

Communities, Housing & Environment Committee

6 April 2021

Declaration of Local Nature Reserves

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing & Environment Committee
Lead Head of Service	William Cornall, Director Regeneration & Place
Lead Officer and Report Author	Andrew Williams .Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	<i>Fant, Bridge, Boxley, South, Bearsted, Downswood and Otham</i>

Executive Summary

Six new Local Nature Reserves will be formally declared following the Natural England protocol namely; Fant Wildlife Area, Hayle Place Nature Reserve ,Weaving Heath , Five Acre and Wents Wood, Spot Lane Nature Area and Allington Millennium Green.

Purpose of Report

For noting

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. Note the planned work and sites that will be progressed

Timetable

Meeting	Date
CHE Committee	6 April 2021

Declaration of Local Nature Reserves

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve a Safe Clean & Green borough	William Cornall Director of Regeneration & Place
Cross Cutting Objectives	The report recommendations supports the achievement of the 'Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected' <i>cross cutting objective by encouraging and celebrating the environmental categories within the competition</i>	Andrew Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Risk Management	<i>No additional risk following recommendations</i>	William Cornall Director of Regeneration & Place
Financial	£12000 has been made available to progress this work with detailed management plans, ecological survey, maintenance plans, legal fees and signage costs. All sites can be progressed within budget.	Andrew Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing, Legal Department, Communications Team and procuring specialist advice on ecological evidence and site management plans.	Andrew Williams Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Legal	The statutory provisions of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 sections 19 and 21 provide for the declaration process. The purpose of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee is to take the lead in ensuring the Council delivers its strategic objectives with regard to parks, green spaces and biodiversity. As such it is for the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee to note the report and consider the recommendations	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	No additional privacy data will be held by the Council	Andrew Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a	Andrew

	change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Public Health	<i>Suggested :</i> We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals and access to well managed natural spaces has the potential to make a positive contribution to wellbeing & mental health.	Paul Clarke, Senior Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The recommendation will have no negative impact on crime & disorder	Andrew Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Procurement	No procurement activity following recommendation/outcome	Andrew Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 During 2019 a comprehensive evaluation of potential nature reserves was undertaken in the borough. The evaluation considered 38 sites that were suggested by Members and officers. The evaluation considered each site's natural value in species & habitats and opportunity for biodiversity, public value such as access, education and levels of community interest and existing and potential management structures and security.
- 2.2 The results of the evaluation were presented to Communities , Housing and Environment Committee meeting on the 16 December 2019 where the priority list of 8 mixed ownership sites was agreed and a further 4 Council owned sites should opportunities for management plan re-writes and revisions become available.
- 2.3 Progression with the above was conditional on securing funding. Funding of £12000 has been made available to progress a number of the priority sites. This report outlines the six areas that can be brought forward to offer the very best combination of site quality, scale , affordability and prospect of a successful outcome.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Do not progress LNR declaration : If Members decide not to progress a programme for LNR sites it means that sites which fulfil the criteria for an LNR, identified as a natural resource with wildlife or geological features of special local interest and making an important contribution to biodiversity are not formally recognised and their long term prospects are not assured.
- 3.2 Endorse workplan to declare six Local Nature Reserves : A review of the priority sites has considered land ownership, legal issues and what can be

achieved within budget. During 2021-22 we will declare the following 6 sites as Local Nature Reserves under the statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Site Name	Description	Size (Approx)	Ward
Fant Wildlife Area	Site owned by MBC & managed by Fant Wildlife Group. Strong community engagement. Ponds , wet grasslands, meadow and carr. Good reptile habitat.	4 ha	Fant
Allington Millennium Green	Community owned & manage by Allington Millennium Green Trust . Meadow, cobnut coppice and native hedges.	0.9ha	Bridge
Weaving Heath	Mix of amenity and recreational space ; small areas of relic semi-natural ancient woodland, areas of damp woodland and small stream. Good community interest.	8 ha	Boxley
Five Acre and Wents Wood	Within 60 metres of Weaving Heath ; Sweet chestnut coppice, with some hazel, elder,ash and holly. South western area on formerly ancient woodland. Good community interest.	2.3 ha	Boxley
Hayle Park (possibly to inc Dean Street*)	Diverse site of mixed habitats. Strong community involvement and voluntary management team. Opportunity to include further area of Dean Street*.	13.5 ha (+11 ha*)	South
Spot Lane Nature Area	A small area of semi-natural woodland in the Len Valley. The site is in the Greensand and Gault Biodiversity Opportunity Area. Mixed native woodland of alder, ash, sycamore and field maple, hawthorn and occasional elm. Records of water vole and white clawed crayfish in the area. Good access to site,	3.2ha	Bearsted, Downswood and Otham
	Total Area	32 ha (43ha*)	

3.3 Site maps are shown in Appendix 1

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Endorse option 2 shown at paragraph 3.2

5. RISK

5.1 No financial risk

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 *None*

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 If the recommendation is supported the project to declare nature reserves will commence immediately.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix 1 LNR site location maps

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None