

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4TH APRIL 2016
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (GOVERNANCE)

**NORTHAW GREAT WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN
2015-2020**

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 A draft management plan for the next plan period was written during 2015 and was available for public consultation during autumn.
- 1.2 No comments were received so the plan is being returned without alteration to EOSC for its approval.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To recommend to Cabinet the adoption of the revised management plan for Northaw Great Wood Local Nature Reserve 2015-2020.
- 2.2 To forward the plan, once adopted, to the Forestry Commission and to Natural England for approval.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 Northaw Great Wood is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) the appropriate management of which is enforced by Natural England (NE) through Section 55 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.
- 3.2 In 2005, the council entered into a management vision for Northaw Great Wood with the Forestry Commission, setting out a proposed management concept for twenty-five years. This twenty-five year vision was broken down into 5-year plan periods, the second of which for the period 2010-2015 expired in 2015.
- 3.3 At its meeting on 21st September 2015, EOSC approved the draft of the third plan period (2015-20) of the Northaw Great Wood management plan for a six-week consultation. This took place during November and December, closing on Friday 4th December.
- 3.4 The plan was available for consultation via the consultation portal on the council's website. No comments or objections were received.

4 Link to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority 'Protecting and Enhancing the Environment' and specifically to the achievement of Maintaining and Improving our Green Spaces and is linked to a statutory requirement under Section 55 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Within s55 of the NERC Act 2006, Natural England has the power to enforce the appropriate management of SSSIs. If the council fails to act responsibly towards the

management of the wood, NE has the power to enforce suitable management through the use of warning letters, formal investigations and prosecutions.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications. Work proposed in the management plan will be funded out of existing budgets and/or by woodland improvement grants available from Defra.

7 Risk Management Implications

- 7.1 There is a risk that failure to undertake proper management of the wood would prejudice the council's reputation through Natural England exposing inaction on our part.

8 Security and Terrorism Implications

- 8.1 There are no security or terrorism implications.

9 Procurement Implications

- 9.1 There are no procurement implications.

10 Climate Change Implications

- 10.1 There are no climate change implications implicit in this report's recommendation.

11 Policy Implications

- 11.1 The adoption of the revised management plan is included under Priority 2 'Protect and Enhance the Environment' and Focus 4 'Help to Build a Strong Local Community' as set out in the Council's Business Plan 2015 -18.

12 Equalities and Diversity

- 12.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been carried out in connection with the recommendations in this report.
- 12.2 Management at Northaw Great Wood will continue to support access for local residents, families and the less mobile within the expectations imposed by ground conditions characteristic of natural woodlands.

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Background Papers: None – no changes to draft plan previously distributed

Appendices: None