

**Action Plan: Scrutiny review of the future of countryside sites  
Progress Report, November 2015**

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Proposed Actions</b>	<b>Link officer</b>	<b>Anticipated completion date / completion date</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Assessment of progress*</b>	<b>Success Measures</b>
1	An overall strategic plan and updated site management plans for countryside sites should be prepared, reflecting the Council's broad strategic objectives and should aim to target capital and revenue resources effectively in light of revenue restrictions.	Prepare a strategic plan for the future development of country parks and other countryside sites	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Draft strategic plan by 31 Dec 2015	Workshop / site visits held to familiarise officers from across the council with the sites and identify future option.  Work on-going to develop strategic plan, which will need to be informed by outcome of 'expressions of interest' process (see Recommendation 3).	2	Plans completed and implementation commenced
		Prepare updated site/habitat management plans, ensuring a consistent and coordinated approach across all countryside sites	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Initial site/habitat management plans prepared by 31 March 2016	Work on-going to develop management plans for main habitat types across all main countryside sites: e.g. grasslands, woodlands, ponds/wetlands. Plans will identify management works to be implemented each year, based on agreed priorities and available funding.	2	
2	External funding for physical improvements to countryside sites should be sought where these are in line with the Council's strategic objectives	Seek external funding to deliver against objectives set out in strategic plans and site/habitat management plans	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	On-going – March 2018	Forestry Commission funding for woodland management works at Wynyard Woodland Park (2014-15). Environment Agency funding to assess feasibility of habitat creation projects at Wynyard Woodland Park and Billingham Beck Valley Country Park (2015-16).  Further funding applications can be made once	2	Amount / percentage of external funding maximised

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	and taking into account implications for future revenue funding.				future priorities for sites have been agreed.		
3	The Council should continue to explore opportunities for external partners to carry out management functions and deliver associated services at countryside sites.	Identify opportunities for external partners to deliver services at countryside sites	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Opportunities identified and prioritised by 31 March 2016	<p>In the near future the Council will invite 'expressions of interest' from businesses and other organisations wishing to put forward proposals for the country park buildings or other assets. Activities or services would need to add to the overall visitor offer, and/or contribute towards the sustainable management of the parks. <i>Progress has slipped due to complicated nature of 'expression of interest' process.</i></p> <p>Discussions are on-going with Tees Valley Wildlife Trust regarding two proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the Trust adopt responsibility for habitat management and community engagement at Bassleton Wood &amp; the Holmes LNR and Black Bobbies Field LNR (with financial support via River Tees Rediscovered and complementing other activity on nearby Trust sites at Preston Farm and Bowesfield).</li> <li>• That the Trust deliver environmental education packages at the Council's countryside sites.</li> </ul>	3	<p>Range of services maintained or increased</p> <p>Quality of services maintained or improved</p>
		Implement projects on a pilot or permanent basis	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership	On-going – March 2018	Track 'n' Trail Cycles are undertaking small-scale cycle maintenance and providing advice on local cycling opportunities at Wynyard	2	

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			Manager		Woodland Park.		
4	Where resources allow, the Council and its partners should 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.	Continue and further develop volunteer programmes at countryside sites	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	On-going – March 2018	Weekly Council-led volunteer sessions continue to be held at the three main country parks and in the River Tees corridor. Normally between 6 and 12 volunteers per session.  Other groups include a weekly Tees health group at Wynyard Woodland Park.	2	Number of 'volunteer hours' maintained or increased, and skills developed  Increased involvement of community groups
		Identify opportunities for wider community participation in countryside sites.	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	On-going - March 2018	Existing groups continue to be active on selected sites, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friends of Stillington Forest Park</li> <li>• Friends of Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park (held school engagement day in Oct 2015)</li> <li>• Billingham Angling Club involved in management of Charlton's Pond</li> <li>• Tees Valley Wildlife Trust and Billingham Town Council have established a new partnership to appoint a part-time environmental youth officer for Harrington's Pond, Billingham.</li> </ul> <p>The recent development of the Stockton-on-Tees Volunteering Strategy (developed by Catalyst Stockton, Tees Valley Community Foundation and Stockton Borough Council) and the new Stockton Borough Environment Forum will both help to encourage and support local community action for countryside sites and</p>	2	

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					wildlife in general.		
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.	Develop a consistent approach to signage at countryside sites (and other parks) reflecting the Council's corporate branding	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Draft signage concepts / designs by 30 Sept 2015	Design templates for signs have been produced. Work is on-going to finalise design details and fabrication.	2	Increased public awareness of sites  Increased number of visitors. Level of visitor satisfaction maintained or improved  Number or range of events/activities increased
		Utilise a variety of media to promote, and provide information about, the Council's countryside sites.	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	On-going – March 2018	No progress to date.	2	
		Further develop events/activity programmes.	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	On-going – March 2018	No new events, but continuation of Trail Races at country parks (organised by SBC and Billingham Marsh House Harriers).	2	
6	Explore the possible use of modern technology to enhance visitor experience at, or	Identify potential opportunities and project proposals	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	30 June 2016	No progress to date	2	Wider range of media used  Improved access to

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	about, the various countryside sites e.g. QR codes on information boards and signs that allow mobile devices (phones, tablets) to deliver additional information.	Implement projects on a pilot or permanent basis	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	On-going-March 2018	No progress to date	2	information and increased customer satisfaction

**\* Assessment of progress:**

1	<i>Achieved (Fully)</i>	<i>The evidence provided shows that the recommendation has been fully implemented within the timescale specified</i>
2	<i>On Track but not yet due for completion</i>	<i>The evidence provided shows that implementation of the recommendation is on track but the timescale specified has not expired.</i>
3	<i>Slipped</i>	<i>The evidence shows that progress on implementation has slipped. An anticipated date by which the recommendation is expected to become achieved should be advised and the reasons for the delay.</i>
4	<i>Not Achieved</i>	<i>The evidence provided shows that the recommendation has not been fully achieved. An explanation for non-achievement of the recommendation would be provided</i>