

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting12th March 2015

1. Title of Item/Report

Scrutiny Review of the Future of Countryside Sites

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that presented the Environment Select Committee findings following the Scrutiny Review of Countryside Sites.

The main issues and overall aim of this review was to consider:-

- How can the Council build on its strong track record for developing and managing country parks, nature reserves and other countryside sites? What facilities, assets and activities should be developed and maintained, to maximise the community, environmental and economic value of these sites?
- Given the increasing budgetary pressures, what alternative management arrangements could be put in place for the Council's existing countryside sites, and how might the Council encourage greater partnership working between the public, private and third sectors to ensure the sustainable management of these sites in the future?
- How can these sites be developed, managed and promoted on an area-by-area basis for nature/activity-based tourism and recreation?

RESOLVED that:-

1. An overall strategic plan and updated site management plans for countryside sites be prepared, reflecting the Council's broad strategic objectives and aim to target capital and revenue resources effectively in light of revenue restrictions.
2. External funding for physical improvements to countryside sites be sought where these are in line with the Council's strategic objectives and taking into account implications for future revenue funding.
3. The Council continue to explore opportunities for external partners to carry out management functions and deliver associated services at

countryside sites.

4. Where resources allow, the Council and its partners continue to encourage community and volunteer involvement in countryside sites, helping to support the positive management and development of these assets and benefiting the individuals involved.

5. All the council's countryside sites be promoted and, where possible, used to host a range of recreational, cultural and educational activities, maximising economic, social, health and environmental benefits.

6. Explore the possible use of modern technology to enhance visitor experience at, or about, the various countryside sites e.g. QR codes on information boards and signs that allow mobile devices (phones, tablets) to deliver additional information.

3. Reasons for the Decision

Stockton Borough has a wide range of countryside sites, including 3 large country parks, 12 Local Nature Reserves, 1 National Nature Reserve, and a number of other nature reserves and countryside sites.

In Spring 2014 Viewpoint, Stockton Council's residents' panel provided positive comments and opinion regarding the subject of parks and green spaces in the borough. Many are owned and managed by the Council, but partners such as Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Natural England, RSPB and the Forestry Commission are also responsible for the management of some of these sites. The provision of a range of publicly accessible countryside sites helps to make the Borough a greener and healthier place to live, work and visit.

The main issues and overall aim of the review is to consider the current management of countryside sites and how they might be managed, promoted and developed in the future, with regard to the objectives set out in the Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday, 20th March 2015

Proper Officer
16 March 2015