
REPORT TO:	HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 8
DATE OF MEETING:	12th MARCH 2015	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND PLANNING 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:	SWADLINCOTE	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS04; HCS07; HCS10

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That Members approve that Swadlincote Woodlands be put forward for declaration as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), managed by SDDC.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To provide information and gain Members support for the declaration of a Local Nature Reserve at Swadlincote Woodlands.

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 There are 2 Local Nature Reserves within the District: one at Elvaston, owned by Derbyshire County Council, and a second owned and managed by SDDC at Coton Park, declared in 2011. The two sites cover approx. 20ha – well below Natural England’s target of a minimum of 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 population. The declaration of Swadlincote Woodlands at 34ha would bring the District to 50% of the target amount.
- 4.3 The site was formerly used for coal and clay extraction before being backfilled with colliery and domestic waste. In the mid to late 1990s the site was restored as an urban woodland park.
- 4.4 Several species of plant and butterfly have been recorded from the site which at County and Local level would be considered to be rare or uncommon.
- 4.5 In 1995 the nature conservation interest of “Salts Meadow” at the northern end of site was formally recognised by its designation as a Local Wildlife Site, qualifying under the species rich neutral grassland criteria.
- 4.6 Part of the site is owned by Derbyshire County Council, who has given Cabinet approval for LNR designation of their site under a joint application.
- 4.7 The Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is producing a 10 year draft Management Plan for the site, which details an annual maintenance regime to protect and enhance existing habitats. This will be finalised in Spring 2015 for submission to Natural England as part of the LNR designation process.
- 4.8 For the local community the site provides an opportunity for practical involvement in an environmental project, new recreational access and an educational resource.
- 4.9 The advent of the new Parklife Officer brings increased capacity to deliver meaningful and sustained community engagement and education on this site, with a view to involving local people in site management and development.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Current maintenance arrangements are delivered through a partnership between SDDC, National Forest Company and The Conservation Volunteers. A volunteer task day is held on the site once a month to carry out conservation tasks throughout the year. Grass cutting and general site maintenance is undertaken by Grounds Maintenance.
- 5.2 The revenue cost of implementing the management plan is estimated at £5,000 per year. This is met by an annual drawdown of the residual s106 commuted sum (£40,000 as at 2014/15), and supplemented through external grants.
- 5.3 SDDC will continue to have management and maintenance responsibility for the site.

- 5.4 DCC will continue to have responsibility for the monitoring and maintenance of the former landfill operations.
- 5.5 The cost of any capital works identified in the Management Plan will be sought from external funding sources and £10,000 provided by the Council, granted through the Capital Programme.

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.

9.0 Background Papers

- 9.1 Annexe A: Map showing boundary of proposed Swadlincote Woodlands LNR