



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Memorandum of Understanding between Council and DFI Roads Service to Promote Bio-Diversity and Reduce Verge Maintenance Costs</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	<b>Environmental Services Committee</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	<b>For Decision</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Protecting and enhancing our natural environment
Outcome	Reduced cost and enhanced bio-diversity
Lead Officer	Head of Estates

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	No additional cost
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>YES/NO</b>
Capital/Revenue	Nil
Code	
Staffing Costs	

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	N/A	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	N/A	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	N/A	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	N/A	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	N/A	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	N/A	Date:

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

To inform Members on the proposal to reduce the cost of roadside verge maintenance and the promotion of bio-diversity.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Council spend approximately £350,000 per annum cutting roadside grass verges on behalf of DFI Roads Service. Discussions with them have led to the development of a Memorandum of Understanding which will
- 1) Reduce the number of cuts to verges
  - 2) Promote bio-diversity
  - 3) Provide additional grass cutting equipment to Council at DFI expense
- 2.2 Cutting and lifting of grass has been shown to reduce the nutrients in the soil which in turn inhibits grass growth. This allows wildflowers to establish and encourages pollen loving insects. Experiments in recent years on both verges and Council land has proved successful in this regard.
- 2.3 To help both Council and DFI Roads Service to promote bio-diversity it is hoped to trial a 'cut and lift' approach to grass cutting on the Coleraine Ring Road over the next few years. DFI Roads Service are prepared to fund a mower suitable for this task at a cost of £50,000. Annual maintenance payments will also be paid (£36,400 reducing as number of cuts reduces – see appendix to MOU)
- 2.4 As the grass will be lifted, it will reduce year on year the number of cuts required each season to a point where one in spring and one in the autumn will be all that is required. This will allow wildflowers to establish and provide more attractive verges.
- 2.5 If successful the scheme will be rolled out to other areas.

## **3.0 Options**

- 3.1 Maintain the status quo with Council cutting verges at their cost up to 15 times per season.
- 3.2 Enter into an agreement with DFI to trial a 'cut and lift' approach for the next 7 years to establish if grass cutting can be reduced to reduce costs and promote bio-diversity.

## **4.0 Recommendation(s)**

**It is recommended** that the Environmental Services Committee recommends to Council the approval of Option 3.2.

**Memorandum of Understanding  
Of  
Partnering Arrangements  
Between  
DfI Roads Northern Division and Causeway Coast & Glens Council  
For  
Pilot Biodiversity Project in Causeway Coast and Glens 2021**

**Introduction**

1. The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to set out the basis of partnering arrangements between DfI Roads Northern Division and Causeway Coast and Glens Council (CCGC) for the introduction of a Pilot Biodiversity Project in Causeway Coast and Glens Area – Phase 1 to which this MOU covers in association with the cutting and collecting of urban grass within Coleraine Ring Road and the commitment from both DfI Roads Northern and CCGC in the need to reduce the cost of managing roadside verges including roundabouts & centre medians, while at the same time maintaining to a high standard to allow safe passage for road users and the importance in biodiversity in promoting wildlife and landscape values in keeping with the character of Causeway Coast and Glens.
2. This MOU sets out a framework of key principles agreed by the DfI Roads Northern Senior Management Team (SMT) to put forward for consideration and agreement if acceptable with Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
  - Key principles: Lowering fertility of roadside verges where possible to reduce grass growth.
  - Reforming operational and contractual arrangements we have for both urban and rural cutting regimes so that we reduce both the amount and frequency of cutting where we view it is not necessary.
  - To identify opportunities where together we may be able to deliver a more effective service.

### **Extent of This Pilot – Phase 1**

3. It is intended that the ‘cut and collect’ approach would be trialled over the urban area of grass currently cut by CCGBC. This currently totals some 216,716 square metres. DfI Roads would also like to include an additional amount of 33-34,000 square meters for which DfI Roads would pay pro-rata. Payments are detailed in Appendix A.
4. DfI Northern Division is willing to consider other areas for which it is responsible, i.e. those additional areas outside of Coleraine Ring Road and across the entire CCGBC area where DfI Roads employs an external contractor. Any adjustments to the totals currently suggested can be agreed at pro –rata rates.

### **Objectives**

5. The objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding are to:
  - Provide an agreed framework between DfI and CCGBC as to the benefits of this and potentially further Biodiversity projects
  - Define each organisation’s duties and obligations in delivering this service;
  - Establish a transparent working relationship through this multi-agency approach
  - Promote an efficient and co-operative working relationship between both organisations.

### **The Role and Commitments of DfI Roads Northern**

6. DfI Roads Northern will make a one off payment of 50k and pay a yearly amount as laid out in the projected payment schedule in Appendix A. Based on feedback from the pilot project it is hoped further phases of similar Biodiversity pilots can be rolled out within the greater CCGBC area with similar financial incentives agreed to encourage more Biodiversity.

**The Role and Commitments of Councils**

- 7. CCGBC will commit to agreed environmental benefits by participating in this ‘Cut & Collect Pilot – Phase 1’ by agreeing to Appendix ‘A’ and the additional locations / measurements along Coleraine Ring Road as detailed in Appendix 2.

**Terms and Conditions of the Memorandum.**

- 8. The Memorandum shall commence on ..... 2021 and will remain in place for 7 years with costs paid as detailed within ‘Appendix A’. However these arrangements are flexible and can be reviewed at any stage during the life of this agreement either by DfI or CCGBC senior management team including additional scope and flexibility to add or remove locations by both parties or in as below
- 9. Either DfI Roads Northern or the CCGBC may seek amendments to the Memorandum at any time during the life of this agreement.
- 10. The Memorandum may be terminated by either party at any stage.
- 11. The effectiveness of these arrangements will be reviewed in April of each year or prior to grass cutting season between both party representatives to ensure all have a full understanding and commitment to this agreement.

**The Signatories**

Both organisations signify below their acceptance of the Memorandum on the terms and conditions set out

Signed on behalf of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. Signed on behalf of DfI Roads Northern

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Date: Date:

## APPENDIX A – Projected Cost savings

Years	Current agreed annual payment to CCG council (£k)	Additional 34000K m2 specific to Coleraine Ring Rd (Listed in Appendix B)	Seasonal cuts current levels over 7 years	Projected annual payment to CCG council (£k)	Seasonal cuts prediction over 7 years
1	35	1.36	15	36.4	15
2	35	1.36	15	36.4	12
3	35	1.36	15	36.4	9
4	35	1.36	15	18.2	6
5	35	1.36	15	18.2	5
6	35	1.36	15	18.2	4
7	35	1.36	15	18.2	3
	<b>245</b>	<b>9.52</b>	105	<b>182</b>	54
	Current		245		
	projected 7 years		-182		
	Savings		-63		
	Mower cost		50		
	<b>Cost saving to Dfl:</b>		<b>13</b>		

Notes:

1. Year 1 commences during FY 21/22
2. Based on 217k m2 urban grass within CCG including additional 34K m2 Ring Rd
3. Mower to be 'cut and collect' as specified by CGBC. Allowance made for capital cost of £50k.
4. Costs above exclude inflationary rises

## **APPENDIX B – Agreed Locations Phase 1 to 6 Coleraine Ring Road:**

- Greenmount additional grass area leading to Laurel Park (details in pdf file)
- Sandford median including verge back of footway approaching Lodge road RBT (details in pdf file)
- Newbridge median from Lodge road RBT to hospital including areas each side of footway (detail in pdf file)
- Ring road from Lodge road RBT to Ballycastle RBT median and each side of carriageway (details in pdf file)
- Ballycastle RBT to Bushmills RBT each side of carriageway including grass verge both sides of carriageway from Ballycastle road RBT leading to Harpur's Hill shops
- Bushmills Road RBT to Portrush road RBT both sides of carriageway back of footway including area around Portrush RBT exiting from Portrush side junction

Pdf maps of these areas will be provided to CCGBC for approval in prior to signing off this memorandum.