

REPORT FOR DECISION



DECISION MAKER:	CABINET
DATE:	4 MARCH 2015
SUBJECT:	BURRS COUNTRY PARK STRATEGY
REPORT FROM:	CABINET MEMBER – COMMUNITIES AND CULTURE
CONTACT OFFICER:	MICHAEL WHITEHEAD – PLANNING OFFICER
TYPE OF DECISION:	CABINET (KEY DECISION)
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	This paper is within the public domain
SUMMARY:	<p>This report concerns a draft strategy for the future development of Burrs Country Park over a time period of 15 years from 2015 to 2029, identifying key projects that will help to fulfil Burrs’ potential to establish itself as a ‘destination park’ of regional significance.</p> <p>In addition to reaffirming the Council’s ambition to make Burrs a quality regional family tourist attraction, the strategy aims to capitalise on the Borough’s reputation as a sub-regional success story by generating higher visitor numbers and longer stays in the area, whilst making a commitment to work with partners in encouraging investment and support funding applications. In particular, the strategy will assist in unlocking the potential of Burrs and the East Lancashire Railway by establishing a direct Burrs Country Park railway halt.</p> <p>Approval is therefore sought for the proposed draft Burrs Country Park Strategy to be brought forward for a 4-week public consultation. After consultation, all comments received will be considered and changes made where appropriate. A final version of the strategy will then be subject to a delegated decision by Cabinet Member for approval and publication.</p>
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	<p>Option 1 (Recommended Option) That Members approve the Burrs Country Park Strategy for consultation purposes.</p> <p>Option 2 That Members seek revisions to the Burrs Country Park Strategy. Members to specify the nature of any revisions to be sought.</p>

	<p>Reasons Option 1 would enable the Burrs Country Park Strategy to go out for a period of public consultation, therefore allowing local business partners and other interested parties to have their say prior to final publication.</p>
IMPLICATIONS:	
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	<p>Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework?</p> <p>The draft strategy is in line with the principles of the following policies and proposals of the Unitary Development Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal RT3/1/4 on Protection of Existing Recreation Provision in the Countryside (Burrs Country Park); • Policy RT4/1 on Tourism Development; • Proposal RT4/6/3 on East Lancashire Railway (Proposed Station Halt, Burrs Country Park).
Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	<p>This report sets out the Council's commitment and ambition to develop Burrs Country Park.</p> <p>Resources to deliver the strategy will be dependent upon the success of external funding bids.</p>
Statement by Executive Director of Resources:	<p>Burrs is a key Council and community asset and the draft Strategy, with is in line with the Council's Asset Management Plan, sets out a very welcome approach which will help to move the Park to another level as a vital contributor to the borough's tourism offer.</p>
Equality/Diversity implications:	<p>No</p> <p>An initial screening has been undertaken (see attached assessment) which did not identify any negative impacts on equality.</p>
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	<p>Yes JH</p>
Wards Affected:	<p>Elton, Moorside, North Manor</p>
Scrutiny Interest:	

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR: MIKE OWEN

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Cabinet Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
26th January 2015			
Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet/Committee	Council	
	4th March 2015		

1.0 BACKGROUND & ISSUES

- 1.1 Burrs Country Park has much to offer the visitor and the Council is proud of the transformation undertaken to-date in developing a formerly derelict site into the Green Flag Award-winning flagship park it is today. Since its establishment in the late 1980s, Burrs has formed part of an evolving visitor destination offer for the Borough, playing host to a wide range of events, short walks or high-octane leisure activities for the family.
- 1.2 The visitor economy of the Borough has seen substantial investment in recent years, encompassing a vibrant Bury town centre and a set of linked attractions, such as Bury Market, The Fusilier Museum, Bury Transport Museum and the East Lancashire Railway (ELR) which give the Borough a strong identity. Burrs remains one of the Borough's major visitor attractions in a growing local cultural and tourism sector and is very much part of Bury's success story. However, the site is in need of a refresh to help modernise and sustain the park as a 21st Century community facility and to aid in realising its potential. The strategy sets a 15-year timeframe and is split into three phases aimed at establishing a 'destination park' which is both a regional attraction and forms a key element of the town's tourism portfolio.
- 1.3 Key to the success of the Strategy is the development of a railway halt at Burrs on the ELR and an extension to the Caravan Club site under Phase 1. The completion of these two projects will be essential in enhancing Bury's growing visitor offer as it will create a direct link between the park and the attractions and businesses in Bury town centre and along the wider Irwell Valley. The strategy notes that this new 'cluster' of attractions will increase the family appeal of Burrs and therefore an expanded events programme and new Marketing and Destination Strategy will be required to help satisfy the demand generated from an expected rise in visitor numbers. Other projects in the strategy are linked to expanding the role of the park and will oversee significant improvements to the quality of existing facilities such as the new visitor centre and restoration and enhancement of archaeological and water features.

Burrs Halt and the Caravan Club

- 1.4 The proposed railway halt and the extension to the Caravan Club both have the benefit of planning permission. The necessary funding to complete the work remains a key obstacle and therefore a significant element of the project cost will need to be generated through an external bidding exercise. The construction of Burrs Halt has been a Council priority for a number of years and it is intended that the Strategy will provide support to any subsequent grant applications made by the ELR Trust. Officers are to approach the Caravan Club to discuss the potential for the organisation to contribute towards the scheme

who will be taking on additional land following the construction of the halt to facilitate the extension of their existing site.

Consultation and Adoption

- 1.5 The Council intends to engage with a series of partners to develop the Strategy. A preliminary consultation phase has been undertaken in January/February 2015 to discuss the draft strategy with key partners such as the ELR Trust and the Friends of Burrs Country Park. A meeting with the Caravan Club is expected to take place in late February or early March.
- 1.6 If the Burrs Country Park Strategy is approved for consultation, it will undergo a four-week period of consultation with appropriate internal and external stakeholders. Following consultation, amendments will be made, where considered appropriate, and providing there are no significant changes to the document the revised version will be subject to a delegated decision by Cabinet Member for approval and publication.

Risk Management

- 1.7 There is a risk that the individual projects within the Strategy will change over time as different opportunities arise and budgets and priorities fluctuate. The Strategy can be updated to accommodate any changes.

2 CONCLUSION

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the Burrs Country Park Strategy and approve the document for consultation purposes.
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List of Background Papers:-

- Burrs Country Park Strategy
- East Lancashire Railway 2020 Strategy (Locum Consulting)

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