

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE GREEN ESTATE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND
PLAN 2013 - 2023****Purpose of the Report**

1. To report on progress of implementation of the Development Strategy and Plan for 2013-2023 for the Council's Green Estate and to seek approval of proposals for the future management and operation of the site portfolio.

Information and Advice

2. This report follows the development of the Green Estate Development Strategy and Plan 2013-2023 which received approval at the October 2013 meeting of the Committee and the follow on report in July 2014 setting out an updated asset /status list of sites and recommendations for their future management/operation.
3. The primary aim of the Strategy is to find alternative management regimes for the portfolio with the objective of reducing as far as possible the management burden and revenue cost to the Council.
4. Discussions are continuing with external organisations that may be interested in operating some of the sites and others may prove suitable for community management. As the Strategy recognises there is unlikely to be a single solution as the sites are so varied in size and location and there will inevitably be a body of land that cannot be managed in any other way but 'in-hand'.
5. There has been mixed progress in transferring some sites to other management arrangements and in resolving some long-standing alternative use proposals that have affected others. The changes to the site list are highlighted in **Appendix 1**.
6. A comprehensive review of the sites in the portfolio has also been undertaken as part of a corporate review of the potential for all landholdings to contribute to alternative energy generation such as solar or wind. Unfortunately in the end none of the sites proved suitable because of a lack of electricity grid capacity or planning constraints.
7. Two site complexes have been due for some time to transfer to the Forestry Commission (FC) as the legacy of the 'British Coal Deal' where the County Council acquired closed collieries, restored them to forest parks and then passed them onto the FC on a long lease for future management and a guarantee of continued public access. The Ollerton sites have been held up pending resolution of issues of access and boundaries but these have now

been resolved and the final form of the lease has been drawn up and is with solicitors. The reworking and restoration of the south tip at Shirebrook has been successfully completed and so the Shirebrook complex is also nearing transfer. As it has been some considerable time since the original Environment Committee resolution to approve the leases of the sites to the FC, Committee is asked to consider reaffirming their agreement to the conclusion of the leases for these two sites. It had been hoped to include the complex of sites at Manton in a similar agreement to lease but the FC do not wish to proceed with these at the moment because of the considerable problems with off-road trespass and other forms of anti-social behaviour. The council is working with the local community and police to reduce this persistent problem to a manageable level.

8. Forestry Commission management of the sites that have already transferred (some 800ha) has been a great success as the Commission has considerable resources and expertise at its disposal and has thus been able to enhance the amenity and biodiversity of the sites and improve the quality of the visitor experience at all levels. There is the ancillary benefit to the Council of a significant reduction in management time and maintenance costs.
9. A number of the remaining sites within the portfolio are also former colliery tips acquired from the National Coal Board and their successors. The objective of these purchases was similarly to facilitate the restoration of the former coal tips by the County Council utilising grant funding for the restoration. This, in turn, created opportunities for improving public access to, and/or agriculture/forestry on the sites.
10. Whilst these initial restorations could be judged a success against the remediation objectives of the time, improved restoration techniques mean that there is now an opportunity to improve on the restoration of a number of these sites to an enhanced level. Such further remediation will allow issues such as wildlife conservation, tip stability and the dangers of spontaneous combustion to be dealt with in a much more effective manner than was previously technically possible or realistic. In addition, a number of these tips contain deposits in the form of waste coal slurry from the former extractive industries. It is now commercially possible to recover these former waste coal products and to sell them in to the power distribution network. This opportunity means that, in addition to improving the quality and standards of remediation, and to allow improved public access and wildlife enhancements, there is an opportunity for the County Council to generate economic benefit from the recovery of these waste coal materials.
11. The former Rufford colliery tip site at Rainworth is one such site which is immediately adjacent to the remainder of the colliery tip complex which is currently undergoing restoration by a private company. This is one of the early former colliery tips which the Council acquired and which was restored to (mostly) lower grade grazing land, but with significant opportunity for further improved restoration to allow the re-creation of valuable, and rare, natural heathland habitat. The site is bisected by a watercourse, Rainworth Water, which has been in culvert since the days of mining on the site. This project offers the opportunity to re-profile the land to allow the removal of the culvert and the opening up of the Rainworth Water watercourse. This is a significant environmental improvement opportunity, in addition to the potential for habitat improvement.
12. The proposal was considered and approved by Finance and Property Committee on 20 June 2016 and now will proceed to detailed planning and negotiation of the contractual stages.

Other Options Considered

13. The report is a scheduled follow-on report arising from the decision of the July 2014 meeting of the Committee.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

14. The proposals are part of the process of transforming council services and reshaping operating models foreshadowed by Redefining Your Council.

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation will be undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

16. Where appropriate when sites pass from Council control every attempt will be made to safeguard public access and biodiversity by means of covenants or contractual terms.

Financial Implications

17. There are aspects of the Strategy that require longer term capital investment and it is anticipated that external funding support will be required in order for them to be progressed. Where land is transferred from direct Council control this will be subject to the normal approval process set out in the Financial Regulations.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Culture Committee:

- 1) reaffirms the previous Committee approval of the leases to the Forestry Commission of the site complexes at Ollerton and Shirebrook, completing the British Coal Deal programme
- 2) in line with the approval of Finance and Property Committee on 20 June 2016, approves the principle of the project to rework and improve the Rufford tip site at Rainworth
- 3) notes the progress on the management and operation of the site portfolio as set out in **Appendix 1**.

Derek Higton
Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Gareth Broome
Team Manager, Country Parks and Green Estate
T: 01623 821313
E: Gareth.Broome@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (LM 01/06/16)

18. The recommendations in the report fall within the terms of Reference of the Culture Committee.

Financial Comments (SS 06/06/16)

19. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 17 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Nottinghamshire Green Estate Development Strategy and Plan 2013-2023 – report to Culture Committee on 8 October 2013

Nottinghamshire Green Estate Development Strategy and Plan 2013-2023 – report to Culture Committee on 1 July 2014

Former Rufford Colliery Tip – proposed disposal of coal fines (coal deposits) - report to Finance and Property Committee on 20 June 2016.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0825