

		AGENDA ITEM 8
		GTP/04/15
Meeting:	GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP BOARD	
Date:	23 January 2015	
Joint Partnership and Long Term Vision for Great Notley Park		
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1. Purpose

This report seeks approval from the Joint Venture Partnership Board (JVPB) to undertake a strategic review of Great Notley Country Park (GNCP) setting out the vision and aspirations over the next 5 to 10 years for the development and management of the Country Park as a major visitor attraction in the Braintree District and County of Essex.

In addition, the Board's approval is sought to review the current partnership arrangements and Joint Committee Agreement to reflect the changing needs of the partnership, a new shared vision and long-term plans for the Country Park.

2. Background

The current partnership between Braintree District Council and Essex County Council for the management and operation of the GNCP was established back in 2008. Over the past 6 years, the partnership has seen the park transform into an important visitor attraction in the Braintree District. Investments in play equipment, the visitor centre, car parking, an Artificial Grass Pitch and Multi-Use Games Area, other grass pitches, organised events and the overall maintenance of the park itself has significantly increased its popularity amongst local residents and visitors who use the park for both informal and formal leisure and recreational activities.

3. Strategic Context

The importance of the park and its role in meeting our respective partnership aims and objectives around people's health and wellbeing, giving children the best start in life and providing a high quality environment, is fully recognised. Also important is the park's identity (as a flagship country park) and the distinctive role it has in helping to shape the local economic, social and environmental wellbeing of communities within the District and indeed countywide. When considered in the context of BDC's new Local Plan and additional property growth, the park will continue to play an important part in helping to shape and develop the local area. In addition, the need to improve the financial sustainability of the

park to a point where it becomes cost neutral is critical in meeting the current and future financial challenges facing our respective Authorities.

4. Proposed Review

It is considered appropriate and the right time to commission a strategic review of our aspirational longer-term vision of the park, its operation and the joint partnership model.

The outcome will be for BDC and ECC to agree a new shared vision and 'master plan' for the development and future direction of the park, that safeguards and ensures a sustainable future for it as a first class destination/visitor attraction for leisure, recreation, sport, nature and conservation.

Members of the JVPB will be asked for their views to help inform the proposed Scope, Terms of Reference and Timeline for the review at its meeting of the JVPB on 23rd January 2015. The intention is to commence the review in the second half of 2015 to allow sufficient officer participation, as by that time the project for the new High Ropes Course at the park will have been completed and officer time will be freed up to work on this and other projects.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

It is proposed to engage an external consultancy through a procurement framework agreement to carry out the review in conjunction with officers from both BDC and ECC. This will include examining and incorporating best practice and innovative thinking from other successful country parks across the country.

An indicative cost of the review is circa £30k which will be funded equally between BDC (Local Plan Fund) and ECC.

6. RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Joint Venture Partnership Board approves a strategic review of the park setting out the options for its future direction over the next 5 to 10 years, including the operational and the joint partnership/governance models.

Paul Partridge
Head of Operations

Tim Dixon
Head of Country Parks

28th November 2014