

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	1077197
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1. **TITLE:** Business Case For The Creation of a Country Park at Horseshoe Lake

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Place, Planning & Regeneration

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To approve the implementation of the new strategy for the parks and countryside service and to agree the Procurement Plans.

4. **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

- i. the implementation of enhancements at Horseshoe Lake, Sandhurst to create a country park is agreed.
- ii. the capital funding of £2.6m for Horseshoe Lake Country Park is agreed.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

1. The Parks and Countryside review forms part of the Council's Transformation Programme and over the last nine months it has been exploring ways in which the savings target of £400,000 could be achieved whilst transforming the way in which the service is delivered. The outcome of the Gateway review demonstrated that a saving in the region of £476,000 could be delivered over 3 years and a Country Park was included as a potential £85,000 per annum.
2. This proposal for a new country park is aligned with the strategic direction agreed at both the Analyse and Plan Phase Gateways Reviews. This focuses on enhancing and maintaining existing services and exploring income generation as an alternative to making savings through cuts to the funding of popular open spaces.
3. Bracknell Forest is well recognised by residents for both the quantity and quality of open space that is provided, but currently has no country park. Investment in open spaces to improve opportunities for residents to access and enjoy nature is entirely consistent with the boroughs approach to ensure the borough is a desirable place to live and work, with opportunities to learn and be active for independent and healthy lives.
4. The Plan Phase Gateway review held on 21st March 2018 saw councillors support the direction of travel to enhance and maintain the service and to move ahead with the five recommendations presented to them, including the recommendation for the investigation

of a Country Park.

5. In May 2018 the Executive supported the recommendation for planning the development of Horseshoe Lake as a Country Park using a modular approach following further feasibility work.
6. As part of the feasibility work there were steps required to refine and verify the recommended proposal;
 - Design and validation of investment and income projections at the start of the do phase.
 - Ring fencing of capital receipt from the sale of two service properties.
 - Decision on the use of S106 funds.
 - A viable invest to save application.
 - Negotiation and agreement of lease renewal for water sports provider, including their capital investment and profit sharing terms.
 - Planning application approval.
 - Natural England assessment and support for the proposal.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

1. Continue current operation and make no BFC investment - Venue currently runs at a loss of c. £26k per annum. This option is not feasible in the current economic climate as the potential of this lakeside location should exceed a cost neutral position.
2. Renegotiate with current leaseholder with the aim of achieving a minimum cost neutral position with option for a profit-sharing model upon good performance. The current leaseholder produced a business case that saw a 5 year plan to eventually share profit with BFC to the amount of £10,000. This was based on significant new services being added on the site. The net result of a third party introducing new services would risk losing SANG status unless it is very carefully designed and controlled to maintain a natural theme. This option is positive in offsetting the costs of providing the site but at the expense of retaining less control of an important resource which is already mitigating new housing and generating income of £200K per hectare through the planning process. There would be almost the same or greater BFC staff input required to ensure a third party scheme complied with planning regulations and protected SANG status as there would be for delivering BFCs own scheme. The option has not been pursued as it misses the opportunity for a separate long term income to be received direct to the council and protects the councils strategic interest in a SANG.
3. Find an alternative site within the borough to develop as a Country Park. All the available sites have been reviewed and considered for income generating potential. There were no other sites where a water based country park could be located and no other sites which could otherwise offer greater advantage than Horseshoe Lake.
4. Capital cost elements proposed include using £599k of capital receipt from the sale of

two properties as well as £120k from S106 built sports and open space S106 contributions. Having assessed the viability of the project if invest to save was the only source of capital the project would become unviable and capital repayments would be too high against income projections.

9. **PRINCIPAL GROUPS CONSULTED:** None.

10. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the Director: Place, Planning & Regeneration

11. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
12 February 2019	19 February 2019