

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 11 March 2025

International Travel to Milan for Circhive Project

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. Policy and Sustainability Committee is asked to approve this request for three officers to travel to Milan for the sixth Circhive Consortium event and General Assembly meeting. The event is taking place in Milan, lasts for three days and is funded by the Circhive grant to the Council.

Gareth Barwell

Interim Executive Director of Place

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International Travel to Milan for CirCHive Project

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report seeks approval for three officers who are working on the CirCHive Project to travel to Milan to participate in the sixth CirCHive Consortium three-day seminar and General Assembly meeting. The seminar has been arranged by Cluster Spring, Italy - the Italian Circular Bioeconomy Cluster and a partner in the project. CirCHive is a project and research consortium that will help businesses and the public sector recognise, measure, and report on the value of nature. There is a particular focus on biodiversity footprinting and natural capital accounting.

3. Background

- 3.1. The CirCHive Project is a five-year €11.5 million project and research consortium. The project will develop rigorous and standardised methods for combining two approaches to valuing nature - biodiversity footprinting and natural capital accounting - that will help businesses and the public sector recognise, measure and report on the value of nature.
- 3.2. Biodiversity footprints are designed to measure the impact an organisation or area has on biodiversity and the main causes of this impact. Natural capital accounting is the process of using an accounting framework to measure and report on the condition of natural capital (ecosystems).
- 3.3. These two approaches are being used by an increasing number of organisations to understand and value the nature that underpins their operations. By combining these methods, the CirCHive Project will provide a more comprehensive approach to valuing nature, improving biodiversity performance, informing decision-making, and creating potential routes for future private investment.
- 3.4. The City of Edinburgh Council is one of 10 case-study partners on the CirCHive Project. The University of Edinburgh is also involved. There are an additional 15 research partners including the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Institute for European Environmental Policy.
- 3.5. The project started in December 2022, and the Council is benefitting from a grant award of £195,332 over five years, to cover resource and travel costs.

- 3.6. The Council has been part of the Circhive Project since the start, with the Parks and Openspace Development Manager (who also sits on the Circhive General Assembly) and two Greenspace Development (Ecology) Officers engaged on the project.
- 3.7. The Circhive grant covers the cost of a full-time Greenspace Development Officer until the end of 2026 to work on the delivery on the Edinburgh Nature Network (ENN) and other associated projects. Nature networks are a requirement of every Scottish Local Authority through National Planning Framework 4 and the ENN is the first urban nature network in Scotland
- 3.8. The Circhive Project has bi-annual consortium seminars and General Assembly meetings which, in the main, are held virtually, with consortium partners meeting in-person roughly once a year.
- 3.9. These in-person events bring together all Circhive partners from senior research organisations, businesses, and public sector authorities from across Europe to share knowledge and learn about biodiversity footprinting and natural capital accounting to help accelerate the roll-out across Europe, and in Edinburgh, as the city continues to be a leader on these matters in Scotland.
- 3.10. Attendance is required to evidence commitment to this programme and ensure grant funding conditions are met, and enables the Council to present project progress, participate in workshops to develop ideas and solutions, and attend General Assembly meetings.

4. Main report

- 4.1. This report seeks permission for the three Council officers involved in the Circhive Project to attend a three-day consortium seminar from 13 to 15 May 2025. The seminar is being held in Milan, Italy. The costs associated with this event will be met by the Circhive grant allocation to the Council.
- 4.2. The purpose of the event is:
 - 4.2.1. Present an update to the entire consortium on the work the Council has been undertaking as part of the Circhive project and hear from other partners to build capacity for biodiversity footprinting and natural capital accounting, both of which are emerging sectors in the UK;
 - 4.2.2. Attend focused meetings with other EU green city hubs (like the local authority in Malaga) to learn and share experiences with one another and explore working closely together on our case studies;
 - 4.2.3. Attend the General Assembly meeting; and
 - 4.2.4. Collaborate with consortium partners (such as senior research organisations) to fully develop the case studies that the Council will be taking forward. With the project now in its third year and the Council receiving significant funding

to drive forward projects within the Scottish policy context, there will be an opportunity to update EU partners and continue to lead in emerging policy (which the Council is piloting with NatureScot for the Circhive project).

- 4.3. The three team members proposed to attend each bring unique skills and perspectives to the project. The Parks and Openspace Development Manager has been involved in the Circhive project from funding application to current stage, has strategic input into the project and overall responsibility for delivering the city's outputs, and is a member of the General Assembly for the project. The two Greenspace Development (Ecology) Officers are each leading on different strands of work in the project. This includes delivery of nature networks; calculating Biodiversity Net Gain for projects; monitoring and evaluation; communications and education; and natural capital accounting.
- 4.4. By attending together, the team can directly share learning of their respective workstreams and projects, and importantly their combined knowledge and expertise will make it possible to fully develop case studies for the Council.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. If approved, travel and accommodation arrangements will be made for this event in Milan. Feedback from the event will be provided to Committee in the Business Bulletin. Information sharing sessions will also be arranged for internal colleagues and partners.
- 5.2. Council officers will continue to meet online monthly with green city hubs across Europe to share learning and best practice on biodiversity monitoring and natural capital accounting – both subjects are a focus of current Nature Emergency Council projects and policies, such as the ENN, Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan, and FIRNS (Facility for Investment Ready Nature in Scotland).

6. Financial impact

- 6.1. The cost of travel, accommodation and the event itself are covered by the Circhive Project grant to the Council. All consortium partners have been allocated £3,490 per event as a travel allowance to enable attendance at Consortium meetings where these are relevant to the work that the Council is doing. There is no financial impact on the Council.
- 6.2. The estimated cost of the trip includes return air travel from Edinburgh to Milan, four nights hotel accommodation (including breakfast and dinner on arrival, on the last evening, and on the day of departure). The cost of all other meals is covered by the Circhive programme, organised by Cluster Spring. Approximate costs are set out in the table below:

Details	Cost (£)
Return flights x 3	671.00
4 nights hotel B&B x 3	1,824.00
Meals for 2 evenings x 3	100.00
Other incidental expenses, e.g. bus travel to/from airport.	50.00
Total cost estimate	2,645.00

- 6.3. It is recommended that officers arrive the day before the start of the consortium, which is a full day on 13 May 2025, and leave the day after the consortium, which finishes on 15 May 2025, as flight times do not accommodate arriving and departing on the first and last days of the event.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1. No equality or poverty impacts have been identified in respect of this event.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1. It is proposed that officers fly to Milan as there are no direct train services available.
- 8.2. The journey time for a flight from Edinburgh to Milan is 2 hours 25 minutes. The carbon emissions associated with the international travel flights for the three members of the team are 803.17kgCO₂e.
- 8.3. Travelling to Milan via train would take approximately 16 hours (not including rest time) and involve approximately five trains, and travel through four countries in each direction. It is felt that the extended journey posed by train travel would not be practical, would incur additional hotel and meal costs and would be an ineffective use of officer time. The carbon emissions associated internationally by train is 90kgCO₂e.
- 8.4. It is noted that the project, whilst having the carbon footprint outlined above, is important in advancing capacity and knowledge as it will enable the Council to better develop and deliver policies and projects addressing the Climate and Nature Emergencies that the Council has declared. It will also directly contribute to other policies, such as Climate Ready Edinburgh.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1. There is an expectation that Circhive members will attend some of the consortium's meetings in-person to build strong relationships across the project partnership. It is recognised that, while this could be done online, working in-person helps to build the relationships necessary to collaborate effectively in developing case study projects and create solutions to common problems. There is a risk if officers do not attend that Edinburgh will:

- 9.1.1. Be failing in the responsibility as a grant-holder to unlock the full potential of this project to benefit the city of Edinburgh and the wider country in addressing the climate and nature emergencies; and
- 9.1.2. Jeopardise the awarded grant funding for this project.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1. [CircHive Project](#)
- 10.2. [International Travel to Helsinki for CircHive](#), Policy and Sustainability Committee, 12 March 2024; and
- 10.3. [Feedback from CircHive Event](#), Policy and Sustainability Committee, 22 August 2024.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – International Visit Request Form

INTERNATIONAL & ELECTED MEMBER TRAVEL APPROVAL FORM

Section to complete before the trip	
Passenger(s) name(s): Linda Anglin, Alexandra Hoadley and Alex Hunter	
Directorate/Division: Place, Operational Services	
Once complete all forms must be submitted to your line manager for approval; all forms must then be submitted to the relevant Service Director and Executive Director with Committee approval required for all International or Elected Member Travel.	
Event name and location: CirCHive Consortium Meeting, Milan	
Event organisers: Cluster Spring, Italy	
Nature of event eg conference /seminar, civic event. Conference	Start date: 13/05/2025 End date: 15/05/2025
Anticipated costs associated with attending i.e. travel, accommodation, conference fees	£2,645 (funded by CirCHive grant)

Purpose of attending: To present an update to the entire consortium on the Thriving Greenspaces and Edinburgh Nature Network (and associated projects) and hear from other partners to build capacity for biodiversity footprinting and natural capital accounting (both of which are emerging UK sectors). Biodiversity footprints are designed to measure the impact an organisation or area has on biodiversity and the main causes leading to this impact. Natural capital accounting is the process of using an accounting framework to measure and report on the condition of natural capital (ecosystems). Staff will also attend focussed meetings with the other EU green city hubs to work closely on case studies, and to collaborate with consortium partners (such as senior research organisations) to fully develop the Edinburgh case study the Council is taking forward as part of this project. With the project now in its third year and the Council receiving significant funding to drive forward projects within the Scottish policy context – it is essential to attend and update the EU-level partners as the funding is allowing us to continue to lead in emerging policy such as biodiversity net gain and natural capital accounting (which we are piloting with NatureScot through this project). The next Consortium meeting in 2026 is being hosted in Edinburgh with the University of Edinburgh so it is important we attend the annual meeting hosted by partners, prior to the Consortium being hosted in Scotland.

Link with [Business Plan](#) strategic priorities:

Priorities	Please briefly explain how the event is linked with this priority (if relevant):
Create good places to live and work	A key focus of Circhive is to look at biodiversity footprinting and natural capital accounting in a city context; to create greener, more biodiverse cities to protect and enhance the natural environment thereby enhancing places to live and work.
End poverty in Edinburgh	By supporting how we value and invest in our natural capital, this project will support more equitable access to greenspace across our city.
Become a net zero city	This project supports the Climate Ready Edinburgh Implementation Plan by providing data and methodology that can support delivery.
Link with other civic duties	The learnings from this Conference feed into how the Council responds to the declared Nature and Climate Emergencies, through creating a greener city with more robust biodiversity that is baselined and valued in a way that can increase investment in nature such as through natural capital accounting without losing the intrinsic value of nature itself. It will also pilot and deliver against national policy set by Scottish Government and NatureScot, for example the development of a natural capital account.

Travel mode (2023 emissions factors):

Travel mode	Emission factor (kgCO2e/passenger.km)	Tick relevant box	Travel mode	Emission factor (kgCO2e/passenger.km)	Tick relevant box
Flight (domestic)	0.27258	<input type="checkbox"/>	Flight (short-haul, economy)	0.18287	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Flight (short-haul, business)	0.27430	<input type="checkbox"/>	Flight (long-haul, economy)	0.20011	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flight (long-haul, premium economy)	0.32016	<input type="checkbox"/>	Flight (long-haul, business)	0.58029	<input type="checkbox"/>
Car (average)*	0.166639	<input type="checkbox"/>	Car (electric)*	0.054796	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coach	0.027181	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taxi (regular)*	0.208056	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rail (national)	0.035463	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rail (international)	0.004459	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ferry (foot passenger)	0.01871	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ferry (car passenger)	0.12933	<input type="checkbox"/>

If travelling by plane – please explain what other alternatives have been considered and why these have not been retained: Travelling to Milan via train would take approximately 16 hours (not including rest time) and involve approximately five trains and travel through four countries in one direction. This is repeated on return. It is felt that the extended journey posed by train travel would not be practical, would incur additional hotel and meal costs, and would be an ineffective use of officer time.

Note: Domestic air travel is only allowed in exceptional circumstances, for example if it's not practical to travel by train. In order to ensure we reduce our carbon footprint as much as possible, flights are restricted for environmental reasons, no air travel is allowed when there is a direct rail connection. All flight tickets must be Economy class or equivalent to ensure it is the most "carbon efficient" and approval is required by the relevant Service Director and Executive Director.

*The emission factors for cars assume the passenger is driving on its own. The same factor should be used if there are several passengers in the car (no need to multiply with the number of passengers in the next question). Similarly for the taxi emission factor, no need to multiply with the number of passengers.

Estimated carbon emissions (in kgCO2e) = Distance (in kms) x Emission factor (see above table) x number of travellers

803.17kgCO2e

Other requirements: Please ensure that you have arranged the following travel requirements.

Make sure that you meet the entry requirements for any country that you visit on Council business, including any visas needed;

Get pre-approval from your line manager and other relevant Senior Officers (The Chief Executive is required to authorise international travel for Service Directors); and the reasons recorded in an email.

Request approval from IT that you will be using CEC devices from abroad (InformationSecurity@edinburgh.gov.uk)

All travel involving Elected Members has appropriate approval

Section to complete after the trip

Final costs: £ Click or tap here to enter text.

Funded by:

Service area budget

Externally funded, please specify:

Other, please specify:

Key areas which you found particularly useful: Click or tap here to enter text.

Benefits of attendance for the Council, including relevance to key Council priorities and Pledges: Click or tap here to enter text.

Additional comments: Click or tap here to enter text.

Process for Member and/or International Travel

International travel identified to be required or,
Elected Member invited to attend event outwith Edinburgh or internationally or,
Elected Member is wishing to attend a conference and there is a cost associate with this.

Is this for travel internationally?

No

Does this travel request cover or include travel for an Elected Member?

No

Please refer to the Business Travel Guidance on the Orb to ensure all approvals are in place prior to booking

Yes

Is there time for this to be considered at a meeting of P&S Committee before

Yes

Please note that all travel and Conference attendance for Elected Members must be shared with Group Leader/ Council Leader for initial agreement prior to formal request being submitted

Lead Officer submits completed form on behalf of the delegation to line manager with cover note explaining reasons for urgent approval

Line manager submits completed form and cover note to Service Director

Service Director submits to Executive Director for sign-off

Executive Director/Directorate Office will circulate to Convenor & Group Leaders for approval

Travel booking arrangements are made

Retrospective Committee Report to be prepared and submitted as per appropriate Committee Report process

Where a request is for Elected Members only this should be submitted via their Group Business Manager to the relevant Directorate Office

Lead officer submits completed form on behalf of the delegation to line manager

Appropriate officers prepare a cover Report for the Policy & Sustainability Committee - all completed travel requests must be included as report appendix and submitted to Service Director for approval

Service Director submits Committee Report to Executive Director for sign-off

Policy & Sustainability Committee approves travel request

Travel booking arrangements are made

If Committee does not approve the report or the specific request, then no bookings may be made.