

APPENDIX 3 Progress Update – Countryside Sites

	Recommendation	Link officer	Anticipated completion date / completion date	Evidence of Progress Presented to Committee June 2017	Assessment of progress June 2017 Categories 1 - 4	Evidence of Progress Presented to Committee December 2017	Assessment of progress Dec 2017 Categories 1 - 4
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.	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Draft strategic plan prepared by 31 July 2016 <i>(original date: 31 Dec 2015)</i>	A new Open Space Assessment has now been completed and will inform the preparation of the final plan. This will also reflect the new partnership arrangements at the Borough's country parks (see Recommendation 3 below).	3	Plan being drafted, informed by Open Space Assessment and analysis of key issues and opportunities. Partnership arrangements at all three parks have not yet been finalised, but will be reflected in final version of plan.	3
		Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Initial site/habitat management plans prepared by 31 March 2016	Habitat management works carried out during 2016/17 included: Grassland management: cut and baled 10ha at Wynyard Woodland Park, 8.4ha at Billingham Beck, 7ha at Cowpen Bewley, plus smaller sites near River Tees and Honey Pot Wood. Other work included volunteers cutting and raking wildflower banks / meadow areas at Wynyard and Cowpen Bewley Woodland Parks. Woodland management: thinning woodland compartments at Honey Pot Wood and Stillington Forest Park.	1	Grassland Management as per previous report with all programmed grassland management work having been completed, including additional flailing of two species-rich roadside verges (designated Local Wildlife Sites) to prevent scrub encroachment. Woodland management 2017/2018 includes thinning of beech / larch compartment at Thorpe Wood at Wynyard Woodland Park, understorey thinning at Honey Pot Wood / Thorntree Plantation in Thornaby and thinning / crown lifting at Faith Wood at Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park.	1

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				<p>Water bodies: control of invasive species at Wynyard Woodland Park and Cowpen Bewley ponds.</p>		<p>Invasive Non-Native Species control 2017 includes chemical control of Giant Hogweed at sites throughout the Borough, Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, Floating Pennywort and Crassula.</p>	
2	<p>External funding for physical improvements to countryside sites should be sought where these are in line with the Council's strategic objectives and taking into account implications for future revenue funding.</p>	<p>Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager</p>	<p>On-going – March 2018</p>	<p>Wynyard Woodland Park: A draft plan for the development of the core area of the country park has been prepared and funding being sought from Heritage Lottery Fund for conservation of key features and interpretation. Wet woodland and approx. 30no. ponds and scrapes created as part of woodland restoration project, part-funded by Forestry Commission.</p> <p>Six Fields: Detailed proposals being developed and Environment Agency funding committed to support implementation.</p> <p>Stillington Forest Park: £18k funding secured from Banks Group through Lambs Hill Wind Farm development.</p>	<p>2 (on-going)</p>	<p>Wynyard Woodland Park: Currently exploring opportunities to fund cycleway improvements through the Rural Development Programme for England (grants for tourism infrastructure). Also discussions with Heritage Lottery Fund regarding possible funding for conservation and interpretation of railway heritage.</p> <p>Six Fields: detailed scheme developed including creation of 3 hectares of water-dependent habitat. Implementation in 2018.</p> <p>Stillington Forest Park: Works implemented under the 25-year Forest Park Improvement Plan, funded by Banks as part of the planning conditions for the Lambs Hill Wind Farm development. The</p>	<p>2 (on-going)</p>

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						plan includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland management works • Grassland management works • Installation of bird boxes • Construction of 875m footpath (now complete). 	
3	The Council should continue to explore opportunities for external partners to carry out management functions and deliver associated services at countryside sites.	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Partners to be finalised by 31 May 2016 (original date: 31 March 2016)	<p>Wynyard Woodland Park: Planning approval secured for conversion of the railway carriage to cinema, to be operated by arts collective 'Missing Piece'. Awaiting completion of necessary works, but progressing lease for part of Station House to allow community arts activities to commence.</p> <p>Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park: Former visitor centre to be leased to Billingham Environmental Link Project.</p> <p>Billingham Beck Valley Country Park: National charity Autism Initiatives has expressed interest in using the former visitor centre as a base for their clients. Discussions are on-going but the</p>	3	<p>Wynyard Woodland Park: Arts collective 'Missing Piece' are now established at the former station house and have plans to develop it as a centre for community arts and to deliver a range of recreational and educational activities. Railway carriage currently being refurbished and approvals are also in place to convert it to a cinema, to be operated by Missing Piece.</p> <p>Billingham Beck Valley Country Park: The Council continues to consider proposals from organisations with an interest in the former visitor centre.</p> <p>Cowpen Bewley Woodland</p>	3

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				<p>centre could be run as a social enterprise, offering day provision for individuals with autism as well as delivering activities and services which will benefit other park users.</p> <p>Grassland management: meadow areas at Wynyard Woodland Park and Billingham Beck are now under legal agricultural licences with local farmers (allowing cutting, baling and cattle grazing).</p> <p>Work on-going to develop a similar agricultural licence arrangement for Six Fields, allowing the same farmer to cut The Holmes and Honey Pot Wood as a reciprocal agreement.</p>		<p>Park: Arrangements are being finalised by Land and Property before being passed to Legal for a lease agreement to be drawn up with Billingham Environmental Link Project</p> <p>Six Fields: site has been cut and baled by a local farmer and an agricultural agreement will be implemented one habitat creation works are completed (see section 2 above).</p>	
		Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Projects / activities to commence on a pilot or permanent basis. On-going - March 2018	Subject to finalising the above agreements / leases it is anticipated projects and activities will commence in 2017/18.	2 (on-going)	'Missing Piece' have commenced activities at Wynyard Woodland park, including launch events in September 2017.	2 (on-going)

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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.	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Continue and further develop volunteer programmes. On-going – March 2018	<p>The Council's volunteer work teams continue to undertake management works at main sites. 1328 volunteer attendances from Jan to Dec 2016 (an increase on 1266 attendances in 2015)</p> <p>Other volunteer projects were delivered through Tees Health at Wynyard Woodland Park (228 attendances in 2016).</p>	2 (on-going)	<p>Quarterly volunteer attendance at countryside sites 2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan to March - 289 • April to June - 408 • July to Sept - 457 	2 (on-going)
		Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Identify opportunities for wider community participation. On-going - March 2018	<p>The Wild Green Places programme, led by Tees Valley Wildlife Trust continues to support community groups in caring for local green spaces. Groups at Norton and Roseworth have been most active under this programme.</p> <p>A draft 'Licence to Occupy' has now been developed which can be adapted for any groups wishing to undertake similar activities on other green spaces, subject to Council approval.</p> <p>In addition 16 events were held at country parks during 2015/16,</p>	2 (on-going)	<p>'Licence to occupy' for Tinkers Yard now agreed, enabling the community group to undertake a range of events and activities under the Wild Green Places scheme. This provides a template that could be adapted for other groups / sites.</p> <p>There were 15 events at the country parks, during 2016/17; mainly orienteering and running clubs. Attendance numbers ranged from 60 – 300.</p>	2 (on-going)

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				including trail races, orienteering and school visits, attracting between 10 -150 participants per event.			
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.	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Develop a consistent approach to signage with draft concepts / designs by 30 Sept 2015	New signage at Wynyard Woodland Park to be incorporated into a wider project to improve access around car park / station house and interpret site's heritage.	2	It is anticipated that some new 'welcome' and information signage at country parks will be installed under the Council's wider 'Ambitious, effective and proud to serve' campaign.	2
Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager		Utilise a variety of media to promote, and provide information about, countryside sites. On-going – March 2018	SBC web pages on country parks and nature reserves updated during 2016/17. Draft 'Out and About' leaflet prepared, including information on selected sites and access routes. Due for publication during 2017/18.	2 (on-going)	On-going updates to web pages. Leaflet to be published in March 2018.	2 (on-going)	
Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager		Further develop events/activity programmes.	Additional events and activities to be delivered linked to Recommendation 3	2 (on-going)	Additional events and activities to be delivered linked to Recommendation 3	2 (on-going)	

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			On-going – March 2018				
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.	Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Identify potential opportunities and project proposals by 30 June 2016	Consideration has been given to possible use of an augmented reality app developed by Sprytar. The Council will continue to consider this and other options.	3	Possible approaches being considered.	3
		Greenspace Strategy & Partnership Manager	Implement projects on a pilot or permanent basis. On-going-March 2018	No projects agreed at this stage.	2	No projects agreed at this stage.	2

Assessment of progress:

1	Achieved (Fully)
2	On Track but not yet due for completion
3	Slipped
4	Not Achieved