



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
Aylestone

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Cabinet

13th December 2010

Declaration of Glen Hills Local Nature Reserve

Report of the Strategic Director, Development, Culture and Regeneration

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to declare City Council owned land at Glen Hills a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in parallel with the LNR designation of the adjoining land by Blaby DC, Leicestershire CC and Glen Parva PC.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve declaration of land in the Council's ownership at Glen Hills, shown in Appendix 1, as a Local Nature Reserve.

3. SUMMARY

- 3.1 It is proposed to designate land at Glen Hills as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) to recognise its existing high nature conservation value and the need to protect and enhance its value as a nature conservation asset. The land is partly in the ownership of Leicester City Council, but lies outside the City boundary. The adjacent areas within the proposed reserve are owned by Leicestershire CC, Blaby DC, Glen Parva PC (see Figure 1).
- 3.2 Natural England, Blaby DC, Leicestershire CC and Glen Parva PC fully support the designation as a LNR and land within their ownership has already been designated as a LNR.
- 3.3 The site meets the criteria for designation stipulated by Natural England as legislated by the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. No additional site management costs will result from the declaration.

4. REPORT

- 4.1 The proposed Glen Hills Local Nature Reserve is within the ownership of several local authorities, namely Leicester CC, Leicestershire CC, Blaby DC and Glen Parva PC (see Figure 1). The area for designation lies outside the City boundary, but an area shown in Figure 1 is retained in the ownership of the City Council.

- 4.2 Natural England, Blaby DC, Leicestershire CC and Glen Parva PC fully support the designation of the LNR. They agreed to declare the land within their ownership as a LNR in March 2010. This area is locally of high nature conservation value, providing a suitable area for a number of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species and habitats. The grassland and open water are also Local Biodiversity habitats and their conservation meets the City and Local BAP objectives for their preservation and conservation.
- 4.3 The area is currently managed for nature conservation as the Glen Hills Nature Area and is well used by the public with designated and informal footpaths across the site. Naturalist groups and the local community group “Friends of Glen Parva” regularly visit the site and carry out conservation tasks, overseen by the County Council Stepping Stones Project conservation officers.
- 4.4 Regarding the legal implications, a Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by principal local authorities.
- 4.5 The declaring local authority must have a legal interest in the land concerned. The City Council has power to designate this land as an LNR as landowner despite the fact it lies outside the city boundary. Appendix I shows the declaration to be signed if the proposal is approved.
- 4.6 The LNR must be managed so that the features which gave the place its special interest are maintained. When declaring an LNR, the local authority accepts responsibility for ensuring that the special interest of the land is maintained. Consideration of how the reserve is to be managed and by whom is required. At present, the management is in accordance with the Glen Hills Nature Area Management Plan completed by Blaby DC. The plan expired in 2008 and prescribes management of the site for nature conservation (maintenance of hedgerows, grassland and woodland management, access and interpretation). The management plan will require updating in agreement with the local authorities and Natural England as a requirement of the sites declaration, specifically stating who will be responsible for maintaining it. It is recommended that Leicester retains responsibility for managing the area within its ownership.
- 4.7 Such management will not incur any additional costs over those currently being made for the maintenance of the site within ownership of Leicester City Council, although the declaration will enable access to potential sources of funding as a Local Nature Reserve (e.g. Access to Nature – Natural England funding). It is therefore understood that there will be no financial implications resulting from the declaration of the nature reserve.
- 4.8 The area located within the City Council ownership is relatively small, but is strategically important as it provides access into the reserve and connectivity to the strategic green corridor and adjacent areas of wildlife importance. Figure 2 shows the site in context of the other nearby Aylestone Meadows LNR. Declaration of the reserve will assist in the protection and conservation of these important habitats and associated species. The designation will also provide an opportunity to develop community based action.

- 4.9 Following agreement to the declaration, a management plan will be drawn up by Blaby DC and agreed by partnership authorities including the City Council. The Plan will be regularly reviewed. The City Council will retain responsibility for the management of the land in its ownership. Natural England can act as advisor to the content of the plan, but cannot legally enforce any prescriptions.
- 4.10 Potential benefits also include flood alleviation/defence to the City through protection and conservation of the surrounding floodplain as well as climate change amelioration through the conservation of grassland and woodland acting as a carbon sink and its ability to absorb green house gases.
- 4.11 The designation will support partnership working with other local authorities, strategic green infrastructure, Leicester's One Vision (Planning for People Not Cars, Reducing Our Carbon Footprint, Improving Wellbeing and Health; and Talking-Up Leicester).

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The management of spaces within the reserve will remain the responsibility of the City Council as at present. It is unlikely that the management of the site will change from its current status and it is anticipated that there will be no additional costs resulting from the declaration. There will be no legal cost implications to the City Council resulting from the declaration.
- 5.2 Declaration of the LNR may provide access to funding from Natural England and continued support from the Stepping Stones Project.

Martin Judson Financial Services

Legal Implications

- 5.3 A Local Nature Reserve (or LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by principal local authorities (PLAs). Parish and District Councils can also declare LNRs if these powers are delegated to them by the PLA. The declaring authority must have a legal interest in the land concerned and the LNR must be managed so that "the features which gave the place its special interest are maintained."
- 5.4 Local authorities are now legally responsible for managing biodiversity in a positive way under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. In order that the declaration can occur the Council must have a legal interest in the land, it is then in the Council's power to formally designate the site. In order for the sites to be declared as LNRs management agreements would be prepared. The management agreements will constitute the Council's legal interest in the sites and allow for declaration to occur.
- 5.5 Declaration of the LNR affords it greater protection under the 1949 Act against trespass. In such cases person(s) can be ordered to leave the site immediately.

Dina Nathwani, Legal Services

Climate Change Implications

- 5.6 Preserving this area as a greenspace and protecting its status as a nature conservation area will make an important contribution to the Council's work to adapt to the potential impacts of climate change such as by providing an area of carbon sink, flood alleviation (there is an increased risk of flooding due to climate change) and an area of cooling and shade to address potential increased temperatures.

Helen Lansdown, Senior Environmental Consultant - Sustainable Procurement

6. Other implications

Property Implications

- 6.1 Property has been consulted and considered the development potential of the site. The declaration of this LNR will remove any potential long term hope value on the part of the site not in the floodplain.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/ NO	Paragraph references within the report
Equal Opportunities	N/A	
Policy	N/A	
Sustainable and Environmental	YES	Whole document
Crime and Disorder	N/A	
Human Rights Act	N/A	
Elderly/People on Low Income	N/A	
Corporate Parenting	N/A	
Health Inequalities Impact	N/A	

7. CONSULTATIONS

Parks and Green Spaces.
Property Services

8. REPORT AUTHOR

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Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	N/A
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)