

## Rother District Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Climate Change Steering Group
<b>Date:</b>	25 April 2024
<b>Title:</b>	Micro Woods Projects update
<b>Report of:</b>	Climate Projects Officer
<b>Ward(s):</b>	Rye & Winchelsea, South Battle and Telham, Bexhill Pebsham & St Michaels
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	To update the Steering Group on the progress of the Micro Woods projects and proposed sites for planting.
<b>Officer</b>	
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It be <b>RESOLVED</b> : That the progress of the projects to date be noted.

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### Introduction

1. In October 2023 the Council were successful in a grant application to the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) Coronation Living Heritage Fund for £27,149 to plant urban micro woods in Battle, Bexhill and Rye.
2. It was resolved at Cabinet on [11 December 2023](#) that the Director – Place and Climate Change accept the funding and be granted delegated authority to procure goods and contracts as necessary for the completion of the Micro Woods projects, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

### Analysis / Details of the proposed sites

3. The Climate Projects Officer has liaised with Parks and Estates Officers, Town Councils, Tree Wardens, local community groups, East Sussex County Council and Southern to identify eligible and suitable sites of around 200m<sup>2</sup> for planting a micro wood in each of the specified towns.
4. All suggested sites were reviewed against the reports and documents listed below, where applicable, to assess eligibility and suitability for micro wood planting, taking into account the intensive soil preparation that is required using the stipulated method of planting.
  - [Bexhill Tree Planting Strategy](#)
  - Biodiversity Audits of Council Assets (2023)
  - [Woodland Opportunity Map for Sussex](#)
  - [Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in Sussex](#)
  - [On-site or nearby Designations](#)
  - [On-site or bordering Tree Protection Orders](#)
5. Other considerations, such as proximity to residences, use by the local community and access (for plant equipment, deliveries etc.) were also

considered. Advice was received from Natural England’s Woodland Creation service for sites in Battle and Rye and is pending for Bexhill.

6. The proposed sites and plots are pending underground infrastructure surveys.
7. The proposed site in Battle is at the recreation ground at Coronation Gardens. The indicative plot for the micro wood is shown in Figures 1 and 2. (This site will be subject to liaison with the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.)



Fig 1: Aerial view of proposed plot at Coronation Gardens Rec. Fig 2: Ground view of proposed plot on Coronation Gardens Rec

8. The proposed site in Rye is at Mason’s Field. The indicative plot for the micro wood is shown in Figures 3 and 4.



Fig.3: Aerial view of proposed plot at Mason’s Field

Fig. 4: Ground view of proposed plot at Mason’s Field

9. The proposed site in Bexhill is Seabourne Road Recreation ground, Pebsham. Due to existing trees and play equipment, the proposal is to split the micro wood over two 100m<sup>2</sup> plots (as approved by DEFRA). These indicative plots are



Fig 5: Aerial view of two proposed plots at Seabourne Rd rec.



Fig 5: Ground view of two proposed plots at Seabourne Rd rec.

shown in Figures 5 - 7.



*Fig 7: Ground view of proposed plot 2 at Seabourne Rd rec.*

## Options

10. 21 sites in total were reviewed, as suggested by those listed at paragraph 4. The proposed sites above are considered the most suitable for micro wood planting, however, alternative viable sites have been identified should issues be identified in the underground infrastructure surveys.

## Next steps

11. Further advice will be sought from Natural England to confirm the appropriate mix of tree species for each site, and trees must then be procured from a nursery that meets the [Plant Healthy](#) standard.
12. Community Tree Planting events will be organised at each of the sites over the Winter of 2024/25. To date, 16 local groups have expressed interest in coordinating groups of volunteers to help plant these micro woods.

## Implications

### Financial Implications

13. The Micro Woods Project is included in the Council's Capital Programme with a budget of £27,149. The scheme is not expected to require additional capital investment by the Council over and above the DEFRA grant award.
14. Any unused funds on 31 March 2025 are to be returned to DEFRA.
15. The Miyawaki method of planting micro woods has higher initial costs than traditional tree planting, due to the requirement for intensive soil preparation, mulching, and watering during establishment. This, however, results in long-term savings from the reduced need for ongoing maintenance, the fast growth and establishment rates of the trees, and the increased resilience and survival rates of the trees.

### Legal Implications

16. The three proposed sites are owned and managed by Rother District Council and therefore do not require any agreements with third-party landowners.

## Other Implications

17. Environmental: Through the addition of soil improvers and dense planting of native tree and shrub species, micro woods create biodiversity-rich woodland habitats. They aim to reconstruct indigenous woodlands to enable the delivery of benefits for people, wildlife, biosecurity, and ecosystem services.
18. Micro woods are well suited to urban and degraded soils, where they assist in restoring the soil biome and improving soil carbon sequestration, whilst creating green spaces that connect communities with nature as a permanent reminder of the coronation of King Charles III, linking with the King's lifelong support of the natural environment.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	Yes	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

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Appendices:	None.
Relevant previous Minutes:	None.
Background Papers:	None.
Reference Documents:	None.