

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CULTURE, CORPORATE SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION
28 FEBRUARY 2017

Biodiversity Enhancement Project across Bracknell Forest Borough

Director of Environment, Culture & Communities

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for the allocation of S106 funding (£34,530) to support biodiversity enhancements at BFC managed sites (parks, open spaces and Roadside Nature Reserves) across the borough.
- 1.2 To confirm which financial contributions secured from developers under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will be applied to the project. (ANNEX 1).
- 1.3 To confirm that the improvements will be implemented by Bracknell Forest Council, Parks and Countryside service, if approved.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That £34,530 of S106 contributions (as summarised in ANNEX 1) are allocated to fund works to enhance biodiversity value at BFC sites.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Provision of and access to public open space is recognised as being a key contributor to well-being and quality of life. This includes being central to:
 - Character of the built environment
 - Social functions; especially health, recreation and play, social inclusion, and community development
 - Environmental quality
 - Economic vitality
 - Sustainability
- 3.2 The proposed biodiversity project supports specific Strategic Themes identified in The Council Plan 2015 – 2019 including providing ‘A clean, green, growing and sustainable place.’
- 3.3 Key measures of success are identified for each strategic theme and the proposed enhancement of the quality and capacity of a parks and open spaces site will act directly to ensure:
 - Resident satisfaction levels with parks and open spaces is maintained
 - Development plans provide sufficient open space
- 3.4 The council has adopted a Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2012) and the Biodiversity project is in accordance with delivering the key objectives:

Provision:

- Protect and establish public open space for recreation, play, sport, health, **biodiversity**, heritage and climate change adaption that is appropriate to need; strategically located; and adaptable to future requirements

Maintenance:

- Provide safe and welcoming public open space; attain and improve quality standards

Use and Enjoyment:

- Make sure public open space supports well-being; encourages participation; and facilitates social inclusion

Core priorities over the next 5 years include:

1. Monitor and assess quality standards across parks and open spaces. Manage sites to a high standard; carry out improvement works to sustain and improve quality in line with the Bracknell Forest Council 'Plus One Principle' and relevant national guidance.

2. Enhance the natural qualities of parks and open spaces. Protect and **enhance biodiversity**. Positively manage trees and woodlands, to include new planting to provide for future generations.

3. Identify opportunities to increase the positive role that parks and open spaces can contribute to climate change mitigation (e.g. tree planting as part of carbon sequestration)....”

- 3.5 The council has adopted a Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Action Plan (2012-2017) (BAP) and the Biodiversity project is in accordance with delivering on the key priorities:
- Grassland Habitat - Di) Enhance or restore 25ha of grassland including BAP species.
 - Woodland Habitat - C iii) Enhance or restore 10ha of woodland habitats including BAP species
 - Woodland Habitat - H ii) Install 30 bat boxes at sites with limited deadwood
 - Wetland Habitat - D i) Create 5 new ponds
 - Wetland Habitat - E i) Restore 5 ponds
 - Wetland Habitat - G i) Restore or enhance 2km of river habitat for BAP species
 - Urban Habitat Ai) Plant or replace at least 50 large native urban trees
 - Heathland Habitat - C i) Create 57ha of new heathland
- 3.6 Local Transport Plan 3: Local Objectives 5. Protect and enhance the quantity and quality of natural resources including water, air quality and the natural environment. Supporting LTP3 Policy: TP2, TP3, TP4, TP7, TP8, TP9, TP10, TP12, TP20.
- 3.7 The Capital Programme for 2016/17 approved £125,000 of s106 monies towards Leisure and Culture small schemes.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Not carrying out a project in these areas could lead to funds being returned to the developers.
- 4.2 Not enhancing biodiversity in the borough could lead to a failure to meet the following:

- Maintaining resident satisfaction levels with parks and open spaces and providing sufficient open space as part of development plans. (Key measures of success in the Council Plan).
 - Monitoring and enhancing quality standards at sites, protecting and enhancing biodiversity and contributing to climate change mitigation. (Key objectives / core priorities in the Bracknell Forest Parks and Open Spaces Strategy).
 - Delivering key priorities in the Bracknell Forest BAP.
 - 'Protect and enhance the quantity and quality of natural resources including water, air quality and the natural environment.' (Objective 5. Of the Local Transport Plan 3).
- 4.3 Not funding large scale improvements to the Borough's biodiversity through s106 funding would transfer a financial pressure to the boroughs own capital and revenue funding streams.
- 4.4 The s106 funding will help mitigate the impact of development and will be used in the 'carrying out or assisting in the carrying out of nature/landscaping conservation projects'. All sites identified for biodiversity enhancements are within distance constraints as set out in the s106 agreement for the developments.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 Bracknell Forest Council directly manages publicly accessible land providing for outdoor recreation, biodiversity and landscape amenity. This includes urban parks, sports pitches, grassland, woodland, wetland and heathland (totalling approximately 320 hectares). The Bracknell Forest Residents Survey (2014) identifies that 91% of respondents use parks and open spaces (79% at least monthly). When asked to identify the three best things about living in the borough, the highest response was 'parks and open spaces' (42%) closely followed by '**access to nature**' (30%). Of those who gave a satisfaction rating, the service that the highest proportion of respondents were satisfied with was parks & open spaces (89%).

Nature Conservation Improvements to be carried out:

- Increased wildlife features or refuges e.g. bird and bat boxes
- Increased and enhanced wildflower grassland
- Enhanced river and stream edge habitats
- Improved and new wetland habitats
- Restored heathland habitats
- Restored and improved woodland and hedgerow habitats
- Provision of new information raising public awareness about the Borough's important biodiversity.

Wards and associated sites in which these biodiversity improvements are to be carried out

Parish	Ward	Sites for biodiversity enhancements
Binfield	Binfield with Warfield	Farley Copse
Bracknell	Old Bracknell / Hanworth	South Hill Park
	Various	Roadside Nature Reserves
Bracknell / Winkfield	Crown Wood	Farningham Ride
Crowthorne	Crowthorne	Caesar's Camp
Sandhurst	Central Sandhurst	Evenlode Way
Warfield	Warfield Harvest Ride	Garth Meadows Garth Pond
Winkfield	Ascot	Wentworth Way
		Englemere Pond

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

6.1 The allocation of funding proposed in this report complies with the requirements of the s106 agreements.

Borough Treasurer

6.2 The financial implications are set out in the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.3 A current EIA is in place for the parks and countryside service. An EIA has also been completed for the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. There are no negative impacts resulting from the proposed project. An EIA scoping assessment has been carried out for this project and included in Annex 2.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.4 S106 contributions will need to be refunded should they not be allocated in accordance with the respective legal agreement. Future revenue costs associated with this project will be met by the Borough Council. The project is designed in such that a way that there are no significant increases to maintenance costs and site management can still be accommodated within existing revenue budgets.

Head of Planning

6.5 The proposed use of the identified S106 contributions to fund the proposed enhancements is considered appropriate. The proposed works will help offset the impact of the new housing permitted by the applications to which the specified S106s are related on local open space/recreational facilities.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

7.1 Priorities have been identified in discussion through consultative mechanisms such as the Local Countryside Access Forum and Parish Parks and Public Realm Forum, and consultation prior to publications of the Parks & Open Spaces Strategy in 2012.

7.2 Ward Cllrs

Method of Consultation

7.3 Sent to Ward Councillors and local Parish/Town Councils

Representations Received

7.4 Clarification requests were received from two councillors covering:

what the money will be spent on specifically, how will the projects be delivered, what are the implications for ongoing maintenance and what was the methodology for site selection.

Responses were provided to clarify:

the projects will include one or more of the works listed in 5.1 on each site, but it is not possible to say exactly which elements will be most appropriate at this stage.

projects will be delivered by Parks and Countryside staff, in conjunction with the volunteer network / local interest groups and some tasks will be procured from specialist contractors, including sourcing quotes from existing borough contracts (Ringway / CLL) where appropriate.

there is no immediate budget saving or budget pressure from the works, but the enhancements are financially positive to ongoing land management in a variety of ways.

sites were selected by identifying open space land with potential to significantly benefit from biodiversity enhancements, and to meet actions defined within the BAP. This list of sites was further refined by choosing those that are closest to developments where the contributions had been received.

Background Papers:

The Bracknell Forest Parks & Open Spaces Strategy (2012)

EIA scoping assessment for project – ANNEX 2

Contact for further information

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ANNEX 1 S106 Allocation details

YN CODE	PLANNING REF	PLANNING SITE NAME	PARISH	WARD	AMOUNT AVAILABLE	AMOUNT TO BE ALLOCATED	DESCRIPTION	SPEND DEADLINE?
YN283	04/00528/FUL	Former Cranbourne Towers PH, Fernbank Rd	Winkfield	Ascot	£7,000	£2,000	"...Towards the cost of providing or improving open space provision (including the acquisition and/or improvement of land/or carrying out or assisting in the carrying out of nature/landscape conservation projects and/or recreational facilities within 3kms of the land"	No. 7 years from date of receipt of payment is 28/01/2012
YN378	08/00086/FUL	57 Church Rd, Ascot	Winkfield	Ascot	£2,000	£2,000	"...towards the cost of providing expanding or improving open space, and/or outdoor recreational facilities (which may include the acquisition and/or improvement of land and/or buildings and/or carrying out or assisting in the carrying out of nature/landscaping conservation projects) within 3 kilometres of the Site."	Yes. 14/01/2017
YN384	07/00815	Land at Swinley Edge, Coronation Rd	Winkfield	Ascot	£2,090	£2,090	As above	Yes. 02/02/2017
YN425	07/00035	The Hollies, Milestone, Burnside & Kirkfield	Bracknell	Harmans Water	£14,500	£1,000	As above	No. 16/11/2018

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		Bank, London Road						
YN430	10/00098/FUL	6 dwellings at 25-29 High St.	Crowthorne	Crowthorne	£9,620	£4,000	As above	Yes. 19/04/2019
YN451	12/00625/FUL	4 Portman Close, Bracknell	Bracknell	Priestwood and Garth	£1,000	£1,000	As above	Yes. 23/01/2020
YN459	12/00365/FUL or 13/00498/FUL	116 College Rd	Sandhurst	College Town	£6,000	£3,000	As above	Yes. 31/12/2019
YN473	12/00911/FUL	Land at Junction of Forest Rd & Foxley Lane.	Binfield	Binfield with Warfield	£8,300	£2,000	As above	Yes. 23/09/2020 and 23/06/2021
YN479	13/00831/FUL	Manor Farm	Warfield	Warfield Harvest Ride	£27,806	£5,000	As above	Yes. 17/03/2021
YN504	12/00010/FUL	Aldi Stores, 136 Liscombe	Bracknell	Hanworth	£20,145	£4,145	As above	Yes. 06/11/2021
YN534	12/00492/EXT	Land adj Birch Hill Medical Centre	Bracknell	Hanworth	£9,622	£5,295	As above	Yes 18/10/2023
YN543	14/00858/FUL	Land then known as Popeswood Garage & Hillcrest, London Road	Binfield	Binfield with Warfield	£20,189	£3,000	As above	Yes. 24/12/2022
				Totals:	£128,272	£34,530		

ANNEX 2 - Equality Impact Assessment Scoping**Initial Equalities Screening Record Form**

Date of Screening: 18/11/2016	Directorate: Environment, Culture and Communities	Section: Parks and Countryside	
1. Activity to be assessed	Biodiversity enhancement works across the borough which includes, new wildlife features (e.g. bat & bird boxes), wildlife habitat enhancements and new interpretation provision.		
2. What is the activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change		
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing		
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Marlies Boydell		
5. Who are the members of the screening team?	Marlies Boydell and Rose Wicks		
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	<p>The aim is to carry out enhancements to biodiversity at key sites across the borough using s106 developer contributions, in accordance with Planning Obligations SPD (section 5.11) and the BFC Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2012.</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased wildlife features or refuges e.g. bird and bat boxes • Increased and enhanced wildflower grassland • Enhanced river and stream edge habitats • Improved and new wetland habitats • Restored heathland habitats • Restored and improved woodland and hedgerow habitats • Provision of new information raising public awareness about the Borough's biodiversity. 		
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	Access to nature has been proven to promote health and well being, therefore everyone in the borough should benefit. There will be more specific benefits to park users, including local residents, community groups, volunteers, etc.		
Protected Characteristics	Please tick yes or no	Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	What evidence do you have to support this? E.g. equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your

			conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data
8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities including conditions such as dementia.	Y ✓	N	Positive Improved health and well being through enhancements that create more attractive environments that appeal to a wider cross section of the community.
9. Racial equality	Y ✓	N	The interpretation will be provided in plain English, however people whose first language isn't English may struggle to read the information provided.
10. Gender equality	Y	N ✓	
11. Sexual orientation equality	Y	N ✓	
12. Gender re-assignment	Y	N ✓	
13. Age equality	Y ✓	N	
14. Religion and belief equality	Y	N ✓	
15. Pregnancy and maternity equality	Y	N ✓	
16. Marriage and civil partnership equality	Y	N ✓	

<p>17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.</p>	<p>These are publically accessible spaces that are accessible 24/7. Access to nature has been proven to promote health and wellbeing.</p>		
<p>18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?</p>	<p>No, it cannot be justified; however, we have proposed action (under point 23.) to address the potential negative impact identified (under point 9).</p>		
<p>19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?</p>	<p>No</p>		
<p>20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>N ✓</p>	
<p>21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?</p>	<p>Further information is not required as we're already planning to signpost people via the new interpretation to our website, where other languages are available.</p>		
<p>22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>N ✓</p>	
<p>23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.</p>			
<p>Action</p>	<p>Time scale</p>	<p>Person Responsible</p>	<p>Milestone/Success Criteria</p>

Unrestricted

<p>Explore the use of QR codes to signpost people to the Parks and Countryside pages on the BFC website, where different language translations are available.</p>	<p>March 2018</p>	<p>Marlies Boydell and Rose Wicks</p>	<p>Interpretation supplied on site, containing links to the website.</p>
<p>Install the interpretation at an appropriate height so that it is accessible to all.</p>	<p>March 2018</p>	<p>Marlies Boydell and Rose Wicks</p>	<p>Interpretation supplied on site, that can be accessed by all.</p>
<p>24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?</p>	<p>Parks and Open Spaces Strategy - S106 quality improvement programme, based on the Plus 1 Principle.</p>		
<p>25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?</p>	<p>When carrying out site quality improvements, the following actions are undertaken to ensure that any new / improved site features are made accessible to all park users:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Follow best practice examples from guidelines from the BT Access For All Project and from organisations such as Fields in Trust (registered charity that protects vital open spaces all across the UK). 2. Provide appropriate specifications to contractors, which include the need to adhere to equalities best practice guidelines. 		
<p>26. Chief Officers signature.</p>	<p>Signature: Date:</p>		

When complete please send to abby.thomas@bracknell-forest.gov.uk for publication on the Council's website.