
REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 10
DATE OF MEETING:	27th August 2009	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	ZOË SEWTER ext. 5753	DOC:
SUBJECT:	zoe.sewter@south-derbys.gov.uk	REF:
	LOCAL NATURE RESERVE DECLARATION	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	LINTON	TERMS OF REFERENCE: EDS01

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Members approve that Coton Park can be put forward for declaration as the first SDDC managed Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To provide information to support the above recommendation.
- 2.2 A copy of a plan identifying the boundaries of the site is attached at Annexe A.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 South Derbyshire has 1 Local Nature Reserve at Elvaston, owned by Derbyshire County Council, covering 9.67ha – well below Natural England's target of a minimum of 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 population. The declaration of Coton Park at 10ha would bring the District to 21% of the target amount.

4.0 Detail

- 4.1 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are for both people and wildlife. They offer people special opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it.

Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, by principal local authorities.

All district and county councils have powers to acquire, declare and manage LNRs. Parish and Town Councils can also declare LNRs but they must have the powers to do so delegated to them by a principal local authority.

To qualify for LNR status, a site must be of importance for wildlife, geology, education or public enjoyment. Some are also nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

LNRs must be controlled by the local authority through ownership, lease or agreement with the owner. The main aim must be to care for the natural features which make the site special.

Natural England recommends to local authorities that LNRs should be:

- greater than 2ha in size,
- capable of being managed with the conservation of nature and the maintenance of special opportunities for study, research or enjoyment of nature as the main concern

4.2 Coton Park was formerly used as a Coal Stacking Yard. When this operation ceased the area was subject to restoration works sometime during the late 1990's, and was restored to a mosaic of habitats including new wetland providing a particular area of interest.

4.3 Several species of plant and bird have been recorded from the site which at County and Local level would be considered to be rare or uncommon.

In 2005 the nature conservation interest of the site was formally recognised by its designation as a Local Wildlife Site, qualifying under the habitat mosaic selection criteria.

4.4 In 2006 BBC Breathing Places awarded a grant of £10,000 to Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire, working with SDDC & Linton Parish Council, to carry out physical improvement works to improve access onto and around the site. This work was managed by SDDC.

4.5 The Derbyshire Wildlife Trust has produced a Management Plan for the site, which details an annual maintenance regime to protect and enhance existing habitats.

4.6 For successful management to be implemented it is important that there is a formal management structure to oversee and implement proposed management. The development of a Management Advisory Group is underway, comprising representation from the site owners, the local community, conservation organisations and other interested individuals and organisations.

4.7 For the local community the site provides an opportunity for practical involvement in an environmental project, new recreational access and an educational resource.

4.8 An explanation of how Local Nature Reserves are declared is outlined in the information sheet, attached at Annexe B.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 Current maintenance arrangements are a partnership between SDDC, Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire (GD&D) and a small group of local volunteers. The cost of implementing the management plan is approximately £2,500 per year, which is currently met through the Service Level Agreement with GD&D.

5.2 SDDC will continue to own and have responsibility for the site.

5.3 The cost of any capital works identified in the Management Plan will be sought from external funding sources.

6.0 Corporate Implications

- 6.1 The designation of a Local Nature Reserve in the District contributes to the overall vision of the Corporate Plan to make South Derbyshire a better place to live, work and visit.
- 6.2 The site is in the National Forest and contributes to the Sustainable Growth and Opportunity theme to promote the National Forest.
- 6.3 It also contributes to the Theme "Lifestyle Choices" and delivers against the priority "Helping the community reduce its environmental footprint".
- 6.4 Community Strategy Vibrant Communities theme - Communities that are vibrant and active where there is a strong sense of community. Outcomes: Increased participation in community and voluntary action; An increase in the percentage of people who feel South Derbyshire is an attractive place to live.
- 6.5 The declaration of a Local Nature Reserve is also listed as a priority for action in the Service Plan for Leisure & Community Development, Grounds & Facilities.
- 6.6 LNRs can also help local authorities meet Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and sustainable development targets.
- 6.7 The declaration will assist the Council in meeting Access to Natural Greenspace (ANGST) Standards; the shortfall is identified in the South Derbyshire 'Evidence Base' document

7.0 Community Implications

- 7.1 A "Local Nature Reserve" is a statutory designation, and is therefore a very clear signal to a local community of the local authority's commitment to nature conservation.
- 7.2 The site will present many opportunities for Volunteering, and for local communities to assist in the delivery of the management plan, learning new skills and get involved.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 The declaration of this site as a LNR will lead the way for further declarations either by this Authority or by Parish Councils as assisted by SDDC to help meet ANGST standards.
- 8.2 If approved by this committee, this report will be taken to the next meeting of the Housing and Community Services Committee, to approve the designation in terms of Site Management.

9.0 Background Papers

- 9.1 Annexe A: Map showing boundary of proposed Coton Park LNR
- 9.2 Annexe B: Information sheet "Local Nature Reserve declaration process"