

CABINET – 29TH JUNE 2004

**PROPOSAL FOR THE FORMAL DESIGNATION OF MOIRA
JUNCTION AND SALTERSFORD WOOD NATURE RESERVES AS
LOCAL NATURE RESERVES**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to consider the proposal that Moira Junction and Saltersford Wood Nature Reserves be formally designated as Local Nature Reserves.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the formal designation of Moira Junction and Saltersford Wood Nature Reserves as Local Nature Reserves be approved.

Reasons for Recommendation

3. The sites fulfil English Nature's requirements for Local Nature Reserves, and with designation would be protected from development or damage of any kind in the future. The County Council, in the Leicestershire Nature Conservation Strategy, is committed to a programme of Local Nature Reserve designations. This fits into the national framework set out in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan which states that "The government and the agencies working with local authorities will encourage the designation of more Local Nature Reserves".

Timetable for Decision including Scrutiny

4. Formal designation will follow approval by Cabinet and agreement by English Nature.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

5. The Leicestershire Structure Plan 1991-2006, Explanatory Memorandum

(1994) includes a Statement of Intent that the County Council will "promote the establishment of Local Nature Reserves on its land and encourage District Councils to do likewise".

6. The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan 1996-2016 Written statement (as proposed to be adopted, July 2003) states that "Measures will be taken to promote natural biodiversity; protect, conserve and manage sites of ecological importance and protected species and their habitats; and enhance the wider ecological value of the environment." The designation of Local Nature Reserves supports this.
7. Policy Nc9 (Local Nature Reserves) of the Leicestershire Nature Conservation Strategy (May 1994) states that "Leicestershire County Council will, in consultation with English Nature, use the powers available to it under The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to declare suitable sites as Local Nature Reserves."
8. It is stipulated in Policy Nc9 of the Leicestershire Nature Conservation Strategy that the County Council will prepare management plans for all proposed Local Nature Reserves as part of the designation process. A management plan has been prepared for Moira Junction and Saltersford Wood.
9. Both sites have been allocated for nature conservation and informal recreation in the North West Leicestershire Local Plan adopted August 2002. The freeholds are owned by the County Council.

Resource Implications

10. There are no additional revenue implications. Both sites are already managed by the Country Parks Service, which carries out the work required within the Site Management Plans.
11. The Director of Resources has been consulted on the resource implications of this report.

Circulation under Sensitive Issues Procedure

Mr. S. D. Sheahan CC

Officer to Contact

Peter Williams
Tel. (0116) 265 7080.

PART B

Background

12. Moira Junction forms part of Overseal railway sidings, which were closed in 1966. It was developed as a nature area in 1991 within the railway cuttings and embankments. Two lakes were created and parts of the site were left to regenerate naturally. This narrow site is approximately 150m wide at its widest point and 500m long.
13. Moira Junction Nature Reserve covers an area of 3.27 hectares. The site has free open access for pedestrians with access via Conkers and the Ashby Woulds Heritage Trail. Car parking is available at Conkers Waterside.
14. Saltersford Wood Nature Reserve covers an area of 5.6 hectares. The site has free open access for pedestrians of all abilities with stone paths throughout. A lake called a 'flash' formed by Saltersford Brook flowing into an area of coal mine subsidence dominates the area. The flash is also fished with the licence let to Swadlincote Angling Club. The remainder of the site consists of grassland, marsh and new woodland planting forming part of the National Forest. Attached at Appendix A is a plan indicating the location of both sites.
15. There is a timber board walk along the flash and purpose-built stone fishing platforms for disabled people. A car park is provided for up to 20 cars.
16. The County Council prepared a Management Plan for both sites in April 2004. The sites are managed by the Country Parks Service, which is responsible for implementing the management plans, and associated work programme. This work programme includes scrub clearance to stop ecological succession occurring, periodic removal of reeds from the flash to maintain open water and regular cutting of grassland to retain habitat.
17. The declaration of Moira Junction and Saltersford Wood as Local Nature Reserves will increase the number of formal Local Nature Reserves to four throughout the County Council estate and allow the Council to meet the commitments of the Structure Plan and Leicestershire Nature Conservation Strategy (see paras. 6-8). The two existing Local Nature Reserves are at Snibston Grange and New Lount. Designation will also ensure that the habitats and species at the site are properly conserved and use of the site for education, public enjoyment and interpretation and scientific research is optimised in accordance with the Site Management Plan.
18. The requirements for Local Nature Reserve declaration vary. The site may be of special ecological or geological value, provide opportunities for education and research or allow informal enjoyment of nature by the public. Both sites fulfil the criteria for designation set out by English Nature.

19. The sites have a number of different habitats in close proximity; this provides ecological and educational value (this educational value is further enhanced by the provision of a formal path network and proposed pond dipping platforms to be constructed at the ponds in Moira Junction). The sites also allow informal enjoyment of nature by the public. There is free open public access for pedestrians, they are situated close to settlements, and have vehicle access and parking facilities.

Consultations

20. English Nature has been consulted and has welcomed the proposal of the County Council to declare the sites as Local Nature Reserves.

Equal Opportunities Implications

21. Local Nature Reserves give those members of the public unable to travel long distances the opportunity to visit sites of conservation interest and the opportunity to experience nature without having to travel far. The footpaths at both sites allow access for disabled people and there are fishing platforms for disabled people at Saltersford Wood flash.

Background Papers

Leicestershire Nature Conservation Strategy, May 1994.

Letter received from Neil Pike, Conservation Officer for English Nature on 15th April 2004.

Moira Junction Nature Reserve Management Plan, Leicestershire County Council, April 2004.

Saltersford Wood Nature Reserve Management Plan, Leicestershire County Council, April 2004.

Biodiversity; the UK Action Plan, January 1994.

Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan 1991 - 2016, Explanatory Memorandum, 1994.

Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan 1996 - 2016, May 2000.