



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet 22 September 2022

Designation of New Local Nature Reserves

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Carolyn Healy – Cabinet Member: Climate Change, Green Spaces, Natural and Historic Environment and Cultural Services	
Lead Director:	James Dunn – Director: Prosperity & Investment	
Service Area:	Development Management	
Report Author:	Fran Lancaster - Ecology & Green Infrastructure Specialist	
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 384220	Email: Fran.Lancaster@Telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All	
Key Decision:	Key Decision	
Forward Plan:	Yes	
Report considered by:	Cabinet - 22 September 2022	

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

1.1 It is recommended that cabinet:

- Approves the declaration of the new areas of Local Nature Reserve including both new and extended sites
- Delegates authority to complete the declaration process to the Director of Prosperity and Investment and Director of Policy and Governance in consultation with the Cabinet member for Climate Change, Green Spaces, Natural and Historic Environment and Cultural Services.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 This report sets out proposals for Cabinet to approve the declaration of extensive new areas of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) under Sections 19 and 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

- 2.2 The declaration of these new areas of LNR forms part of a wider program of works being delivered by the Council to protect, care and invest in the borough's natural environment. To date this program has protected over 1000ha of locally important green spaces valued by our local communities, protecting 200 Green Guarantee sites and 17 LNRs.
- 2.3 The proposed new areas of LNR includes a range of new sites along with some extensions to existing LNRs to cover areas of land which were not included in the original declarations. The Council will continue to identify suitable land across the borough on an ongoing basis, including ongoing discussions to extend Dawley Hamlets LNR.
- 2.4 The declaration of these further areas of LNRs, over new parcels comprising a mix of new LNRs and extensions to existing LNRs covers 151ha and will bring the number of LNRs in the Borough to 23 covering an area of 707ha.
- 2.5 The declaration of the LNRs identified within the adopted Telford and Wrekin Local Plan (2011- 2031) has been completed. The Local Plan is currently under review, and the designation of further LNRs has been identified as a key driver in the delivery of an enhanced and better protected natural environment within the borough. The further program of LNR declarations set out in this report addresses that need.
- 2.6 Visitor modelling in 2020 identified that the borough's existing 17 Local Nature Reserves receive approximately 3.5 million visits a year. The derived welfare value provided by those visits can be valued at approximately £12.5 million/yr. Of the 3.5 million visits per year approximately 2.5 million visits are made via active travel and 1.1 million visits are made by individuals who have never visited the LNRs before.
- 2.7 It is increasingly recognised that we are facing three challenges linked to the natural environment:
- The impacts of a changing climate,
 - The impacts of current declines in biodiversity, and
 - The increasing need to strengthen the connections between people and the natural world.

The protection of additional areas of LNR, as part of a wider suite of sites across the borough, will help to address these challenges at a local level.

- 2.8 LNR status recognises the role each site plays in increasing local resilience to a changing climate whilst as a core site within the borough's wider green network the designation provides recognition of the site's wider ecological value. The designation ensures residents will have continued access to accessible green space on their doorstep allowing them to create meaningful connections to the natural environment as well as helping people improve their health and wellbeing by engaging in healthy activities locally. The Council is not simply providing these spaces but working actively to ensure they are participatory. Telford's green spaces are cared for by a combination of Council services and just under 30

individual ‘friends of’ groups, many of which are affiliated with The Telford Green Space Partnership.

- 2.9 The response to the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the need for our communities to have access to local green space and has shown that there are inequalities in the levels of local green space provision and accessibility. At the height of the pandemic in 2020 the UK’s People and Nature survey found that nearly 50% of adults surveyed had spent more time in the natural environment than before the pandemic. However, it was also found that people’s ability to access local green space was strongly linked to their socio-economic status. People living in areas of high deprivation, on low incomes or without a current job were less likely to be visiting local green spaces. Similar trends were also found for older people, minority ethnic groups and those with long term illness.
- 2.10 The increasing provision of LNRs in the borough, including designating sites in areas of higher than average deprivation particularly in the south of the borough, will improve both the availability and, through effective promotion and engagement, knowledge of how the sites can be accessed and used. The formation of a ‘friends of’ group for each site will provide an opportunity for community involvement and a feeling of local ownership as well as opportunities for physical activity and social interaction through volunteering. Educational usage of the sites, by local schools, engages school aged children with the natural environment and with their local green spaces. This work complements the Council’s Safer Stronger Communities program.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The proposed new areas of LNR includes a range of new sites along with some extensions to existing LNRs to cover areas of land which were not included in the original declarations.
- 3.2 The declaration of these further areas of LNRs, over new parcels comprising a mix of new LNRs and extensions to existing LNRs, covers 151ha and will bring the number of LNRs in the Borough to 23 covering an area of 707ha.
- 3.3 The declaration of the LNRs identified within the adopted Telford and Wrekin Local Plan (2011- 2031) has been completed. The Local Plan is currently under review, and the designation of further LNRs has been identified as a key driver in the delivery of an enhanced and better protected natural environment within the borough. The further program of LNR declarations set out in this report addresses that need.
- 3.4 Visitor modelling in 2020 identified that the borough’s existing 17 Local Nature Reserves receive approximately 3.5 million visits a year. The derived welfare value provided by those visits can be valued at approximately £12.5 million/yr. Of the 3.5 million visits per year approximately 2.5 million visits are made via active travel and 1.1 million visits are made by individuals who have never visited the LNRs before.
- 3.5 The details of the proposed LNR’s are as follows:

Proposed New LNR	Ward	Hectares
Central Hall	Donnington	5
Heath Hill and Pool Hill	Dawley & Aqueduct	13
Holmer Lake with Kemberton Meadow and Mounds	Madeley & Sutton Hill The Nedge Brookside	30
Horsehay Pool with Simpsons Pool	Horsehay & Lightmoor	7
Snedshill and the Flash	Priorslee and St Georges	48
Langley Fields	Malinslee & Dawley Bank	13
SUB TOTAL		116
Proposed Extensions	Ward	Hectares
Dothill LNR	Dothill, Shawbirch Admaston & Bratton	12
Granville	Muxton	23
SUB TOTAL		35
OVERAL TOTAL		151

3.6 A series of maps showing the proposed LNRs is presented in Appendix 1.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 This report sets out a proposal for the Council to agree to declare a number of new parcels of land as statutory Local Nature Reserve. This is in accordance with the provisions of Sections 19 and 21 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Local Nature Reserves provide opportunities for volunteering in the natural environment which increases physical activity, social interaction, encourages the lifelong learning of new skills and allows individuals to give back to their local community which leads to increases in physical and mental wellbeing.

4.2 The sites meet the necessary criteria for declaration and draft management plans are in preparation. Initial engagement with Natural England has been undertaken along with the appropriate level of geotechnical assessment. As part of the declaration process and following Cabinet approval, a series of legal checks will be undertaken including reports on title, coal and drainage searches. Detailed boundary work will also be undertaken with any small changes required being made before declaration. Following which a consultation document will be issued to Natural England to seek their formal 'Welcome' prior to completion of the declarations and the associated legal seals.

The Sites

Central Hall

- 4.3 This site covers 5ha in Donnington Ward off Oakengates Road and St Georges Road. The site is comprised of wet grassland, scrub and grassy banks and is an adopted Local Wildlife Site.

Heath Hill and Pool Hill

- 4.4 This site covers 13ha in Dawley & Aqueduct Ward between Doseley Road and Station Road, and between Station Road and Fence Road. The sites are largely wooded with a mix of broadleaved trees with some open areas of gorse and bracken at Pool Hill.

Horsehay Pool with Simpsons Pool

- 4.5 Horsehay Pool is a 3ha site north of Bridge Road in Horsehay & Lightmoor Ward. The site is comprised of a large mature lake along with the woodland and grassed surrounds. With it is Simpsons Pool which covers an additional 4ha west of the A5223 Wellington Road in Horsehay and Lightmoor Ward. This compartment of the site includes a deep former quarry pool and the surrounding broadleaved woodland. There are angling and recreational interests on these pools which will be protected as the site management plan is written.

Holmer Lake with Kemberton Meadow and Mounds

- 4.6 The lake covers 9ha in The Nedge Ward and Brookside Ward north of the A442 Queensway and includes areas of woodland and grassland around the lake which is a reservoir. The lake itself is not in the ownership of the Council and cannot be included in the declaration. Kemberton Meadows and Mounds is comprised of 20ha and sites on the intersection of Madeley & Sutton Hill Ward, The Nedge Ward and Brookside Ward south of the A442 Queensway and in close proximity to Holmer Lake. The site includes a mosaic of grasslands, scrub and wooded pitmounds on the eastern edge of Halesfield Industrial Estate.

Snedhill and the Flash

- 4.7 This site includes 49ha of land in three distinct compartments within Priorslee Ward and St Georges Ward.
- The Flash sits east of the A5 St Georges Bypass and covers an extensive area of woodland and grassland and the mature Hangman's Pool. The pool has historically been used for angling and this use would be protected. There is also an existing play area and a small pitch with the potential for future enhancement. These existing facilities will be protected in the management planning for the site and potential enhancement of formal recreational facilities would be made clear at the time of declaration with the potential for the boundary to be amended around these facilities at the time of declaration.

- Snedhill covers a former mine working location east of the A442 either side of Cannongate and is comprised of secondary woodland and grassland areas. There is an existing ball court and youth shelter within the site and a new play area is proposed to be delivered in 2022. Neither of these facilities will be impacted by the proposed LNR status and management activity will seek to maintain and secure these facilities.
- Redhill Eco Park with great crested newt pools and pitmounds covering land around the Redhill development in St. Gorges.

Langley Fields

- 4.8 The site covers 13ha of land in Malinslee and Dawley Bank Ward adjacent to the new Telford Langley School off Duce Drive. The site includes a mosaic of pools and woodland with scrub and large areas of heathland. The site is rich in amphibian and reptile species, birds and invertebrates including dingy skipper butterfly.

Extension to Dothill LNR

- 4.9 This large extension to the existing Dothill LNR covers areas of land in Dothill Ward, Shawbirch Ward and Admaston & Bratton Ward totalling 12ha which sit to the north of the existing declared site. The additional land contains areas of woodland, grassland and scrub habitats forming important green connections through the developed area.

Extension to Granville LNR

- 4.10 The proposed extension to the existing Granville LNR in Muxton Ward cover 23ha over two distinct sites:
- The larger compartment sits immediately south west of the current LNR declaration and includes areas of woodland, a steeply sided ‘bowl’, ponds and grassland areas
 - The smaller area covers a small compartment of previously undesignated woodland close to Daisy Bank Drive.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The alternative is to not declare additional land as Local Nature Reserve and to retain the existing sites.
- 5.2 The Council has already declared 556ha of Local Nature Reserve meaning that the borough has close to 3ha of LNR for every 1,000 population. This is 3 times the recommended level of provision and will rise further if these new proposals are taken forward. Telford & Wrekin was within the top 20 local authorities nationally for provision of LNRs based on available data from 2021 and was the leading West Midlands authority at that time.

6.0 Key Risks

6.1 Internal and external consultation with relevant stakeholders has taken place.

- Internal consultations with Engineering Officers confirmed the need for geotechnical risk assessments on these sites which have mining legacy. The geotechnical risk assessments are complete and funding has been secured to implement the recommendations prior to formal declaration.
- Internal consultations with Healthy Spaces Officers have identified some sites where existing play, youth provision or ball game facilities exist within the proposed boundaries, the inclusion of these facilities within proposed LNRs is consistent with previous declarations. These facilities are part of the sites and are part of the balance between conservation and recreational usage of the sites. These facilities will be maintained and managed for their specific use.
- Some sites where additional play or other facilities are desirable have also been identified and management planning will take these needs into account and if necessary small boundary amendments can be made prior to declaration to ensure that these additional or enhanced facilities can be delivered without being constrained by the LNR declaration process.
- Internal consultations with officers including development management, estates, drainage, and environmental maintenance have not identified any potential issues with the declaration of this sites.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 Following declaration the land shown in Appendix 1 will be managed as Local Nature Reserves**
- 7.2 The selection and declaration of Local Nature Reserves play an important role in maintaining a healthy balance in spatial planning between the built environment and green infrastructure. A full list of existing Local Nature Reserves is provided in Table 1.**

7.3 Table 1: Local Nature Reserves in Telford

Site	Size (ha)
Dothill	41
Limekiln Wood	24
Lodge Field	3
Madebrook and Stirchley Dingle	5
Madeley Pit Mounds	43
Telford Town Park	92
The Beeches	4
The Ercall and St Lawrence's Hill	67
The Granville	62
Apley Woods	23
Lillishall Hill	5
Ketley Paddock Mound	5
Randlay Valley (in process)	45
Rough Park (in process)	42
Lightmoor (in process)	24
Dawley Pools and Pit Mounds	38

The Cockshutt (in process)	33
TOTAL	556

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The Council will continue to manage and maintain the sites at its current budget levels. Any recommendations arising from the geotechnical risk assessments and implementation of recommendations arising will be funded from within the Development Management budgets. S106 funding will be used to support the maintenance of play equipment at the sites referred to in section 4.
- 8.2 The Council will work in partnership with Parish & Town Councils and 'Friends' groups and seek to establish groups across these new sites.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 The Council has power under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to establish nature reserves by way of a declaration. The declaration will stand as evidence that the land is a LNR and will be managed as such. LNR status is a statutory designation which reflects an owner's commitment to managing the site for conservation purposes or for a combination of conservation and recreational purposes.
- 9.2 There is a making and publication procedure that needs to be followed regarding the declaration which includes prior consultation with Natural England. Legal Services will assist the Director of Prosperity and Investment as required regarding the process. Declaring a site as a LNR provides opportunity for the Council to make byelaws for the protection of the reserve.
- 9.3 There are no direct HR implications arising from this report.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 The designation of the areas as LNRs will deliver borough wide benefits and specific impacts in multiple wards listed in 4.3 to 4.10 above.
- 10.2 The designation of the LNRs contribute to several priorities, including:
- ensuring that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained
 - improving the health and wellbeing of our communities and addressing health inequalities.
- 10.3 The provision of accessible green spaces contributes to supporting the delivery of the Borough's public health priorities encouraging people of all ages to remain active.
- 10.4 LNR status for these sites will assist in the application for external funding.

10.5 LNR's provide opportunities for volunteering which increases physical and social interaction and encourages lifelong learning of new skills as well as supporting mental wellbeing.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 Outdoor Recreational Value (ORVal Assessment)

ORVal is an online tool that spatially models the number of visits made to sites and calculates the welfare value of these visits. Calculations are based on findings from the 'Monitor of Engagement in Natural Environment' (MENE) surveys and a variety of economic valuation literature. In 2020 Telford and Wrekin Council modelled the outdoor recreational value of the council's LNR series. This high level assessment based on broad habitat types and the presence of outdoor facilities indicated that:

- Telford's 17 Local Nature Reserves receive approximately 3.5 million visits a year.
- Those visits to Telford's 17 Local Nature Reserves can be valued at approximately £12.5 million/yr
- Of the 3.5 million visits per year to our Local Nature Reserves approximately 2.5 million visits are made via active travel, and
- Of the 3.5 million visits per year 1.1 million visits are made by individuals who have never visited the LNRs before.

Accessible Natural Green Space ANGsT

11.2 In 2010 Natural England published 'Nature Nearby' setting out the recommended standards for Accessible Natural Greenspace:

"Everyone, wherever they live, should have accessible natural greenspace:

- *Of at least 2 ha in size, no more than 300 metres from home;*
- *At least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km of home; and*
- *One accessible 500 ha site within 10km of home; plus*
- *A minimum of one hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 population"*

11.3 At the time of Telford's inception it was intended that every 1000 of the population would have access to four hectares of green space. This standard was achieved by the 1980s.

11.4 In 2016 the Marches Ecosystem Assessment revealed that 89% of households within Telford and Wrekin are within 300m of accessible natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size.

11.5 The borough of Telford and Wrekin has an estimated population of 185,600 people (Office of National Statistics, 2021). The Cabinet approval of these eleven new areas of Local Nature Reserve will increase the spatial coverage of Cabinet approved and formally declared LNR's in the borough by 151hectares to 707 hectares. The declaration of all the cabinet approved Local Nature Reserves will result in approximately 3.8ha of LNR per 1000 of the population, nearly four times the minimum recommended standard.

11.6 Health and Mental Wellbeing

Health inequalities are often linked to individuals' access to nature. It has been shown that living close to accessible green spaces can promote public health and reduce levels of obesity, heart disease, reduce stress and levels of depression.

- 11.7 Access to high quality green space is important to health and wellbeing at all stages in life. Learning through natural play is a key part of developing imagination, physical fine motor skills and improves a child's ability to deal with stress and adversity in life. Activities in nature can have a significant impact on reducing social isolation and symptoms anxiety and depression in adults.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 The Council, working with parish and town councils, friends groups and local environmental organisations has made a commitment to address the inequalities in physical, cultural and social access to the natural environment and this reflects even more positively given the changes seen through the pandemic.
- 12.2 Volunteering through Friends of Groups is an established and effective way of engaging A wide range of people and provides opportunities for maintaining and improving physical health as well as providing social opportunities. These groups also offer opportunities for local people to be involved in site management and decision making processes through the steering groups on which Telford & Wrekin Council, town and parish councils and local people work together for the good of the site.
- 12.3 Telford & Wrekin Council is also delivering Live Well Telford, an online community directory which signposts local people to a range of services across the borough. Volunteering opportunities at Local Nature Reserves are made available on this directory.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 Natural Capital

In 2020 a government review collated and assessed our current understanding of the economics of biodiversity. The study sets out how we rely on the natural environment to provide us with food, water and shelter and how the natural systems we are part of regulate our climate, maintain nutrient cycles and oxygen production. The review sets out how, as individuals or as communities, the natural environment can enhance our physical health and mental wellbeing providing us with opportunities for spiritual fulfilment, recreation and recuperation. The study highlighted how the natural systems we are part of also absorb the waste products we produce including carbon dioxide, plastics and other forms of waste that, in some instances, can be polluting or disruptive to the way the natural systems we are part of work.

- 13.2 The natural environment has an intrinsic worth. However, our natural environment can also be viewed as an asset in the same way that roads, buildings and factories or health, knowledge and skills are assets. The natural environment has 'value' and delivers 'economic good'.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 13.3 The Council's existing and proposed LNRs hold a considerable resource of biodiversity which the Council is making a baseline assessment of biodiversity value in 2022 and 2023. The Council will identify potential for increasing biodiversity value across these sites, through amending and altering management, and determining how those increases are funded in the long term.

14.0 Background Papers

None

15.0 Appendices

A Site Maps

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Finance	05/08/2022	12/08/2022	AM
Legal	05/08/2022	10/08/2022	HR
Director	05/08/2022	12/09/2022	JD