

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**

**CABINET 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

**DECLARATION OF LILLESHALL HILL 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 This report sets out proposals for Cabinet to approve the declaration of Lilleshall Hill Local Nature Reserve following its designation in the Lilleshall Neighbourhood Plan and with the support of the Parish Council and local groups.

1.2 Our population is undergoing a rapid process of urbanisation, where and how we live is changing faster than ever before. Telford is the fastest growing town in the West Midlands with a population that is younger than average and is predicted to grow more rapidly than the rest of England. This pace of change brings challenges to ensure the places where we live, work and spend leisure time support our physical and mental wellbeing. Responding to this the Council, working with our Parish and Town Councils, friends groups and local environmental organisations have made a commitment to increase the provision of easily accessible green spaces across our borough.

1.3 **Under its Green Guarantee and LNR declaration program, the Council has identified, retained and protected over 1000ha of locally important green spaces valued by the local community** for the wildlife they support, the opportunities they provide for leisure and recreation and the positive impacts they bring to health and wellbeing.

1.4 **Telford & Wrekin's green network extends to over 2500ha and approximately 75% of the urban area is composed of green space.** The Council is committed to continuing to create a strong and resilient network of green spaces and continues to invest in the appropriate management of these sites. **In 2018 alone £52,000 of investment was committed to the borough's Green Guarantee sites and in 2019 a further £50,000 worth of investment is planned.**

1.5 Telford and Wrekin's designated site network comprises;

- 8 Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- 47 Local Wildlife Sites

- 9 designated Local Nature Reserves
- 6 cabinet approved Local Nature Reserves
- 2 proposed Local Nature Reserves
- 200 Green Guarantee Sites
- 52 Ancient Woodland Sites, and
- 25 Local Geological Sites

- 1.6 **Approving the declaration of Lilleshall Hill Local Nature Reserve will add to the fifteen reserves already approved by Cabinet, increasing the coverage of approved LNR's by 4.6ha to 519.96 hectares.**
- 1.7 Telford's green spaces are cared for by a combination of Council services and some 30 individual 'friends of' groups. This partnership of friends groups aims to provide local green spaces accessible to all, maintain and enhance biodiversity, improve social cohesion and encourage the development of social networks within local communities
- 1.8 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 and the Shropshire Wildlife Trusts 'Live Well/Work Well with Nature' project and the Small Woods Association 'Telford Woods' project that combines social prescribing and social enterprise and has been funded partially by a £80,000 investment from Telford and Wrekin Council.
- 1.9 The formation of a 'Friends of' group is underway being led by the Parish Council and supported by officers.
- 1.10 A Map showing the proposed LNR is presented in Appendix 1.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that cabinet:

- 2.1 Approves the declaration of Lilleshall Hill Local Nature Reserve; and
- 2.2 Delegates authority to complete the declaration process to the Assistant Director: Business, Development & Employment (and any officer authorised in writing by that Assistant Director).

### 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>	Agreement at Cabinet – March 2019	
<b>FINANCIAL/ VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT</b>	Yes	<p>There is no requirement for a Geotechnical risk assessment for this area as the site is not a Colliery spoil mound, therefore surveys and associated costs will not be required or incurred for this proposal.</p> <p>The Council will continue to manage and maintain the site at its current budget levels as no additional proportionate steps have been identified with this declaration.</p> <p>The Council, in partnership the Parish Council will support a 'Friends group' to become established.</p> <p>A draft Management Plan will be developed with input and consultation from Natural England. Resources from within the Councils current budgets will be provided to support the development of this plan.</p> <p>(AEM 12/02/19)</p>
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>	Yes	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 evidence that the land is a LNR and will be managed as such. LNR status is a statutory designation which reflects an owner's commitment to managing the site for conservation purposes or for a combination of

		<p>conservation and recreational purposes. 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. Declaring a site as a LNR provides opportunity for the Council to make byelaws for the protection of the reserve.</p> <p>(Other legal points are set out elsewhere in this report) (IR 11/02/19)</p>
<b>OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	Yes	<p>The provision of accessible greenspaces contributes to supporting the delivery of the Borough's public health priorities encouraging people of all ages to remain active. LNR provide opportunities for volunteering which increases physical and social interaction and encourages life long learning of new skills as well as supporting mental wellbeing.</p>
<b>IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS</b>	Yes	<p>Lilleshall Hill is within Lilleshall Parish. However, the designation of the area as an LNR will deliver borough wide benefits.</p>

## **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 'Lilleshall Hill'. 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 site meets the necessary criteria for declaration and has a draft management plan. Informal engagement with Natural England has been undertaken. As part of the declaration process, and following Cabinet approval, 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.

### **Lilleshall Hill**

- 4.4 Lilleshall Hill proposed Local Nature Reserve is situated to the north of Telford in the village of Lilleshall. The site is isolated from other LNR's in the borough and unique in its position and physical prominence in the landscape. This LNR is important because it is so physically significant within the landscape and because the site provides access to natural green space for residents within the rural area.
- 4.5 Lilleshall Hill comprises a steep limestone outcrop fringed in oak dominated woodland with areas of bramble and gorse on the lower slopes with open views over the surrounding landscape in all directions. The higher part of the hill is largely open acid grassland with some gorse present and crossed by a mosaic of footpaths and desire lines. The hill is topped by an impressive stone moment which can be seen over significant distances.
- 4.6 The site has nature conservation value by virtue of its acid grassland open areas and oak dominated woodland. The site has potential to support a range of species including breeding birds and notable invertebrates and is valuable as a significant 'island' for biodiversity within the open rural landscape.

## **5 STRATEGIC PLANNING**

- 5.1 Following declaration the land shown in Appendix 1 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 Local Nature Reserves is provided in Table 1. The Local Plan commits to completing the declaration of the proposed Local Nature Reserves during the life time of the Local Plan - 2031.

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

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  
Apley Woods  
Ketley Paddock Mound  
Randlay Valley  
Rough Park  
Lightmoor  
Dawley Pools and Pit Mounds

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**Proposed Local Nature Reserves**

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Lillishall Hill  
The Cockshutt

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- 5.3 The Telford Local Plan committed to delivering the LNR program during the plan period, by 2031. Reflecting the Council's commitment to providing accessible greenspaces the full LNR programme is set to be delivered far in advance of that target. Only one site remains, The Cockshutt. Preparatory work on site surveys and management plan is underway and the site will be brought forward for consideration by Cabinet once this is completed.

## 6 **ACCESSIBLE GREEN SPACE STANDARDS**

- 6.1 In 2010 Natural England 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. This standard was achieved by the 1980s.

- 6.3 In 2016 the Marches Ecosystem Assessment 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 176,000 people (Office of National Statistics, 2017). The Cabinet approval of Lillishall Hill Local Nature Reserve will increase the spatial coverage of Cabinet approved and formally declared LNR's in the borough by 4.6 hectares to 519.96 hectares. The declaration of all the cabinet approved Local Nature Reserves will result in approximately

2.9ha of LNR per 1000 of the population, nearly tripple 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.
- 7.2 Health inequalities are often linked to individuals' access to nature. 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 Access to high quality green space is important to health and wellbeing at all stages in life. Learning through natural play is a key part of developing imagination, physical fine motor skills and improves a child's ability to deal with stress and adversity in life. Activities in nature can have a significant impact on reducing social isolation and symptoms anxiety and depression in adults.
- 7.4 The designation of additional LNRs further reflects the Council's commitment to promoting health and wellbeing. The Council is not simply providing the spaces but working actively to ensure they are participatory. Telford's green spaces are cared for by a combination of Council services and just under 30 individual 'friends of' groups, many of which are affiliated with The Telford Green Space Partnership.

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

- 8.1 Internal and external consultation with relevant stakeholders has taken place.
- Internal consultations with Engineering Officers have confirmed that there is no need for geotechnical risk assessments on this site which is not a spoil heap and does not have mining history.
  - Internal consultations with officers including arboriculture, regeneration and investment and healthy spaces have not identified any potential issues with the declaration of this site.

## **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 spring 2019 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 Assistant Director: Business, Development & Employment making or authorising the making of the formal declaration

**10. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

- 10.1 Cabinet 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018: Declaration of Lightmoor Local Nature Reserve
- 10.2 Cabinet 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018: Declaration of two new Local Nature Reserves: Rough Park and Randlay Valley
- 10.3 Cabinet 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2019: Declaration of Dawley Pools and Pitmounds Local Nature Reserve.

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 None

**Report prepared by Fran Lancaster and Mark Latham Ecology & Green Infrastructure Specialists.**

## Appendix 1: Lilleshall Hill Proposed Local Nature Reserve Boundary



Lilleshall Hill  
pLNR

Drawn by: Fran Lancaster  
27th November 2018