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**Proposed Scheme of Woodland Plantings on Lauder Common**

**Briefing Paper by Hannah MacLeod & Jo Stewart**

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**LAUDER COMMON GOOD FUND SUB-COMMITTEE**

**27 JANUARY 2021**

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**1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

This report is to advise Members of the Lauder Common Good Fund Sub-Committee of the results of the public consultation carried out in terms of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 in respect of the proposal to change the use made of part of the Lauder Common, by the undertaking of a scheme of woodland planting on areas of land currently used for grazing.

The consultation was carried out through Citizens Space, and was advertised on the Council's website. It opened on 2 November 2020 and closed on 10 January 2021. The consultation advised the public of the proposed scheme, explained the reasons for the proposal, and requested comments. The consultation also asked respondents whether they were in support of the proposal.

Several of the respondents to the consultation posed questions about the detail of the proposal. Hugh Chalmers from Tweed Forum has assisted officers in the consideration of these questions, and both the questions and the responses thereto, are noted below.

**2. BRIEFING**

28 responses to the consultation were received.

23 respondents confirmed they were in support of the proposal.

1 respondent confirmed they were not in support of the proposal.

4 respondents stated that they were not sure if they supported the proposal.

Positive responses

The positive comments received reflected a feeling that the biodiversity of the Common would be benefitted by the proposed plantings, and that this in turn would benefit the bird population. It was also commented that increased woodland areas serve to benefit the community, the landscape and the environment. Some positive respondents raised questions, considered below.

## Negative response

The one objection to the proposal was made on two grounds: firstly a concern that the immediate road structure would not support the harvesting of the woodlands (and that any improved infrastructure would be unwelcome in this location); and secondly, that the views from the common would be restricted as a result of the plantings.

The issue of harvesting and use of the road infrastructure is considered below.

## Neutral responses

Those who were unsure whether to support the proposals raised some questions (see below). They also questioned the possible extent of the environmental impact, given the scale of the plantings. One comment suggested that the scheme lacks connectivity and that the isolated and sparse pockets of woodland will not provide an ecological benefit in the short to medium term.

## Questions raised

The following questions were raised by respondents to the consultation. The response to each is noted in italics.

- 1. Is it possible for the woodland not to encroach upon the old stone sheep fold in area 4, as it is important to maintain the rural history of the area?**

*Tweed Forum have confirmed that the plantings will not encroach on this site.*

- 2. There is an old wartime rifle range also in the planned woodland area 4 – again, could the markings of this range remain outside the woodland?**

*Tweed Forum have confirmed that the plantings will not encroach on this site.*

- 3. What measures have been put in place to ensure road maintenance on Whitlaw Road, (during planting and felling)? This is a privately maintained road which users pay to upkeep.**

*Felling is not likely to take place for at least 20 years, so arrangements will need to be made at that time. Only area 7, Scots pine, is likely to be thinned or felled. For fencing and planting works, contractors will be bound to restore any damage caused to fields, tracks or roads.*

- 4. Could the proposals include some edible fruit?**

*There will be space to plant some fruit trees, but not using funding from this scheme, which is mainly a Native Woodland Scheme funded by the Forestry Grant Scheme.*

- 5. Why are non-native trees being planted?**

*Area 7 is 'Diverse Conifers' and is 70% Scots pine with 15% Norway spruce and 15% birch. This area is designed, with guidance from the Lauder Common Riding committee, to act as a screen to reduce the risk of horses bolting during the Common Riding. It will also act as a shelter for livestock and be good for wildlife. The rest of the planting is of native trees.*

**6. Will these woodlands be maintained - at least until they are established - to ensure a higher sapling survival rate (and will damaged tree guards be removed to prevent them from littering the area)?**

*Yes. The Forestry Grant Scheme contract means that trees need to become established within 5 years, and there is some funding for that. The number of 1.2m tree tubes has been kept to a minimum, and they will be removed when the trees are safe from roe deer. Regular maintenance will replace any broken stakes. Maintenance is being arranged through Tweed Forum, who are acting as the Submission Agents on behalf of Lauder Common Good.*

**7. Is there any opportunity for the community to be involved with the planting?**

*Yes. Once Covid restrictions are eased, an on-site meeting can gauge how people would like to be involved.*

**8. Is this a permanent woodland or will it be harvested?**

*Permanent, with the possible exception of area 7 – see answer to Q3 above.*

**9. Are any of the proposed planting areas currently bog lands which in themselves can be bigger carbon stores than woodland?**

*No.*

### **3 NEXT STEPS**

In accordance with the 2015 Act, Members should now consider the comments received in response to the consultation and decide whether to proceed with the proposed change of use, and if so, whether the proposal should be reconsidered in any way.

#### **Approved by**

**Name  
Title**

**Signature .....**

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#### **Background Papers:**

#### **Previous Minute Reference:**