

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**

**CABINET 15/11/2018**

**DECLARATION OF LIGHTMOOR LOCAL NATURE RESERVE.**

**REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: BUSINESS, DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT**

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR J MINOR**

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**PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT**

**1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 The Council places great importance on the protection of, and the provision of access to, the natural environment. The Council has made a commitment to identify, retain and protect locally important green spaces valued by the local community for both the wildlife they support and the opportunities they provide for leisure, recreation and the positive impacts they bring to health and wellbeing.
- 1.2 The protection of the natural environment is delivered through a hierarchy of statutory and non-statutory site designations and a series of planning policies set out in the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan.
- 1.3 Telford and Wrekin's designated site network currently includes;
  - 8 Sites of Special Scientific Interest
  - 47 Local Wildlife Sites
  - 9 designated Local Nature Reserves
  - 4 adopted Local Nature Reserves
  - 4 proposed Local Nature Reserves
  - 200 Green Guarantee Sites
  - 52 Ancient Woodland Sites, and
  - 25 Local Geological Sites
- 1.4 The adoption of Lightmoor Local Nature Reserve will add to the thirteen reserves already adopted by Cabinet, increasing the coverage of adopted LNR's by 24.4 hectares to 477.4 hectares.
- 1.5 This report sets out proposals for cabinet to approve the declaration of Lightmoor Local Nature Reserve under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- 1.6 Lightmoor proposed Local Nature Reserve is situated in the south-west of Telford, approximately three miles from Telford Town Centre, and just under two miles north of the Ironbridge Gorge. The site supports a network of wooded pitmounds, ponds, pockets of unimproved species

rich grassland and a network of hedgerows. This mosaic of habitats supports a valuable and diverse assemblage of wildlife including woodland birds, amphibians, reptiles and bats.

1.7 The site has high nature conservation value and a high level of community interest and involvement. Lightmoor is owned by Telford and Wrekin Council and managed by Shropshire Wildlife Trust under a 25 year management agreement. An area of wet meadow is leased to the Lightmoor New Community who hold a 999 year lease. Members of The Lightmoor Steering Group and wider partners have played a key role in developing the designation proposal.

1.8 Maps showing the proposed LNR are presented in Appendices 1 and 2.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that cabinet:

2.1 Approves, in principle, the declaration of Lightmoor Local Nature Reserve; and

2.2 Delegates authority to complete the declaration process to the Assistant Director: Business, Development & Employment.

**3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

<b>COMMUNITY IMPACT</b>	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-operative Council priorities?	
	Yes	The designation of the LNR contributes to several priorities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained</li> <li>improving the health and wellbeing of our communities and</li> <li>addressing health inequalities</li> </ul>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	The proposed LNR is a beneficial resource to people who live and visit the area.
<b>TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE</b>	Adoption at Cabinet - November 2018	

<b>FINANCIAL/ VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT</b>	Yes	<p>A 25 year management agreement has been in place with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. Through this agreement the Council provides £24,450 per year to the Shropshire Wildlife Trust to deliver the management and maintenance of the site, funded from s106 contributions.</p> <p>Legal and due diligence surveys (prior to the legal designation) will be funded from within the Strategic Planning Team budget. The surveys are estimated to be in the region of £4,000.</p> <p>The Council, in partnership with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, will continue to manage and maintain the site at its current levels. If proportionate steps are required as a result of the risk assessment (referred to in 9.2), the current Lightmoor Wildlife Park s106 funding will be utilised to cover those costs.</p> <p>(AEM 18/10/18)</p>
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>	Yes	<p>The Council has power under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to establish nature reserves by way of a declaration. The declaration will stand as conclusive evidence that the land is an LNR and will be managed as such. The declaration of LNR status would place a general duty on public bodies, including the Council, when exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, the area of outstanding natural beauty, to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of that area. There is a making and publication procedure that needs to be followed regarding the declaration which includes prior consultation with Natural England. Legal Services will assist the Assistant Director: Business, Development &amp; Employment as required regarding the process.</p> <p>(Other legal points are set out elsewhere in this report)</p> <p>(IR 15/10/18)</p>
<b>OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	Yes	<p>An area of proposed LNR is leased to 'The Lightmoor New Community' (identified in Appendix 3) a Nature Reserve Agreement between the Council, the Lightmoor New</p>

		Community and Shropshire Wildlife Trust will need to be composed.
<b>IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS</b>	Yes	Lightmoor is in Horsehay and Lightmoor Ward. However, the designation of the area as an LNR will deliver borough wide benefits.

## **PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **4. INFORMATION**

- 4.1 This report sets out a proposal for the Council to agree to declare the statutory Local Nature Reserve known as 'Lightmoor Local Nature Reserve'. This is in accordance with the provisions of Sections 19 and 21 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- 4.2 Local Nature Reserves provide opportunities for volunteering in the natural environment which increases physical activity, social interaction, encourages life long learning of new skills and allows individuals to give back to their local community which lead to increases in physical and mental wellbeing.
- 4.3 The proposed LNR is within the Council's ownership with management and maintenance provided by Shropshire Wildlife Trust, delivered through a 25 year management agreement. An area of floodplain meadow is leased to the Lightmoor New Community on a 999 year lease.
- 4.3 The site meets the necessary criteria for declaration and has a draft management plan. The proposals have been developed by the 'Lightmoor LNR Steering Group' in liaison with the local community and will involve partnership working between Telford and Wrekin Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, local Parish councils, friends' groups and volunteers carrying out small scale conservation tasks as part of the management of the site.
- 4.4 Informal engagement with Natural England has been undertaken. As part of the declaration process, and following Cabinet adoption, a consultation document will be issued to Natural England to seek their formal 'Welcome' prior to completion of the declaration and the associated legal seal.

### **5. STRATEGIC PLANNING**

- 5.1 Following declaration the land shown in Appendices 1 and 2 will be managed as a Local Nature Reserve and will be protected from inappropriate uses or development.
- 5.2 The selection and declaration of Local Nature Reserves play an important role in maintaining a healthy balance in spatial planning between the built environment and green infrastructure. The Telford &

Wrekin Local Plan Policies Map shows the site as a ‘Proposed Local Nature Reserve’ (pLNR). A full list of adopted and proposed Local Nature Reserves is provided in Table 1. The Local Plan commits to completing the declaration of proposed Local Nature Reserves during the life time of the Local Plan - 2031.

**Table 1: Local Nature Reserves in Telford**

<b>Declared Local Nature Reserves</b>
Dothill
Limekiln Wood
Lodge Field
Madebrook and Stirchley Dingle
Madeley Pit Mounds
Telford Town Park
The Beeches
The Ercall and St Lawrence’s Hill
The Granville
<b>Adopted Local Nature Reserves in the declaration process</b>
Apley Woods
Ketley Paddock Mound
Randlay Valley
Rough Park
<b>Proposed LNRs</b>
Lightmoor
Dawley Pools and Pit Mounds
The Cockshutt
Lillishall Hill

## **6. ACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACE STANDARDS (ANGST)**

6.1 In 2010 Natural England, the countries statutory nature conservation authority, published ‘Nature Nearby’ setting out the recommended standards for Accessible Natural Greenspace:

*“Everyone, wherever they live, should have accessible natural greenspace:*

- *Of at least 2 ha in size, no more than 300 metres from home;*
- *At least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km of home; and*
- *One accessible 500 ha site within 10km of home; plus*
- *A minimum of one hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 population”*

6.2 At the time of Telford’s inception it was intended that every 1000 of the population would have access to four hectares of green space (similar to the then current green space standard of the Greater London Plan of 7 acres per 1000 population). This standard was achieved by the 1980s.

6.3 In 2016 the Marches Ecosystem Assessment modelled accessible greenspace across Telford and Wrekin, Shropshire and Herefordshire. The analysis revealed that 89% of households within Telford and Wrekin are within 300m of accessible natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size.

- 6.4 The borough of Telford and Wrekin has an estimated population of 170,200 people (Understanding Telford and Wrekin 2017). The adoption of Lightmoor Local Nature Reserve will increase the spatial coverage of adopted LNR's in the borough by 24.4 hectares to 477.4 hectares. The declaration of these adopted Local Nature Reserves will result in approximately 2.8ha of LNR per 1000 of the population, nearly triple the minimum recommended standard.

## **7. HEALTH AND MENTAL WELLBEING**

- 7.1 During the 2011 Census, 80.2% of the population of Telford and Wrekin reported that they had 'good' or 'very good' health. However, the census also highlighted that 15,938 adults aged 16-64 within the borough were living with a long-term health problem or disability that limited their daily activities. Furthermore, it is estimated that 17,400 adults aged between 16-64 within the borough have a common mental health disorder<sup>1</sup>.
- 7.2 Health inequalities within communities are increasingly being linked to individuals' access to nature. The evidence base illustrating how access to nature is vital for good mental and physical health highlights the need for increased efforts to provide accessible and well-maintained natural areas for particularly disadvantaged groups<sup>2</sup>. It has been shown that living close to accessible green spaces can promote public health and reduce levels of obesity, heart disease, reduce stress and levels of depression.
- 7.3 The designation of additional LNRs further reflects the Council's commitment to promoting health and wellbeing. Urban green space interventions are most effective when a physical improvement to the green space is coupled with a social engagement/participation element that promotes the green space and reaches out to new target groups ("dual approach")<sup>3</sup>. The proposed designations will provide a framework to increase engagement with internal partners such as 'My Options' and 'Healthy Telford' and external partners including: The Telford Green Space Partnership, The Shropshire Wildlife Trusts 'Live Well/Work Well With Nature' project and the recent Small Woods Association social enterprise funded by Telford 50 Legacy Funding.

## **8. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- 8.1 Consultation with relevant stakeholders has taken place and the declaration of the site as an LNR has received support.
- 8.2 The proposed boundary has been subject to internal officer consultation and external stakeholder engagement. The following should be noted:

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<sup>1</sup> Understanding Telford and Wrekin 2017: A demographic, health and socio-economic profile of our communities

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4628/understanding\\_telford\\_and\\_wrekin\\_2017](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4628/understanding_telford_and_wrekin_2017)

<sup>2</sup> Institute for European Environmental Policy (2017) Nature For Health and Equity

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organisation (2017) Urban Green Space Interventions and Health: A review of impacts and effectiveness.

- Due to the presence of mining legacy features including mineshafts a geotechnical risk assessment will need to be undertaken. Following which proportionate steps will be taken to make the land safe e.g. by fencing, installing appropriate signs informing visitors of any risks and performing risk assessments.
- Land to the north east of the proposed LNR is within the ownership of the Council and leased under a 999 year agreement to the Lightmoor New Community.

## **9. NEXT STEPS**

- 9.1 In the case that Cabinet approves the principle of declaration of the proposed Local Nature Reserve and the recommended delegation, then the required next steps include the following:
- A) A formal consultation process with Natural England will be undertaken in Winter 2018 which includes the submission of a formal consultation document and a site visit following which Natural England will write to formally 'Welcome' the site
  - B) All necessary property/title enquiries and searches being undertaken regarding land in the Council's ownership.
  - C) The Nature Reserve Agreement being entered into with the third party leasing Lightmoor meadow
  - D) The Assistant Director: Business, Development & Employment making or authorising the making of the formal declaration

## **10. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

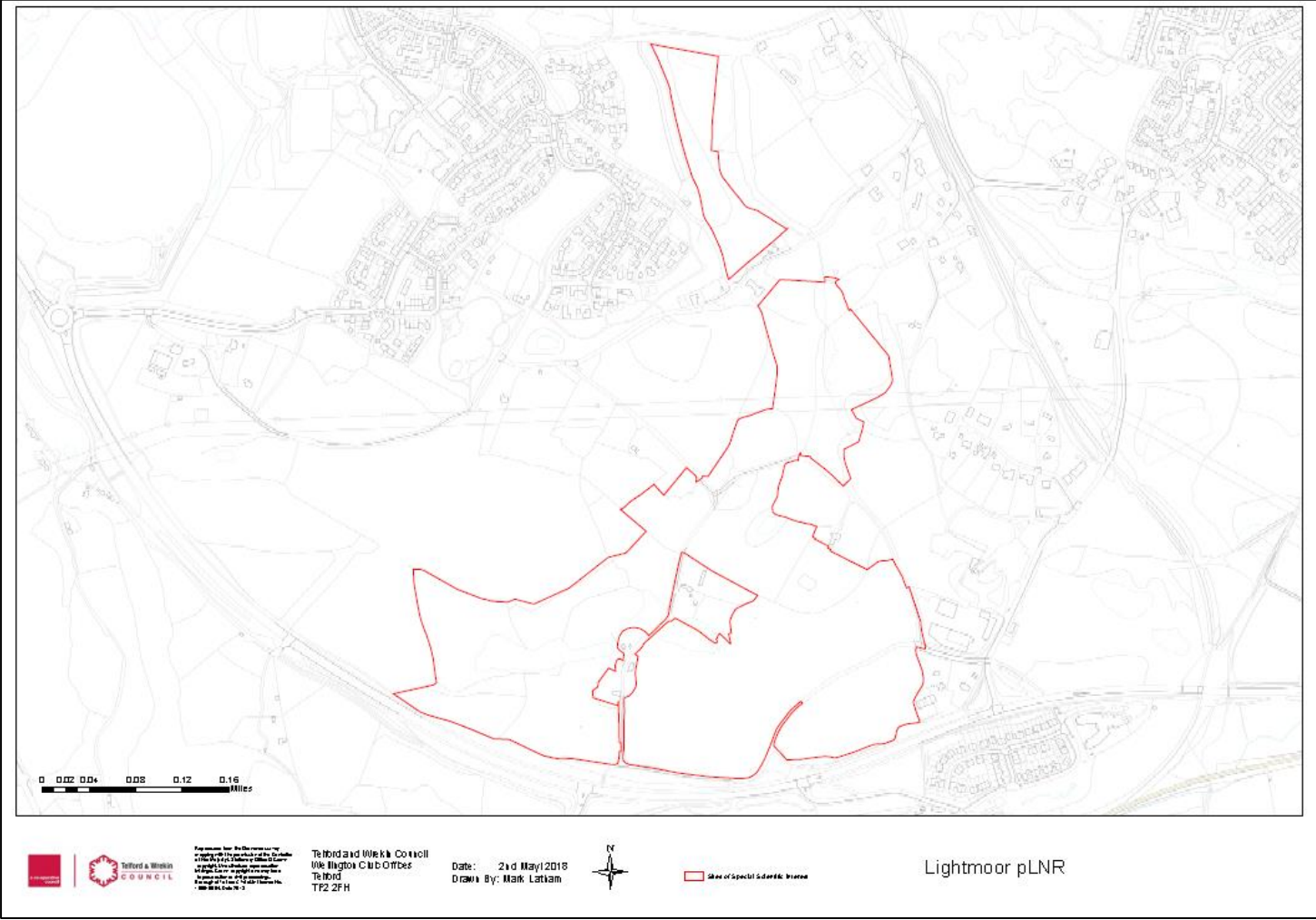
- 10.1 Cabinet 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018: Declaration of two new Local Nature Reserves: Rough Park and Randlay Valley

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Local Nature Reserves in England: A Guide to their selection and declaration Natural England, 2009
- 11.2 Local Nature Reserves: places for people and wildlife (English Nature)
- 11.3 Accessible natural green space in towns and cities: A review of appropriate size and distance criteria (English Nature Research Reports No. I53)

**Report prepared by Mark Latham, Ecology & Green Infrastructure Specialist.**

# Appendix 1: Lightmoor Proposed Local Nature Reserve Boundary



## Appendix 2: Lightmoor Proposed Local Nature Reserve: showing areas under lease

