

Subject: Thorn Bank Woodland

Status: For Publication

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 18 October 2006

Report of: Head of Street Scene and Liveability

Portfolio

Holder: Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Liveability

Key Decision:

NO

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency "X" In Relevant Box

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members that a successful bid for £15,000 funding has been secured for woodland management and pathway improvements at Thorn Bank Woodland from the English Woodland Grant Scheme.
- 1.2 To seek permission from members to carry out tree thinning, pruning, path clearance and footpath repair work within the woodland and confirm future maintenance arrangements for the management of this woodland.
- 1.4 To seek permission to use the site to deliver woodland management training for young offenders by working in partnership with Burnley Probation Services. The training provided on site will then be utilised by allowing Probation Services to carry out much of the improvement work.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report are linked to and support the following corporate priorities:
- **Environment**
Focusing on making the most of our fabulous rural setting, including parks and open spaces
 - **Community Safety**
Tackling crime and disorder and working to make sure people feel safe as they go about their lives
-

- **Health**
Making sure people have a long and healthy life.
- **Education**
Promoting education and learning opportunities for all ages as well as making sure local businesses can employ people with the skills they need.
- **Economy**
Quality jobs for local people as well as the skills to access them.
- **Community**
Making sure we're a borough where all opinions count and people respect and celebrate difference. The LSP Environment Action Plan includes a target to bring neglected woodlands into beneficial long term management.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- This is an ideal opportunity for the council to take advantage of a unique trial project which aims to make paths safer and more accessible for the community.
- The council has an opportunity to take advantage of this funding opportunity and partnership working in order to achieve improved pathways at very little initial cost.
- The funding has only been secured on the basis that the council approve the works and subsequent training opportunities. As this is council land, improvements would have to be found from mainstream budgets at some point in the future.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

Background

4.1 Thorn Bank Woodland was identified as a site in need of improvement as part of the Planning for Real Exercise in the Pennine Road Estate in 2001. The woodland provides a walkway from Sandfield Road on the Pennine Road Estate, into Bacup town centre.

4.2 The site is hard to access in places, as the footpaths uneven and become waterlogged during the winter. Overhanging trees and overgrown vegetation can give a feeling of feeling of insecurity when using the pathway.

4.3 This project aims to open up the footpaths to allow clear, safe vision of the path ahead as well as to open vistas enabling people to enjoy views across the valley. New signage on site and an entrance feature would make the woodland more welcoming to visitors and walkers.

4.4 The close proximity of the Irwell Medical centre identifies this site as being ideal for introducing short health walks in order to encourage healthy lifestyles.

4.5 The woodland is in the ownership of the Borough Council and Lancashire County Council have license to manage the trees within the woodland. Whilst funding is to be spent on the tree work, here is an opportunity to improve footpaths and signage which remain the responsibility of Rossendale Borough Council.

4.6 Burnley Probation Services are keen to work in Partnership with Groundwork Rossendale, Lancashire County Council and Rossendale borough Council in order to restore the woodland back into management.

4.7 This partnership working would include: Tree thinning, Crown lifting, Ground clearance, path widening and repair, installation of steps and boardwalks where necessary, drainage, and clearing the site of fly-tipping and Groundwork intend to use the site for delivering woodland management training courses.

Options for Consideration

1. Do nothing

The woodland has been neglected for many years. There is a need to carry out reparation work, however this is not a corporate priority for mainstream funding at this time. Failure to go ahead with the project will result in the funding being lost.

2. Approve the project

This is an ideal opportunity to:

- Carry out much needed reparation work and promote partnership working and training opportunities
- Take advantage of £15,000 funding from the Forestry Commission.
- Promote the woodland as a site for health walks
- Make the woodland into an attractive place to picnic for workers and visitors to Bacup town centre; and
- Increased use of the site would promote healthy lifestyles; deter fly-tipping, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour within the woodland.

5. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

5.1 Some funding has already been raised for this site, to be spent over 3 years; however the council would need to identify a budget for the ongoing maintenance of the picnic site from 2008, which would include the mowing of grass, emptying of litter bins and litter picking. Identified annual maintenance costs from 2008 would be estimated in the region of £2,000 per annum.

6. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

6.1 N/A

7. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

7.1 N/A

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 This type of funding is unlikely to be available again for this woodland. This is a unique opportunity for the Council to take advantage of and indeed promote Partnership working between so many organisations. The training opportunity afforded with this funding would be beneficial to approximately 15 young people at no cost to the Council.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

9.1 That full approval for the scheme is granted and a maintenance budget be established for the woodland from 2008.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 Planning for Real Exercise in 2001

10.2 Steering group set up in 2005

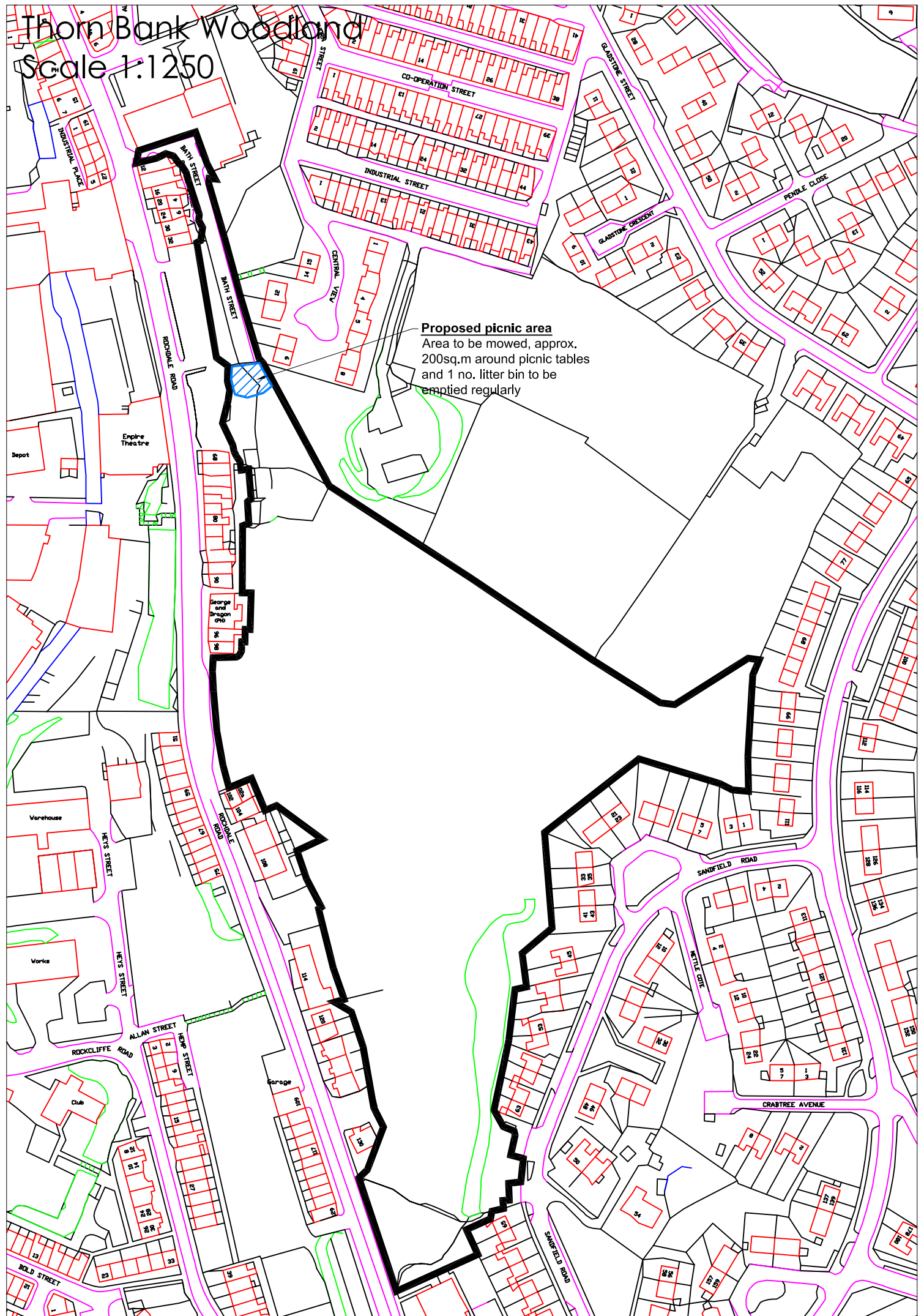
10.3 Leaflet drops and poster campaign to be carried out in Pennine Road Estate.

Contact Officer	
Name	Carole Todd
Position	Head of Street Scene and Liveability
Service / Team	Street Scene and Liveability
Telephone	01706 252551
Email address	caroletodd@rossendalebc.gov.uk

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Map – Appendix One	
Funding Documentation – Appendix Two	

Thorn Bank Woodland

Scale 1:1250



Proposed picnic area
Area to be mowed, approx.
200sq.m around picnic tables
and 1 no. litter bin to be
emptied regularly