

# Environment Select Committee

## Future of Countryside Sites

### Outline Scope

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| <b>Scrutiny Chair:</b><br>Councillor Cooke   | <b>Contact details:</b><br>nigel.cooke@stockton.gov.uk                                     |
| <b>Scrutiny Officer:</b><br>Graham Birtle  | <b>Contact details:</b><br>graham.birtle@stockton.gov.uk                                   |
| <b>Departmental Link Officer(s):</b><br>Craig Willows<br>Graham Clingan  | <b>Contact details:</b><br>craig.willows@stockton.gov.uk<br>graham.clingan@stockton.gov.uk |
| <b>Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</b><br><br>Provide clean streets, attractive parks and green spaces  |  |
| <b>What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?</b><br><br>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. 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.<br><br>The study will review the current management of countryside sites and consider 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. It will also explore the opportunities which may exist for further partnership working, taking into account on-going reductions in the Council's resources.             |  |
| <b>The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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?</li><li>• 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?</li><li>• How can these sites be developed, managed and promoted on an area-by-area basis for nature/activity-based tourism and recreation? For example, within the area of the Tees Heritage Park, or the area around the Tees Estuary covered by the North Tees Natural Network partnership?</li></ul> |  |
| <b>Who will the Committee try to influence as part of its work?</b><br><br>Key partners / SBC Direct Services  |  |
| <b>Expected duration of review and key milestones:</b><br><br>6 Months – Report to Cabinet on 12 March 2015  |  |

**What information do we need?**

*Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):*

- Stockton on Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Viewpoint Survey 36: Parks, Green Spaces & Outdoor Recreation (2014)
- Heritage Lottery Fund 'State of UK Public Parks' report (2014)

*New information:*

- 'Rethinking Parks' programme: a national programme, recently initiated by Nesta Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund, which is backing a number of organisations and partnerships to develop and test new approaches to help local parks thrive.

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

Key Partners (Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Natural England, the RSPB and the Forestry Commission)

**How will this information be gathered? (e.g. Financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)**

Meetings / Site visits to selected country parks and nature reserves.

**How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?**

Invited to give evidence at meetings

**How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?**

Determine accessibility issues

**How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?**

Providing access to safe, good quality green spaces and path networks, together with those specific facilities and activities which enable people to participate in physical exercise, will make a positive contribution to addressing local health inequalities; for example, by reducing levels of obesity and improving mental health and emotional well-being.

JSNA Summary of Commissioning Intentions

- Improve accessible, safe, high quality green spaces for leisure and recreational use

**Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:**

To assist:

- Delivery of Stockton on Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy actions, in liaison with key partners.
- Implementation of Core Strategy policy and supplementary planning guidance on Open Spaces, Recreation and Landscaping to improve the proximity, quality and quantity of green space within the Borough.

## Review of Countryside Sites

## Project Plan

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| <b>Chair</b><br>Councillor Cooke                   | <b>Scrutiny Officer</b><br>Graham Birtle |
| <b>Departmental Link Officers</b><br>Craig Willows | <b>Finance Link Officer</b>              |

| KEY TASK                   | DETAILS/ACTIVITIES   | DATE                                  | RESPONSIBILITY  |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Scoping of Review</b>   | Information gathering  |                                       | Scrutiny Officer<br>Link Officer  |
| <b>Tri-Partite Meeting</b> | Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review   | 8 May 2014                            | Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Corporate Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer |
| <b>Agree Project Plan</b>  | Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee   | 28 July 2014                          | Select Committee  |
| <b>Publicity of Review</b> | Press Briefing at start of review  | ????                                  | Chair, Link Officer, Press Officer<br>Scrutiny Officer  |
| <b>Obtaining Evidence</b>  | Background and Viewpoint survey results<br><br>Examining the destinations, the range of facilities available to visitors and maximising their use as venues for events and activities.<br><b>(Site Visits)</b> | 28 July 2014<br><br>15 September 2014 | Select Committee  |

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|  | <p>SBC's performance in the development, promotion and management of urban and country parks as destinations for nature/activity-based tourism and recreation, utilising existing sites as hubs, enhancing connectivity and improving facilities for visitors.</p> <p>Partnership working between the public, private and third sector to ensure nature-based and activity-based tourism and recreation benefitting local communities and the local economy.</p> | <p>27 October 2014</p> <p>8 December 2014</p> |   |
| <b>Members decide recommendations and findings</b>         | Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations   | 19 January 2015                               | Select Committee  |
| <b>Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders</b>              | Circulation of Report  | 26 January 2015                               | Scrutiny Officer  |
| <b>Tri-Partite Meeting</b>                                 | Meeting to discuss findings of the review and draft recommendations  | February 2015                                 | Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Corporate Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer |
| <b>Final Agreement of Report</b>                           | Approval of final report by Committee  | 2 March 2015                                  | Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Corporate Director  |
| <b>Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Cttee</b> | Consideration of report  | 3 March 2015                                  | Executive Scrutiny Committee  |
| <b>Report to Cabinet/Approving Body</b>                    | Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet  | 12 March 2015                                 | Cabinet/ Approving Body   |