

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

PROPOSED BROADMEADOW LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

EXEMPT INFORMATION

No

PURPOSE

To inform members of the recent transfer of the Broadmeadow site into Council ownership and to approve the attainment of Local Nature Reserve Status and future environmental improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to note the details of the report and to:-

- 1 Approve the commencement of the tender process to create access to the land and to delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Enterprise and the Director of Assets and Environment to enter into contract with the most viable tender and to obtain all necessary statutory approvals to facilitate this.
- 2 To authorise the Portfolio Holder and the Director of Assets and Environment to make the necessary arrangements for the designation process for Broadmeadow to attain Local Nature Reserve status.
- 3 Authorise the release of all of the S106 monies, currently £128,220, attributable to the site to enable the access works and environmental improvements to be undertaken.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Broadmeadow is one of the key sites for nature conservation both in Tamworth and Staffordshire. The site is recognised as a Site of Biological Importance (SBI) (also known as a Local Wildlife Site) due to its Lowland Meadow habitat. Lowland meadows are both nationally and locally rare habitats and are included in the United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) and the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (SBAP) as a priority habitat for conservation

One of the key botanical species found at Broadmeadow is the Snake's Head Fritillary (*Fritillaria meleagris*) which is very rare in Staffordshire and is native to only two sites in the county: Broadmeadow and Motte Meadows SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), near Wheaton Aston. Protecting the Snake's Head Fritillary population is therefore a priority for the site and introducing appropriate habitat management is vital, as the absence of such management has led to the majority of the site becoming dominated by rank, species-poor grassland.

Due to the decades of neglect the site has experienced, a concerted effort is now required in an attempt to restore the site's biodiversity interest.

Broadmeadow has previously been identified as a potential Local Nature Reserve due to its significant biological interest and it is the intention that the Wild About Tamworth Project Officer works with the Council to bring the site up to the required standards in order to

commence the designation of the site as a Local Nature Reserve. This will include the day to day management of the site by the Council's Street Scene service and the implementation of several capital works which have been identified to improve the site, and funded under the Higher Level Stewardship scheme. These capital works will be undertaken between 2013 and February 2016. It will also be the intention that the Wild about Tamworth Project seeks to form a local "friends of" group to try and secure local and sustained volunteering on this site as with other local nature reserves within the Borough.

In January 2013 the S106 agreement for Broadmeadow was finally completed and the land transferred into the Council's ownership together with all funding from the S106 agreement.

The first priority on the site is to demolish the existing condemned bridge and achieve suitable access, as vehicular access is vital to the future maintenance and development of the site and to remove the redundant pipeline from the land contained within the 'island' area. Vehicle access will be restricted to official maintenance vehicles and will not be for general public access.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

All funding for the environmental improvements to the site has been secured through either S106 payments for the site or Higher Level Stewardship funding for the area.

S106		Usage of funding
Payment 1 PM4718 R6202	£78,656	Originally for development of conservation site but varied in the final agreement to be used for create adequate site access.
Payment 2 PM4718 R6224	£49,565	For maintenance of public open space and weir.
	Revenue	
HLS	£3,492	Paid annually for 10 years.
	Capital Cost for	2013-2016
HLS 2013-16	£2,731	

There are two S106 agreement payments for the Broadmeadow site, as above. It is intended that the access works be funded from both Payment 1 and 2, the further development and maintenance of the site will be funded from the remainder of these S106 payments together with the annual revenue contribution from the HLS funding. The on site capital works will be funded from the agreed HLS capital payment for 2013-16 (Appendix 2). Further capital works can be applied for in future years of the scheme.

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND

Failure to deliver the HLS works will result in all or part of the funding being withdrawn

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The HLS scheme gives a 10 year funding program to develop and maintain the site. Once the site is designated as a Local Nature Reserve this will also protect the site for future generation as a conservation area. In addition conditions of the S106 agreement requires the land be used for conservation. The WAT (Wild About Tamworth) project is now well established within Tamworth and there is an ongoing commitment from this to manage the site for future generations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the 1990's Tamworth's Development Plan identified the Smurfit Site on Lichfield Road for

residential development. McLean Homes (Midlands) subsequently developed the site in accordance with a planning permission which was accompanied by a S106 agreement. The S106 covered a number of issues relating to matters such as affordable housing, off site highway works and most importantly the public open space. The developers completed the development around 2000 but the S106 agreement was not completed. The S106 agreement required the transfer of Broadmeadow (an 'island' between the two channels of the River Tame) and an area of open space on the Lichfield Road side, which is designated as flood plain, to be developed as a conservation area. The S106 agreement included payment to Tamworth Borough Council for future maintenance and conservation on site. See Appendix 1 – site plan, all coloured land has transferred to Tamworth Borough Council.

Broadmeadow is an area of superb ecological interest, which regularly floods, and currently cannot be accessed by any vehicles due to the poor structural quality of the existing bridge (which is currently closed to both vehicles and pedestrians), with pedestrian access gained over a footbridge that sits above the weir.

Over the years, but more intensively during the last two years, officers have negotiated with Taylor Wimpey (the successors to McLean Homes (Midlands) Ltd.) to secure the transfer of the land. The negotiations have included discussions to vary the original S106 agreement to provide some flexibility in the way money, contributed by McLean Homes, could be spent, the variation means that money contributed towards a conservation project could be directed to the creation of adequate vehicular access to the site.

Additional money for the future maintenance of the on site open space has been secured through Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship scheme (HLS).

REPORT AUTHOR

Sarah McGrandle - Head of Environmental Management

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Site Plan

Appendix 2 – Approved capital works

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