

Draft York Community Woodland Engagement Strategy

Background

- In Feb 2020 CYC Exec committed £3m to the Northern Forest initiative for land purchase to create a sizeable community woodland and set a target to plant 50,000 trees by the end of 2023
- In August CYC Exec approved the release of funds for the purchase of suitable land which had been identified west of Knapton
- The purchase was completed in September and the location of the site made public by a LibDem media release in October 2020.

Vision and objectives

The draft vision for the community woodland approved by Executive is for it to be:

a well-designed, bio-diverse, green space providing a place for peaceful contemplation and leisure for the people of York. This will create a new stray for the city, enhance the setting of the city and make York an even greater place to live, work and visit

The objectives to be achieved by the creation of the woodland are:

- Planting 50,000 trees by 2023 for carbon sequestration, as part of a wider commitment to reach net zero carbon by 2023
- A new woodland amenity to increase and enhance access to green space in York
- Full engagement of the local community in the creation and ongoing development of this community asset
- Enhanced health and wellbeing outcomes for local residents and resultant savings for health budgets
- An increase in biodiversity and wildlife habitats
- Enhancements to the York active travel network, including new and improved walking and cycling routes
- Opportunities for green jobs, green skills development and volunteering

The purpose of the proposed engagement strategy is to:

- share information with special interest groups, neighbouring communities and city-wide audiences
- explain the council's vision, objectives and possible design features
- invite views and ideas on the vision, purposes and design:
 - in order to develop a shared vision for the woodland
 - and a design that reflects community priorities
- build community support and ongoing involvement in the delivery and management/maintenance of the woodland and its facilities

Approach

The engagement approach will be developed in three phases alongside the key milestones of the project.

Phase 1 – early engagement – October to December 2020

During the project definition and planning stage the focus on engagement will be to:

- Develop a stakeholder database of community leaders, community and special interest groups and interested residents identifying areas of expertise and offers of help that can be factored in to the project delivery plan.
- From this work we will establish:
 - a stakeholder reference group who will have an ongoing role as an advisory body to the project steering group
 - an internal CYC stakeholder group
 - A keep informed list of interested people who we will keep up to date, invite to events and consultations
- *Purpose –*
 - Share more widely the information about the council's vision, objectives and benefits of the woodland creation and highlight the range of features and facilities that could be included. Together with high level timescales and future opportunities to be involved.
 - Seek early input from the community on the vision, purpose and features of the proposed woodland so these ideas can be used to shape concept designs/inform the consultation areas in Phase 2. Due to constraints of Covid security and time this early engagement will be via discussion at the initial advisory group online meeting and by an online open question style survey open to everyone
- *Subject for consultation -* We will invite views on the overall vision, what possible features are a priority for residents, how people would like to be involved, which existing woodlands people like/enjoy and why
- *Timing tbc –* 4 weeks from w/c 16th November to be launched with publication of the November executive report which will formally announce the successful procurement and location of the land to create the woodland
- *Format –* in development but likely to be comment style/open questions rather than a structured survey

Phase 2 – consultation on concept designs – January to March 2020

By late December/early January we will have concept design/s available from the Community Forest Trust and their report from the site appraisal covering a full assessment of the site conditions and characteristics along with the rationale behind the high level design/s proposed. This material will form the basis of a wide-ranging consultation on the high level concept design options that are possible.

- *Purpose* –
 - Share widely the details of the high level concept design option/s and rationale – explaining how the work has been carried out and what the next stages of the work will be to develop a more detailed design and setting it in the context of the overall project timeline and process (eg FC approval, specification, phasing and procurement of the work)
 - Seek specific feedback on aspects of the high level concept design setting it in the context of the original vision and objectives and explaining the range of possible features - reflecting as appropriate the themes and ideas that have come from the Phase 1 feedback to shape questions or provide commentary on the concept designs.
- *Subjects for consultation* - We will again invite views on the overall vision, which features are a priority for residents, which aspects of the concept plan people like/dislike, how people would like to be involved, which existing woodlands people like/enjoy and why
- *Timing tbc* – a 4-6 week period in Jan/Feb 2021 start date dependent on availability of site appraisal report and concept design, analysis of Phase 1 feedback, time to develop consultation materials and the resource availability to do this work.
- *Format* – as wide a range of materials, approaches and channels will be used as is possible given the Covid security requirements in force at the time. This could include:

CYC website

- illustrative plans of the site with existing features and proposed design options
- summary of the site appraisal report
- description of options and rationale
- Structured survey to get feedback on the design options and other consultation subjects
- Invitation to sign up for updates/Friend of YCW group

Information marquee on-site

- Staffed for drop-in sessions by CYC and delivery partners
- with information display boards
- leaflets and surveys to take away
- guided walks around site perimeter – display boards on the route and/or accompanying walk leaflet
- sample trees planted on site (timing of this?) with information boards eg illustrating how long they take to grow/what wildlife habitat they provide, photos of mature woodland of those trees

Information drop-in sessions in other locations

- Knapton, Rufforth, Acomb and city-centre, local schools and colleges
- Similar range of information materials as on-site (apart from trees!) we can suggest people go and look, advise on sustainable travel options and give them a walk leaflet

Interactive Workshop-style sessions for stakeholders and individuals

- Where the information can be presented (on-line or in person depending on prevailing conditions) and there is a panel of experts available to answer questions
- Also the option for a recorded presentation talking through the plans that can be downloaded with an option to send in questions that we develop into FAQs on the website

Curated social media conversations – referencing the above materials

Resources

- A funding bid will be made to the White Rose Forest to cover the costs of engagement and the requests listed below
- The CYC communications team will need to be provide resource to support some activities above (eg social media curation/media releases)
- The CYC Business Intelligence Unit will need to resource the creation and analysis of any on-line surveys
- The web services team will need to resource the updating up the YCW web-page to reflect new content and link to consultation surveys
- Other CYC officers/delivery partners may be required to support facilitated workshop in certain areas of expertise
- Woodland engagement manager
- YCW Project manager

Phase 3 – Feedback and publication of detailed design – April to June 2021

The purpose of this phase will be to publish an analysis of the Phase 2 consultation and the final/in progress design (?) that it has influenced. Further comment will be invited but the emphasis will shift to answering questions about how the plan will be implemented and inviting people to become involved eg in tree planting.

Ideas for events include:

- Woodland fair on site with a selection of stalls hosted by delivery partners, community and special interest groups
- Ceremonial tree-planting – by community leaders and members
- Launch of a community project to decorate the underpass and create a gateway to the YCW