

**20<sup>th</sup> June 2013****Agenda Item: 11****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR POLICY, PLANNING AND  
CORPORATE SERVICES****BIODIVERSITY OPPORTUNITY MAPPING AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
SENSITIVITY PROJECT****Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Members of the work recently commissioned to undertake Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping and Environmental Sensitivity work to inform the site selection and restoration briefs for the Minerals Local Plan.

**Information and Advice**

2. The Council is currently progressing work on the Minerals Local Plan which will be proposing a 'Biodiversity-led Restoration Strategy'. As the Local Plan needs to be based on 'sound' evidence, officers have recently commissioned work to be undertaken on Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping and Environmental Sensitivity to provide information to inform the site selection process for the future sand and gravel site allocations and also inform the restoration briefs for those sites proposed
3. The work will inform a process which allows conservation action, such as habitat creation and restoration of worked out quarries, to be targeted in areas where it is likely to have the greatest benefit for biodiversity. It will also identify sensitive areas of landscape, in general terms those landscapes of highest sensitivity to change will be areas where the landscape remains intact both visually and structurally, have strong historic and cultural identity, and contain many widespread semi-natural habitats with associated linkages appropriate to the character of the area.
4. The work is based on knowledge of where habitats (and species) currently occur in a given area, Landscape Character Assessments and Historic Environment data and is informed by other constraints (such as other land uses). It will therefore help guide the site selection process for future allocations of Sand and Gravel sites and will aim to guide the location of conservation activities.
5. To be able to maximise the potential value of minerals restoration, it is important to carefully plan which habitats can be created, and where. Habitats can only be located in certain parts of the County as a result of underlying geology.

6. The Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping exercise is a tool for helping to deliver habitat creation/restoration targets set in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.
7. The Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping process has emerged out of a growing recognition that the focus cannot just be on protecting important, but isolated sites. Work is needed to expand these sites and to reconnect them at a landscape scale, to allow species to move in response to climate change.
8. Derbyshire County Council is currently completing a study on Environmental Sensitivity for their areas around the River Trent to inform their Minerals Local Plan. To ensure a consistent approach to Sand and Gravel site allocations it is important that Nottinghamshire County Council utilises the same methodology.
9. Discussions have taken place with officers of the County Council (Landscape and Ecology) and also with the Wildlife Trust, who will be undertaking the work, as to how this work can be progressed. The costs associated with this work are as follows:
  - Environmental Sensitivity Project: £4,800
  - Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping: £4,920

The Environment Agency and Rushcliffe Borough Council are also keen for this work to progress and have initially indicated that they could contribute approximately £1,500 each which could bring the total project costs for the County Council to £6,720.

10. The cost of the project would be taken from the Planning Policy budget which can be used for evidence based work to support both the Minerals Local Plan and Waste Development Plan Documents.

### **Other Options Considered**

11. This report considers all of the relevant issues in relation to commissioning the projects. Alternative options considered would have been not to undertake the work, however, it is essential that the Local Plan is based on relevant and up-to-date evidence and as such it is considered essential for this work to be undertaken.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

12. To ensure that the Nottinghamshire Minerals Local Plan is based on relevant, up-to-date evidence.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment

and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

14. The Planning Policy budget contains monies for undertaking evidence based work to support the Minerals and Waste Local Plan process.

### **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

15. Robust, up-to date plans are important for Sustainability and Environment.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That Committee note the recently commissioned work on Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping and Environmental Sensitivity.

**Jayne Francis-Ward**

**Corporate Director, Policy, Planning and Corporate Services**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact: Lisa Bell, Planning Policy Team Manager, ext 74547**

### **Constitutional Comments (SHB.21.05.13)**

16. This Report is for noting only so no constitutional comments are required.

### **Financial Comments (SEM 21/05/13)**

17. The financial implications are set out in the report.

### **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.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

Councillor Kay Cutts - Radcliffe on Trent;  
Councillor Nikki Brooks - Carlton East;  
Councillor John Clarke - Carlton East;  
Councillor Roger Jackson - Farnsfield & Lowdham;  
Councillor Sue Saddington - Farndon & Muskham;  
Councillor Tony Roberts - Newark West;  
Councillor Bruce Laughton - Southwell and Cauton;  
Councillor Maureen Dobson – Collingham;  
Councillor John Ogle - Tuxford

