

LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE - 10 MARCH

PART I

7. LEAVESDEN COUNTRY PARK 10 YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN – 2021-2031 DCES

1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the new 10 year management plan for Leavesden Country Park and to recommend its adoption by the Council. The report also details the results of the public consultation for the fencing options for grazing on The Horses' Field.

2 Details

Leavesden Country Park 10 Year Management Plan (2021-2031)

- 2.1 The current management plan for Leavesden Country Park expired in 2020 and under the Council's processes for managing key sites, this has been reviewed and updated. Under the requirements for the National Lottery Heritage Fund, this needs to be over a period of 10 years and show a clear capital plan for the park during this period.
- 2.2 The new management plan has been developed to show clear and comprehensive objectives for the park, along with a clear maintenance schedule for Environmental Protection to manage. The management plan also brings East Lane Cemetery and The Horses' Field together, so that the whole site is covered by one management plan and will formally become part of Leavesden Country Park.
- 2.3 There is a clear 10 year capital plan for the park, however funding will need to be identified for these elements, whether that be through the Council's capital bid process or through securing external funding. These projects are therefore not confirmed.
- 2.4 There are a number of appendices to view as part of the management plan:
- Appendix A – Leavesden Country Park 10 Year Management Plan
 - Appendix B – Site Description Management and Maintenance Plan Maps
 - Appendix C – 10 Year Capital Programme
 - Appendix D – Wider Context Policies and Strategies
 - Appendix E – Licences and Tenants within Leavesden Country Park
 - Appendix F – Building Maintenance and Risk Assessment
 - Appendix G – Essential Reading
- 2.5 The management plan has been developed in partnership with Officers across the Council, including Properties, Environmental Protection and Leisure. Prior to formal public consultation, it was also shared with ward Councillors, the Leader of the Council and the Lead member for Leisure.

2.6 Formal public consultation on the management plan took place between 24th November 2020 and 4th January 2021. The consultation was publicised across social media and on the website, along with being sent to Steering Group members and local Councillors and advertised at the park itself.

2.7 A total of 15 people responded to the survey and were in favour of the proposals and the objectives within the Management Plan.

The Horses' Field Grazing Project

2.8 In February 2020, the Council undertook public consultation on introducing cattle grazing to The Horses' Field. This received positive feedback and as such the next stage was to consult on the 2 fencing options for the site.

2.9 The proposal is for there to be approximately 20 cattle grazing at The Horses' Field between June and September each year. However, the exact timing and duration will depend on weather conditions and how much grass there is for the cattle to eat during the season.

2.10 There are two appendices to view as part of this project:

- Appendix H: Cattle Grazing Proposal
- Appendix I: Fencing Option 1
- Appendix J: Fencing Option 2

2.11 The two options consulted on are as follows:

- **Option 1:** this would mean a fence line inset by approximately 10 metres from the Furtherfield entrance along the southern field boundary to the Langley Lane play area. Around the remainder of the field the fence would follow the field boundary. As cattle would be excluded from the southern edge of the site, users could walk this part without encountering cattle. Kissing gates on well-used routes would still allow pedestrian access across the field. The benefits of grazing, such as an increase in pollinator friendly flora would be slightly reduced.
- **Option 2:** this would involve a fence line inset approximately 10 metres around the whole boundary of The Horses' Field. This would allow users to walk a circuit of the field without encountering cattle. Kissing gates would be retained as in option 1 and the benefits of grazing would be further reduced.

2.12 The results of the public consultation were split, with 4 in favour of option 1, 4 in favour of option 2 and 5 with no preference.

2.13 Officers would recommend option 2 to allow people to access the entire site all year round, without encountering cattle.

Sustainability of the Project

2.14 Funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund will come to an end in October 2021. It is important to ensure the legacy of the park continues. The 10 Year capital programme details how the park can continue to develop physically, subject to funding.

- 2.15 With the project coming to an end, this also means the contract for the Leavesden Country Park, Park Ranger will also end. Activities within the park, with a focus on art and physical activity will continue and will form part of the Leisure Development work programme. However, nature and wildlife activities will not be delivered. Trees and Landscapes have a staff vacancy in the Senior Park Ranger role and Officers will be reviewing this post to identify how it could be used to continue the work at Leavesden Country Park but also elsewhere in the district, using Leavesden HIVE as a base.
- 2.16 Leavesden HIVE will be managed by Properties, including all maintenance of the building. Leisure will oversee hiring the building, with a clear criteria to ensure heritage and wildlife remain a key feature of the building and this will form part of the hire of grounds process.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To recommend formally adopting the new Leavesden Country Park 10 Year Management Plan.
- 3.2 To recommend proceeding with option 2 of the fencing options for the grazing project at The Horses' Field.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.
- 4.2 The proposed recommendation will impact on the following key performance indicators:
- CP02 – Satisfaction with Parks and Open Spaces
 - C022 – Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities
 - LL34 - To maintain accreditation for Green Flag
 - LL31 – Number of attendances by adults at leisure venues and activities
 - LL33 – Number of attendances by young people at leisure venues and activities
- 4.3 The proposed recommendation will impact on the following service performance indicators:
- LL35 – To ensure all our key open spaces have a current management plan in place
 - CP24 – Number of adults achieving 30 minutes of physical activity per week
- 4.4 The impact of the recommendations on this/these performance indicator(s) is:
1. To support the Council in achieving these performance indicators by providing clean, safe and well maintained parks and open spaces for people to use and enjoy for a variety of reasons: heritage, recreational, health and wellbeing, environmental etc.
 2. In order to achieve Green Flag status, the site must have a clear and up to date management plan.

3. A range of projects and activities to encourage people to use the park will be delivered and are included within the management plan details

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The management and maintenance of Leavesden Country Park will be covered under existing budgets within Environmental Protection.
- 5.2 Subject to final adoption and agreement of the management plan by the Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), a further maintenance amount (circa £24,000) will be received by the Council from the NLHF at the end of the project for ongoing maintenance costs.
- 5.3 Funding will need to identified for the projects outlined in the 10 Year Capital Plan and this will be achieved through seeking external funding sources, the Council's capital bid process as well as potential funds from planning contributions.
- 5.4 The fencing for the cattle grazing project will be funded from S106 monies: 0155 – Ecology – Abbotswood Park and will cost approximately £40,000.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 The adoption of a 10 Year Management Plan for Leavesden Country Park is a requirement of the National Lottery Heritage Fund project.
- 6.2 Any capital works agreed, along with the fencing at The Horses' Field will be tendered within the Council's constitution and procurement procedures.

7 Equal Opportunities Implications

- 7.1 Relevance Test

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact? See Appendix K	Yes
Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required? The management plan includes options for enhancing accessibility across the park along with an activity plan aimed to encourage usage from key groups.	No

8 Staffing Implications

- 8.1 The maintenance of Leavesden Country Park will be managed and overseen by Environmental Protection.
- 8.2 The management of Leavesden HIVE is included within the Council's property portfolio and will be managed by Properties.
- 8.3 The cattle grazing project will be overseen by the Leisure Contracts and Landscapes Project Officer in partnership with the Countryside Management Service.

9 Environmental Implications

- 9.1 The new management plan focuses on enhancing the biodiversity of the site with a key objective of “creating biodiverse and sustainable environments”. The overall aim is that Leavesden Country Park will conserve and enhance wildlife, landscape and heritage features and all aspects of site management are undertaken with sustainability as a guiding principle.”
- 9.2 Conservation grazing enhances overall biodiversity, supports wildflowers and creates a mosaic of habitats ideal for native wildlife, with difference structures of grasses and flowering plants that cannot develop with an annual cut and lift. The cow pats left behind from cattle are also important to meadow ecology, as a number of invertebrates and fungi (many of which are now very rare) need dung as part of their specialist lifestyles. Cattle grazing on The Horses’ Field will manage the meadow in a gradual, low intensity way, causing much less damage to wildlife and making it a more favourable option than cutting. In addition to the wildlife benefits, the introduction of grazing animals has been a popular addition to other local green spaces, with the cattle becoming an attraction in their own right. In the long term, grazing should also reduce the cost of managing the grassland.
- 9.3 This will support the Council’s Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.

10 Community Safety Implications

- 10.1 The management plan aims to provide welcoming facilities and have a friendly park community. This will be achieved through a range of objectives outlined within the management plan.

11 Public Health implications

- 11.1 Accessible, well maintained parks and open spaces have never been more vital to the health and wellbeing of individuals than during the COVID 19 Pandemic. During a recent survey of people using Leavesden Country Park, over 80% said that being able to use the park was either very important or important to their health and wellbeing and 98% of people said using the park enhanced their quality of life.

Ensuring that the Council has a clear and effective management plan in place for the park over the next 10 years, will continue to ensure that this is a space that can be used by all of the local community for their own physical and mental wellbeing.

12 Customer Services Centre Implications

- 12.1 None

13 Communications and Website Implications

- 13.1 All information relating to Leavesden Country Park is available on the Three Rivers District Council’s Leisure website: www.threeriversleisure.co.uk this includes information on facilities at the park, maps and videos showcasing what is on offer.
- 13.2 The local community will be informed when works to install the cattle fencing will take place. Appropriate signage and interpretation will also be installed to inform visitors of the cattle grazing, along with the environmental benefits.

14 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 14.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the

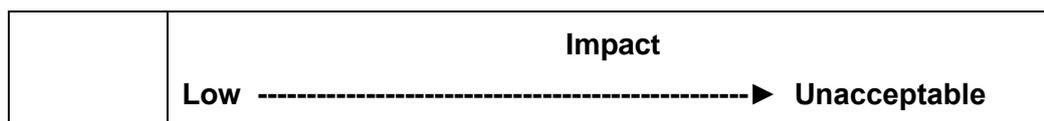
report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

- 14.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Environmental Protection Service Plan and Leisure and Landscapes Service Plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
Dogs and Cattle	Animals could be injured as a result of cattle grazing on site	Fencing option 2 allows people with dogs to walk the entire site without encountering cattle. Signage displayed at the entrances to remind people to keep dogs under control whilst walking through the cattle site.	Tolerate	4

- 14.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely Remote ↓ Likelihood	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4



Impact Score	Likelihood Score
4 (Catastrophic)	4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
3 (Critical)	3 (Likely (21-79%))
2 (Significant)	2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
1 (Marginal)	1 (Remote (≤5%))

14.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

15 Recommendation

- 15.1 That the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee agree to the adoption of the Leavesden Country Park 10 Year Management Plan (2021-2031).
- 15.2 That the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee agree to the installation of cattle grazing fencing as outlined in option 2.

Report prepared by: Charlotte Gomes, Landscapes and Leisure Development Manager

Data Quality

Data sources:

All relevant data included within the management plan: survey results, environmental information, maintenance details, finances and projected capital costs.

Data checked by: Angela Borges, Tree and Landscape Officer
 Jo Copley, Abbots Langley Leisure Projects Officer
 Lisa Cook, Project Development Officer
 Howard Ringland, Grounds Maintenance Manager
 Ross Petefer, Building Surveyor
 Gary Cook, Property and Facilities Estate Surveyor

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	✓
3	High	

Background Papers

None

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Leavesden Country Park 10 Year Management Plan
- Appendix B – Site Description Management and Maintenance Plan Maps
- Appendix C – 10 Year Capital Programme
- Appendix D – Wider Context Policies and Strategies
- Appendix E – Licences and Tenants within Leavesden Country Park
- Appendix F – Building Maintenance and Risk Assessment
- Appendix G – Essential Reading
- Appendix H: Cattle Grazing Proposal
- Appendix I: Fencing Option 1
- Appendix J: Fencing Option 2
- Appendix K: Relevance Test