

REPORT TO:		Cabinet	
DATE:		26 th March 2025	
PORTFOLIO:		Councillor Kimberley Whitehead - Culture, Heritage and Arts	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Anne Hourican, Senior Env Initiatives Officer	
TITLE OF REPORT:		Bullough Park community woodland enhancement	
EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)	No	Not applicable	
KEY DECISION:	No	If yes, date of publication:	

1. Purposes of Report

- 1.1 To bring forward an opportunity for new community woodland, creating a significant resource for people to enjoy and harness external resources for the benefit of the local area. This is also an opportunity to demonstrate positive climate action.
- 1.2 To seek the necessary authorisations for implementation of the scheme

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to agree the following recommendations:-
 - a) Support the implementation of the woodland and access improvements to Bullough Park, Accrington, proposed in section 3 of this report as part of the Bullough Park community woodland, “the scheme”, subject to funding being available.
 - b) Delegate authority to the Head of Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to apply for grants in respect of the scheme, as shown in para 3.6 and Appendix 1, and to implement the scheme in phases subject to the availability of funding.
 - c) Delegate authority to the Head of Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Portfolio Holder, to enter into grant agreements in respect of the scheme.
 - d) Agree Hyndburn Borough Council budget provision of £9,000 to strengthen the measures to be carried out in Phase 1 of the scheme

- e) Agree that all grant income received in connection with the scheme is ring-fenced and accrued for the creation and ongoing maintenance of the Bullough Park community woodland scheme.
- f) Support joint working with external organisations to encourage local involvement with the woodland creation and other enhancements at Bullough Park, subject to necessary insurances being in place and appropriate risk assessments being carried out.

3. Reasons for Recommendations and Background

Summary of the scheme (see scheme drawing attached)

- 3.1 This is a significant, multi-benefit enhancement project at Bullough Park, Accrington, including new entrances and boundary treatments, woodland planting, wildflower meadow and wetland habitat creation and new surfaced footpaths to extend the 'all-ability' access network. It is on the middle plateau of Bullough Park, which is currently in a poor, waterlogged condition, and subject to repeated anti-social behaviour from motorbike trespass.
- 3.2 It is the largest current project in the TreeACTION community woodland programme, which is part of the climate action work of the Council, delivered in tandem with the Prospects Foundation. TreeACTION is all about enhancing the local area, enabling people to get involved in tangible climate action, with many benefits for nature, carbon capture and enhancing spaces for public enjoyment.
- 3.3 The 1st phase, starting in Spring 2025, is to create new entrances and boundary treatments to protect the site from persistent motorbike trespass. This is an essential pre-requisite to deter long standing public nuisance and anti-social behaviour.
- 3.4 The project is supported by joint working with Lancashire Constabulary, the Prospects Foundation and Proffitts C.I.C. community design team, residents groups and extensive local engagement activity.
- 3.5 Support for the 1st phase entrance improvements includes Police staff involvement together with funding through the Lancashire Partnership Against Crime (LANPAC) – see Appendix 1. The Neighbourhood Policing Team will also follow up with increased patrols to help resolve public nuisance from unauthorised motorbike trespass.

Potential investment through grant bids

- 3.6 The overall project value is some £150K for Phases 1 and 2 in the short term, plus up to £100k for further enhancements in the medium term – see Appendix 1. A number of grant bids are being made and phases of improvements will be progressed subject to availability of funding.

- 3.7 A key funding bid is to the Forestry Commission (FC), English Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO). A very well designed woodland creation proposal has been welcomed by FC support officers and is expected to bring investment as shown in Appendix 1.
- 3.8 All grant incomes will be ring-fenced and reserved for the improvements and ongoing maintenance of the scheme to ensure its success.

Potential local involvement

- 3.9 An improved site, with local people actively involved, helps to reduce problems that otherwise arise when land is unused and uncared for, as most of this land is currently. Local involvement from the outset also brings the potential for effective community management arrangements to complement basic maintenance operations.
- 3.10 The scheme has been very strongly welcomed by local people.
 - 93% of respondents said that they liked the improvements suggested.
 - 93% of respondents also told us that they, and their families, would be more likely to visit Bullough Park in the future if the changes were made because they felt it would be more attractive, there would be more colour and wildlife, and because the park would be safer and have improved access.

4. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 One option is to do nothing. This would miss out on potential for external support to provide an enhanced recreation, community and environmental asset. There would be public disappointment as the proposal has received extensive local support. Anti-social behaviour would continue and staff time (HBC and Police) wasted in handling complaints.
- 4.2 A second option is to do a reduced scheme limited to the funding that is available. The scheme has been designed to enable phased implementation with priority elements being done in Phase 1 and Phase 2. This allows the possibility of some elements being progressed later as further funding is secured.

5. Consultations

- 5.1 Extensive public consultation has included information boards on site, online survey, door to door leafletting and in-person discussions including initial volunteer sessions.
- 5.2 Ward Councillors actively support the proposal.
- 5.3 Discussions with Legal Services, Parks Service and Corporate property on HBC title and land ownership considerations and matters relating to the potential EWCO and other grant support will continue throughout project delivery.

6. Implications

Financial implications (including any future financial	The costs of implementation and ongoing maintenance are expected to be mainly covered
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<p>commitments for the Council)</p>	<p>by external grants. If agreed, the £9,000 additional budget to strengthen the measures to be carried out in Phase 1 is expected to be funded from budget underspend in 2024/25.</p> <p>Works will be implemented in phases subject to funding – see Appendix 1.</p> <p>The FC EWCO grant (if approved) includes capital and revenue elements, the latter involving ongoing claims for 15 years. This will require a reminder system for future action.</p> <p>FC EWCO clawback terms as highlighted below will be covered by retaining a contingency in the grant funding to cover the costs of vandalism or tree failures due to adverse weather, and reserving the annual maintenance grant for ongoing care.</p>
<p>Legal and human rights implications</p>	<p>Legal Services have highlighted the following key points:-</p> <p>Easement for underground services. The layout and specification have fully taken account of requirements and a consultation with United Utilities is underway.</p> <p>The FC EWCO grant standard terms and conditions include the following key points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) FC requirements for successful tree establishment and a 15 year timespan for maintaining improvements. To be addressed in project management arrangements and will require ongoing action, post LGR. b) 30 year timespan for public access. This is compatible with the Dedication restrictions that already apply to the land. <p>Legal Services will be consulted on further details of the FC EWCO terms and other grant opportunities for the scheme.</p> <p>Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) will result in the transfer of any longer term grant agreements to the new authority. This will be flagged up to FC and other relevant funders.</p>

<p>Assessment of risk</p>	<p>Risk of grant clawback in the event of failure to establish trees or maintain improvements. This will be addressed by retention of grant monies to ensure successful replacement planting during the establishment phase.</p> <p>Risk of continued anti-social behaviour, damage, vandalism. Improvements have been designed to be durable. Joint working with the Police will bring enhanced patrols to deter nuisance.</p> <p>In the event of excessive vandalism, further resources may need to be considered.</p>
<p>Equality and diversity implications <i>A <u>Customer First Analysis</u> should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i></p>	<p>Woodlands contribute opportunities for outdoor recreation and improved sense of well-being. The enhancements are designed to enable people of all-abilities to access and enjoy this beautiful area.</p> <p>A Customer First Analysis is attached.</p>

**7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:
List of Background Papers**

7.1 None.

8. Freedom of Information

8.1 The report does not contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.