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**MAIDENDALE NATURE AND FISHING RESERVE PHASE 1 EXTENSION**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor David Lyonette,  
Regeneration and Planning Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the continuation of work at Maidendale Local Nature reserve to develop the reserve for both people and wildlife.

**Information and Analysis**

2. The project is devised from aims within Darlington's Countryside Strategy to continue to improve the biodiversity and countryside access in Darlington Borough Council's Local Natures Reserves (LNR). Maidendale LNR already fulfils some key aspects of the Biodiversity Action Plan for Darlington and it is a duty on Local Authorities to carry out programmes of work that promote the aims of the plan.
3. The project proposed by the report sees the continuation of the work including securing the employment of the Site Ranger as well as improved habitat for European Protected Species as well as an additional 500 metres of surfaced path. This follows a successful bid to County Durham Environmental Trust as well as additional funds made available from the adjoining housing developers. The report also details the capital and revenue funding needed for the project and asks for the funds to be released for the purpose of carrying out the project.
4. The new funding comes from three sources. These are, £40,000 from County Durham Environmental Trust, £36,000 from the two adjacent developers, Barratts and Haslam Homes and £5,000 from the Local Area Agreement.
5. The work at the reserve over the past three years has seen the transformation of the site from a largely featureless scrubland with only moderate levels of importance for wildlife and limited access for the public, to a place increasingly held in high regard by the adjacent community as well as from further afield, as an area rich in biodiversity and a venue for quiet recreation and healthy exercise. This includes extensive areas of wetland, two well stocked fishing ponds as well as over a kilometre of easy to use, loose surfaced paths and boardwalks. These features see phase 1 of the project close to completion, although the new monies allow for additional elements in a similar vein to be added that will enhance the site further.
6. The reserve is now a 7 hectare area of semi natural green space, that sees this part of the urban fringe brought up to a standard fitting for the new century as well as one that

performs a multitude of functions for both people and wildlife.

7. The project has also explored in detail the possibility of locating a countryside rangers centre at the site, the aim of which will be to further consolidate the reserve as a venue for countryside activities such as education on wildlife issues, a place for volunteers to meet and a venue from which the reserves ranger can use as a base. The construction of this building would be a part of a second phase for this project and once fully investigated will be the subject of a new report to Cabinet. The funding for phase 2 is currently under investigation and will be delivered in close partnership with the Maidendale Trust who will manage the fishing side of the nature reserve on a day to day basis. If for some reason the bid from the Trust for the funding of the new building is not successful then the reserve will still remain an important asset to the Community as an area for stimulating informal recreational activity.
8. The new monies received for the extension of phase 1 of the project will allow us to further consolidate this phase by continuing the employment of a dedicated ranger who is crucial in ensuring the project is delivered with the maximum level of community involvement. The accompanying table shows that the revenue commitment for the Manager is for one further year's salary while the post will continue to be hosted by the Countryside Team. After this period it is envisaged that the post will transfer to the Trust and continue with further external funding or in combination with fees derived from the fishing facility.
9. The phase 1 extension will also fund the construction of significant amount of additional wetland habitat and associated planting as well provide some additional 500 metres of new path.

#### Phase 1 Extension

Capital	New Wildlife Ponds Extensions to Path Network New Habitat	£50,000
Revenue	Ranger's Salary Educational Material Monitoring etc	£21,000 £10,000

#### **Outcome of Consultation**

10. The project is subject to continual consultation through the Maidendale Nature and Fishing Reserve Trust.

#### **Legal Implications**

11. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

## **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

12. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. One of this project's main aims is to provide alternative activities, in particular angling, for young people living close to the facility.

## **Council Policy Framework**

13. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

## **Decision Deadline**

14. In order to be able to proceed with these works it would be helpful to receive approval at this stage to allow works to proceed within the existing English Nature License granted for works within 500 metres of a great crested newt site and due to expire in late March.

## **Recommendation**

15. It is recommended Members agree to the extension of phase 1 of the project and agree to the release of £50,000 Capital funding and £31,000 revenue funding.

## **Reason**

16. The reason for this recommendation is to enable work to begin on implementing the extension of phase 1 of the project as soon as possible.

**John Buxton**  
**Director of Development and Environment**

## **Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Rob George : Extension 2637  
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