

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 6

meeting date: THURSDAY, 16 MARCH 2017
title: LANCASHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST LOCAL NATURE RESERVES
CROSSHILL AND SALTHILL
submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: DAVID HEWITT

1 PURPOSE

1.1 For Committee to consider a request from Wildlife Trust for Lancashire for an additional contribution towards the management of the two local nature reserves at Crosshills and Salthill, Clitheroe and to seek Committee approval to begin a formal new lease agreement process with the Trust.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives – To help make peoples lives safer and healthier.
- Corporate Priorities – To protect and enhance existing environmental quality of our area.
- Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Salthill and Crosshill local nature reserves are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest and recognise internationally important not only for the geology alone but also for the biology and biodiversity. The geology of the site draws academics and enthusiasts from the UK and further afield and they are also recognised as a key resource for people in Clitheroe as well as the Ribble Valley and beyond.

2.2 Both sites are leased from the Council by the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire under a 25 year fixed term agreement which dates from June 1990 until May 2015 but the tenant is now holding over until a new lease is granted or the old one is terminated by either party. The Trust have a right to a new lease agreement on no better terms than currently.

2.3 The reserves are heavily used for recreational, educational and volunteering health and wellbeing activities, as well as informal recreation on a daily basis. As a consequence to manage the habitats and the heavy public use of the site requires considerable time and effort as well as investment by the Trust.

2.4 The Trust has employed a reserves officer to undertake work to support volunteers and source further income. This employment of 2 days a week on the Clitheroe sites costs the Trust £12,000 per year.

2.5 Whilst the Council did not commit to an income stream at the inception of the lease, it has helped with the costs of some capital items and a contribution towards the revenue costs. We have contributed £2000 per annum since 2008 which coincides with the Trust employing a Reserves Officer.

3 REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL GRANT FUNDING (2016/2017)

- 3.1 The Trust have invested considerable time and money into the reserves and would like to continue its involvement in these important sites and as the 25 year lease term is due for renewal, now is an opportunity to consider the way forward. The working relationship between the Council and the Trust for Lancashire has been a very productive one and the sites are well managed by the Trust. However, the Trust finds itself in a similar situation with the rest of the voluntary sector in that resources have declined due the recession and increased demands on the Trust's limited funds.
- 3.2 A request has been received from the Trust (Annex 1) seeking an increase in the Council's grant contribution to their work at the two sites from £2000 per annum to £4000 per annum.
- 3.3 This could be funded from existing budget and would enable the Trust to continue to their work at the two sites.

4 POTENTIAL FOR NEW LEASE AGREEMENT

- 4.1 The Trust has indicated that it would like to take on a further lease of the two sites following the expiration of the current long lease which is now being held over.
- 4.2 Subject to Committee agreement it is proposed to open discussions on a new long lease of the sites. Any proposals will be brought back to this Committee for consideration prior to being entered into.

5 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications
- Resources – An existing budget is available to fund any increase in contribution that Committee may be minded to approve up to £4000.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal - Further lease agreement will be required to be drawn up for further consideration by this Committee.
 - Political – None.
 - Reputation – The Council's reputation for protecting and enhancing the existing environmental quality of our area will be upheld.
 - Equality & Diversity – None.

6 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 6.1 Consider the request for an increase in the annual contribution to Wildlife Trust for Lancashire for 2016/2017 from £2000 to £4000.
- 6.2 Agree to the commencement of discussions with Wildlife Trust for Lancashire for a new long lease.

DAVID HEWITT
COUNTRYSIDE OFFICER

JOHN HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Annex 1 - Copy of letter from Wildlife Trust for Lancashire.
Annex 2 – Details of Wildlife Trust work at Crosshill and Salthill Nature Reserves.
Annex 3 – Location Plans for Crosshill and Salthill Nature Reserves.

For further information please ask for David Hewitt, extension 4505.