

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET - 26 FEBRUARY 2015

**DECLARATION OF THE EXTENSION TO THE LOCAL NATURE RESERVE
AT TELFORD TOWN PARK**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD & CUSTOMER
SERVICES**

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: CLLR LIZ CLARE

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for the declaration of additional areas within Telford Town Park as a Local Nature Reserve. (Appendix 1).
- 1.2. Accessible, high quality, green spaces are integral to ensuring the borough remains an attractive, vibrant and healthy place for residents, businesses and visitors alike. The importance of protecting and maintaining high quality green spaces is central to the Council's commitment to retain and nurture our 'green town' reputation.
- 1.3 The selection, declaration and management of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) is a function of local authorities. These sites play an important role in maintaining a healthy balance in spatial planning between the built environment and the green infrastructure.
- 1.4 The proposal has been developed in liaison with the Friends of Telford Town Park and the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and will involve volunteers carrying out small-scale conservation tasks as part of the management of the site.
- 1.5 The proposed area is within council ownership, falls within the Telford Town Park boundary and is considered to fulfil the requirements of becoming a formal designated LNR.
- 1.6 Subject to approval, the next stage will be to progress the designation through the formal process with Natural England prior to final declaration.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Approve the declaration of the areas identified in Appendix 1 to this report within Telford Town Park as a Local Nature Reserve. (The existing LNR Byelaws will not be applicable to the extension areas).**
- 2.2 Delegate authority to complete the declaration process to the Assistant Director: Planning Specialist, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Leisure and Culture and Housing, Development & Borough Towns.**

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	Ensure our neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained. Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities.
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	No	Benefits all park users
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	Feb 14 – Informal consultation with Natural England – complete September 14 - Formal Consultation with Natural England complete February 2015 - Cabinet April 2015–Legal Declaration of Local Nature Reserve	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT		The designation of the land (as detailed in Appendix 1) as a Local Nature Reserve requires the Council to manage and maintain the land in accordance with a management plan. In order to avoid a financial pressure as a result of the designation, the Council will continue to maintain the site at its current level. The site Management Committee will be responsible for securing third party funding for any additional works or site improvements, over and above the current maintenance regime. Should additional funding not be identified, the requirements under the site management plan will be amended accordingly.

		<p>The land to be designated is in the ownership of the Council and the designation will offer protection from future development or inappropriate use. This may have an impact on future strategic options for asset use or disposal.</p> <p>PT 29.1.15</p>
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<p>The Council has power under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to declare that land which it owns is to be managed as a nature reserve and the declaration stands as conclusive evidence that the land is being managed as such. There is a procedure that needs to be followed regarding the declaration and Legal Services will assist the Assistant Director: Planning Specialist as required regarding the process.</p>
EQUALITY & DIVERSITY	No	
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	<p>The proposal is located adjacent to the Nedge, Brookside and Dawley Magna wards ward and will benefit the wider communities within Telford</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	No	<p>Declaring this area as a Local Nature Reserve will further enhance the natural environment.</p>

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

- 4.1. This report sets out a proposal to declare additional areas within Telford Town Park as a Local Nature Reserve. This is in accordance with the provisions of Sections 19 and 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- 4.2. Declaration of the land as a LNR requires the Telford & Wrekin Council to manage the land as a nature reserve and to protect it from inappropriate uses or development.

- 4.3. The site has nature conservation value and a high level of community interest and involvement including the Friends of Telford Town Park (FOTTP), Telford Green Gym, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Telford Town Park Junior Rangers and the Green Brigade. Through active engagement with the community, local people are already involved in the management and protection of the site, with regular volunteer work parties and nature walks co-ordinated by Telford Town Park, FOTTP, the South Telford Rights of Way Partnership and the local Green Gym. Work is also being delivered in the local nature reserve through the Parks for People programme and in particular engaging with volunteers through the audience development plan and training plan.
- 4.4. The proposed LNR is within the Council's ownership, meets the necessary criteria for selection, has an up to date management plan, and has gained support from the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Natural England. The LNR would contribute to the quality of the Borough's natural environment and protected green spaces. The natural environment is fundamental to well-being, health and a successful economy. The landscape and green space is at the heart of the Council's vision for Telford. Green spaces and the natural environment complement and provide a structural context for homes and jobs needed by the community.
- 4.5. Due to the physical nature of the proposed new areas the Bye Laws that relate to the existing LNR are not considered to be relevant or necessary.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 5.1 All members of the community should have the opportunity to benefit from the diverse range of species and habitat present in the Borough. Research has shown that improving the provision of and access to natural green space can be valuable to a wide range of groups within the community, especially children and young people. A formal declaration provides clarity that public access is encouraged.
- 5.2 Improving the provision of and access to natural green space can be valuable to a wide range of groups within the community, especially children and young people, including opportunities for local schools to use the site as an outdoor classroom. In addition, the site is one of the few venues in the borough suitable for access by disabled anglers; a key benefit that would be retained.

- 5.3 Declaration of Local Nature Reserves is beneficial to a number of priorities associated with Environment, Transport and Community and Health & Wellbeing, in particular the protection and enhancement of the green infrastructure and biodiversity of the borough. The LNR would add to the existing interconnected network of green spaces that are protected by the Council and create the quality places enjoyed by the community. There are six established LNRs including the Town Park and 41 local wildlife sites. Natural England's standard for accessible natural green space is 1 hectare per 1,000 population and that forms the basis for a local target¹. Telford & Wrekin currently has 1.3 hectares of LNR per 1,000 population. The approval of this LNR will further improve this position.

6. PREVIOUS MINUTES

- 6.1 Cabinet report 12 February 2007 entitled 'Declaration of Local Nature Reserves'.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Local Nature Reserves in England: A Guide to their selection and declaration Natural England, 2009)
- 7.2 Local Nature Reserves: places for people and wildlife (English Nature)
- 7.3 Accessible natural greenspace in towns and cities: A review of appropriate size and distance criteria (English Nature Research Reports No. 153)

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¹Exceed Natural England's standard for accessible natural green space of 1 ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population (1.3ha 2010/11, 1.4ha 2011/12, 1.5 ha 2012/13)