

For background information

**Subject:** Rossendale Urban Woodlands  
**Status:** For Publication

**Report to:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive

**Portfolio Holder:** Portfolio Holder for the Environment

**Key Decision:** Yes

Forward Plan  General Exception  Special Urgency

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek approval to develop a community based management plan for Rossendale woodlands between the area of Hareholme and Waterfoot.

## 2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.

- Keeping Our Borough Clean and Green (Environment)
- Promoting Rossendale as a cracking place to live and visit (Economy)
- Improving health and well being across the Borough (Health, Housing)

## 3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report. Should the bid referred to in the document be successful, a future detailed report will be required for cabinet.

## 4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

4.1 During 2008 “Access to Nature” was launched as a £25m national scheme to encourage people from all backgrounds to understand, access and enjoy our natural environment. It is funded by the Big Lottery Fund’s Changing Spaces programme and Natural England.

4.2 In response to this officers from Rossendale Borough, Lancashire County and Groundwork Pennine Lancashire identified an opportunity to enhance the management of a number of woodlands that form a connected belt between Hareholme and Waterfoot. The woods are largely in the ownership of Rossendale Borough Council although these have woodland management under license by Lancashire County Council.

4.3 The project would ;

- Respond positively to local community aspirations regarding Tricketts Memorial Ground, Staghills Wood and Leabank Wood.
- Enhance local biodiversity
- Reduce the liability of landowners (Local Authorities) from unmanaged woodlands which may provide a risk of litigation if injury occurred
- Provide recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors
- Offer the potential for creation of off-road cycleway or bridleway links
- Involve local people in the active management of local resources with the attendant health and wellbeing benefits

4.4 There are various levels of grant available. For projects up to £715,000 Access to Nature will provide 80% funding (up to £500,000). To secure this 20% match must be obtained although up to half of this can be in kind rather than cash. Thus for a £500,000 grant a cash match of £107,500 and a similar value of gift in kind would be required over the lifetime of the project. This could be secured by the partners collectively.

4.5 For projects over £715,000 Natural England will fund up to 70% but the match can be made up of cash (10%) and gift in kind (20%)

4.6 Discussion with the North West Grants Officer for Access to Nature confirmed that the proposal would meet the criteria for bidding but that the submission should be derived from a management plan reflecting community consultation and that the costs of this work would need to be borne by the applicant.

4.7 The cost of developing a management plan are £15,468. Lancashire County Council has committed 50% of the costs and it is recommended the borough council funds the remaining £7,734.

4.8 The options for consideration are:-

(i) Do nothing and allow individual community groups to secure money for their own projects. It is unlikely that large scale funding would be secured from Access to Nature and the Development Funding from Lancashire County Council may be reallocated to another project.

(ii) Commit development funding of £7,743 to the project and support activities to secure funding based on this research. This would respond to community aspirations, demonstrate effective partnership working with other agencies and provide information and evidence necessary for bidding to Access to Nature and other funders.

## **COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:**

### **5. SECTION 151 OFFICER**

5.1 Funding of £7,743 to be met from existing budgets. Should the bid be successful a further detailed report including identification of funding streams will be completed.

### **6. MONITORING OFFICER**

6.1 This report seeks approval to develop the management plan. The decision to apply for funding will be subject to a report back to cabinet.

### **7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)**

7.1 No comments required

### **8. CONCLUSION**

8.1 This is the first stage to enable the Borough Council and its partners in securing significant funding. Should the bid be successful there will be a further report to cabinet.

### **9. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

9.1 That the Cabinet supports the development of a Community Based management plan and bid to "Access to Nature" and commit development funding of £7,734. To seek approval for the development of sites in order to provide a community based management plan for Rossendale woodlands between the area of Hareholme and Waterfoot.

### **10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT**

10.1 Discussions have been held with Lea Bank Trusts and Waterfoot Forward both of whom endorse a combined approach and are willing to be associated with the development of a community based management plan.

**11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required Yes / **No**

Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached Yes / **No**

**12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required Yes / **No**

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment attached Yes / **No**

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Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Rossendale Urban Woodlands Proposal, vers 2.1, September 2008.</li><li>Map of Ownership of Rossendale Urban Woodland</li></ul>	Groundwork T: 01706 211421 F: 01706 210770