations who may be better placed to manage the scheme depending on the focus.
9. **Other Opportunities:** The council has other landholdings which may in whole or in part be suitable for similar schemes. A review of the council's landholdings would be required to properly identify any opportunities.
10. Funding for future acquisitions could be sourced from the setting up of a local offsetting fund as per the third recommendation. Carbon offsetting services are already available for individuals wishing to offset their personal emissions from flights for example. Clearly the focus needs to be on reducing flights but recognising that this will not get to zero, some form of offsetting has a role to play in funding mitigation and adaption. Existing schemes support projects often on a worldwide basis and rarely support projects where the contributor would for example see the direct impact in terms of amenity, biodiversity or flood reduction. While schemes in other countries may have greater outputs there may be an opportunity to consider if contributions to voluntary offsetting would be increased if they could be linked to local schemes.

11. Initial discussions have been had with Board members of the Local Nature Partnership including the National Trust (NT) and the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT) and both consider it worthwhile to develop the concept further. The intention would be that the District Council establishes the system for the receipt of contributions and manages the resource in relation to specific projects which may be delivered by a number of potential partners including GWT, NT or local groups. The details, including the financial implications, need to be developed and a further report brought back to the Committee.
12. Long term management in terms of funding and responsibility, will need to be considered. To function effectively for both mitigation and adaptation while providing a local amenity, areas will need periodic interventions.

CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATION

13. The repurposing of the land at Salmon Springs provides an opportunity to achieve an early win in terms of sequestration and raises the profile of the issue at almost nil cost to the council. While its individual contribution would be small, the site has the potential to set the context for larger schemes with more significant outcomes.

