

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 8 January 2018

Report Title: Proposal for Local Nature Reserves

Report By: Mike Hepworth, Assistant Director, Environment and Place

Purpose of Report

To seek approval to proceed with the legal process for declaring Ponds Wood Local Wildlife Site a Local Nature Reserve, and extending the boundary of Churchwood Local Nature Reserve to include the area known as Robsack Meadow

Recommendation(s)

- 1. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Environment and Place and the Chief Legal Officer to proceed with the legal process for Local Nature Reserve declaration of Ponds Wood and the extension of Churchwood Local Nature Reserve, under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended), and;**
- 2. Publish a declaration notice in the local press and on the council's web site to allow the public to inspect the declaration and the boundary map free of charge and send a copy of the declaration to Natural England.**

Reasons for Recommendations

The council has had a long standing ambition to declare Ponds Wood a Local Nature Reserve and to extend the boundary of Churchwood Local Nature Reserve to include the area known as Robsack Meadow.

Introduction

1. Hastings Borough Council owns all of Ponds Wood (5.7 hectares) and Churchwood as marked on the attached maps, Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.
2. By declaring Ponds Wood a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and by extending Churchwood LNR to include Robsack meadow, the council are further demonstrating their commitment to safeguarding biodiversity and important habitats in the Borough for future generations.
3. A LNR is a statutory designation made by Local Authorities under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
4. Natural England as a statutory consultee has been consulted and supports the proposed designation of Ponds Wood and extension of Churchwood.
5. Following the Cabinet's consideration of the proposals, it is proposed that the council should complete the legal process and public consultation by advertising the proposals in the appropriate local journal, and registering the declaration with Natural England.

Background

6. Ponds Wood was transferred to the council as part of the Section 106 Legal Agreement from the planning permission issued for the housing development at Celandine Drive and Arbourvale, with the obligation to declare the land a LNR.
7. Ponds Wood is ancient semi-natural woodland with stream side habitats. The site provides easy access for local residents to experience a high quality natural asset in the midst of the urban environment.
8. Once declared, Ponds Wood Local Nature Reserve will be the eighth LNR in the Borough.
9. The area known as Robsack Meadow was originally excluded from the Churchwood LNR declaration on the basis that it was allocated as a housing site in the Local Plan. Following the inspectors recommendations into the 2015 Local Plan, Robsack Meadow was removed as a development allocation.
10. The proposal is now therefore to extend the boundary of Churchwood LNR to include the Robsack Meadow area.

Local Nature Reserves in the Borough of Hastings

11. There are seven LNRs in the borough of Hastings. Three in the west of the borough; Filsham Reedbed, Marline Valley, Churchwood; three in central Hastings at Old Roar Gill, St Helens Wood and Summerfields and one in the east of the borough; Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve.

12. The high number of LNRs in a small borough the size of Hastings is further demonstration that the council values its local habitats as places for wildlife and people to enjoy.

Procedure for Local Nature Reserve Declaration

13. Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 gives local authorities the responsibility and power to acquire, declare and manage nature reserves.
14. The legal process has been conducted by our legal services.
15. Natural England is a statutory consultee and has been consulted. They fully support the proposals.
16. LNR declaration guidance states we should put an advert announcing the LNR in a local paper and allow the public to inspect the declaration and the boundary map free of charge. A copy of the press notice will also be available on the council's website. The press notice is for public information and is not the commencement of public consultation.
17. The press notice has been drafted and will be published if Cabinet approves these proposals.

Financial and Management Implications

18. The council is developing a Strategic Local Nature Reserve Management Plan to establish top level management priorities for all our LNRs. This is a more effective management tool than having eight separate plans for each reserve.
19. All management will be undertaken using existing budgets. No additional funds are required. The council will continue to support community groups and voluntary groups to manage and access the sites.
20. Ponds Wood is ancient woodland. The management plan will prioritise natural regeneration of the ancient woodland stock and prioritise public safety.
21. Robsack is no longer a meadow habitat; it is regenerating woodland from the ancient woodland stock of the surrounding Churchwood LNR. The management plan will prioritise this natural regeneration process.

Wards Affected

Wishing Tree; Maze Hill; West St Leonards; Hollington

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No

Environmental Issues	Yes
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People’s Views	Yes
Anti-Poverty	No

Additional Information

Officer to Contact

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