

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

21ST FEBRUARY 2008

Proposed Local Nature Reserve at Moorhall Marsh

COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:	A Better Environment
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	Managing the Local Environment
CORPORATE PLAN KEY PRIORITY:	Sustainable Environment
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Nathan Desmond
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Head of Community and Partnership Services
CONTACT OFFICER:	Kay Higman 2902
An Open Item	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise members on the current situation regarding the proposed Local Nature Reserve (LNR) at Moorhall Marsh.

2. Recommendations

The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND to Council that:

- 2.1 Moorhall Marsh be declared a Local Nature Reserve and the Management Plan be endorsed.

3. Background

- 3.1 The proposed Moorhall Marsh Local Nature Reserve is 1.4 hectares in size, located 200 metres from Stourport town centre and is directly adjoining Stourport Riverside Meadows. A location map is provided at Appendix A.
- 3.2 The site is owned by Wyre Forest District Council and managed by the Ranger Service.
- 3.3 The Council's interest in the land was highlighted when a private landowner put in a planning application on an adjacent parcel of land in 2006.
- 3.4 The wetland nature of this piece of land would seem to originate from being a remnant of the River Severn flood plain marshland, once extensive but now very scarce.

- 3.5 This site has no formal access and is fenced on all sides, however access is occurring evidenced by children's dens and litter where youths have gathered.
- 3.6 The site is of significant biological value being a habitat type identified in both local and UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).
- 3.7 English Nature has been consulted about the proposal to declare Moorhall Marsh as a Local Nature Reserve under the provisions of Section 21(6) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended). (See Appendix B).

4. Management Plan

- 4.1 The proposed Management Plan has been sent out to each member of the Cabinet and a copy has been placed in each of the Group Rooms for all other members to view (Appendix C).
- 4.2 It is important that this area obtains the Local Nature Reserve to maximise its biological value. Whilst the site is currently inaccessible the opening of the site through the construction of a Boardwalk path leading to an interpretation point would allow this site to act as a wildlife discovery area allowing people with little or no knowledge of the natural world to discover the importance of wetland wildlife in an easy to access environment.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The declaration of this site will have no financial implications for the District Council.
- 5.2 The physical infrastructure, for example gates, fencing, boardwalk and signage has been funded by the lottery funded BBC Breathing Spaces grant of £6,788 which was acquired by Stourport Town Council for the delivery of the project. Future maintenance will be provided through existing resources, currently the Grazing Animals project (GAP), and the efforts of local community volunteers.

6. Legal and Policy implications

- 6.1 The declaration is under the provisions of Section 21 (6) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended).

7. Risk Management

- 7.1 There are minimal risks for WFDC and close adherence to the Management Plan will ensure the correct management of the land. This land is not a new site, just a new LNR.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The declaration of a Local Nature Reserve for Moorhall Marsh will have many benefits for both the Council and the local community. It is hoped that members will also support the Management Plan. Once the declaration is approved by Council it is anticipated that the opening of the Moorhall Marsh Local Nature Reserve will be achieved in May 2008.

9. Consultees:

- Head of Legal and Democratic Services
- Head of Financial Services
- Cllr Nathan Desmond
- Paul Allen, Countryside and Conservation Officer

10. Background Papers

None

11. Appendices:

- Appendix A – Location Map
- Appendix B – Section 21 (6) of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended)
- Appendix C – Proposed Management Plan