



**Service Delivery
Committee**

**Tuesday, 20 March
2018**

**Matter for
Information**

Title: Greening of the Borough and Operational Services Update

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Brian Kew (Head of Operational & Street Scene Services)**

1. Introduction

This report provides Members with a progress report on the Natural Discovery Volunteer Project; Brocks Hill Country Park; an update from the Operational and Street Scene Services and details of the Tree planting programme.

2. Recommendation(s)

That Members note the information provided within the report, including the associated appendices, and endorse and promote the range of opportunities to the wider audience.

3. Information

3.1. Natural Discovery Volunteer Project

The end of February marked the last phase of the funded element of the Natural Discovery Volunteer project. A full report has been produced for Heritage Lottery (**Appendix A**) a copy of which is available on the Council's website at goo.gl/EW6aBb or in the Members' Room.

The report highlights the benefits and achievements identified as a result of the Heritage Lottery grant awarded to Oadby and Wigston Borough Council in 2015. It also reports on the challenges encountered during the project delivery, together with learning and recommendations.

The Natural Discovery Volunteer Project was developed in response to a successful pilot scheme set up at Brocks Hill Country Park, to explore volunteer role development. The Natural Discovery project focused on increasing volunteering opportunities; volunteer recruitment; providing appropriate training; whilst celebrating the improvements to the Borough's natural green spaces.

This project was developed as a partnership project and involved a range of stakeholders, as well as directly linking to the Council's 'Greening the Borough' strategy. One of the key partners was the 'Friends of Brocks Hill', who were involved in the project bid and delivery from the start. Not only did they bring in a considerable amount of partnership funding at the beginning, but as the project progressed they continued to raise money for the benefit of the volunteers.

There were many achievements throughout the course of the project, including an increase in the number of new people engaged in volunteering, thus increasing the number of volunteering hours achieved. The ability to purchase a range of new tools and equipment through the grant funding, including an Electric Van, will act as a lasting legacy to the project. This, together with well-trained volunteers through a

dedicated programme of training (ensuring the majority of investment was in the Lead Volunteers to aid sustainability), has been really positive and will help to improve the Borough's natural green spaces now and into the future.

There were some challenges along the way. This included the need to re-recruit twice to the Project Officer post; it was therefore agreed with Heritage Lottery to extend the project end date, in order to fully deliver the planned two-year project. On reflection, it was felt that the low starting salary for the post holder and the fact that it was a fixed-term contract contributed to this.

There was some learning from the project; this included the need to be more realistic with the Key Performance Indicators, to take account of the seasonal constraints and the number of volunteering hours that can be accumulated across relatively small local sites. Another key learning point was to ensure more robust monitoring and evaluation procedures were set-up from the start, in order to be able to fully evaluate the project at the end.

In conclusion, this project has left a lasting legacy for the Borough. The engagement of a range of individuals who wouldn't normally seek out conservation volunteering has been positive, particularly the difference volunteering has made to their lives. The range of physical improvements achieved across the Borough, have undoubtedly contributed to the on-going achievement of the Green Flag Award and honours awarded at both the East Midlands and Britain in Bloom competitions.

The opportunity to carry out conservation volunteering will continue to be driven forward through the Council's commitment to improving the environment and the health and wellbeing of its residents. This can be seen by its commitment to employ a full-time, permanent Park Warden, who will oversee and coordinate all volunteering and practical works going forward, across Brocks Hill, Fludes Lane and Pochin's Bridge.

3.2. Brocks Hill Country Park Update

The majority of winter work at Brocks Hill Country Park has consisted of woodland thinning. Good progress has been made, in accordance with the licence from the Forestry Commission, to thin the entire woodland at Brocks Hill by 2021. The Park Warden, together with two members of the Grounds Maintenance team have worked together to fell trees from November 2017 to February 2018. The area completed so far is approximately 2.4 hectares, with further works to be carried out next winter.

The volunteers have provided immense assistance with this work by clearing arisings from the tree thinning, dragging, chipping and burning branches. This is in addition to creating many log and branch piles, which are valuable habitat for amphibians and small mammals, as well as invertebrates which are an important base of the food chain for so many other species. Volunteer work has also included scrub cutting and orchard tree pruning. Two dedicated Tree Pruning training courses were arranged in January, to upskill the volunteers on this particular task.

In October, four ladies from Charnwood Foods returned for another successful corporate volunteering day. Work was carried out on the front pond at Brocks Hill, using the new small boat purchased through the Heritage Lottery grant. Pond maintenance was carried out by clearing rubbish and reeds to keep the water open in the centre of the pond, benefitting species such as the kingfisher. New bird and bat boxes were also erected to replace older ones that have rotted or fallen off trees.

Throughout winter the Park Warden has worked on the new Management Plan for Brocks Hill (**Appendix B**). An up-to-date plan was required for submission to the Green Flag Award. The plan contains new images, updated habitat and volunteer information and biological data for the country park. A copy of the full document is available on the Council's website at goo.gl/EW6aBb or in the Members' Room.

3.3. **Operations and Street Scene Update**

The ground maintenance team is currently in the middle of their winter maintenance programme. This includes pruning back shrubbery, tree maintenance, tidying up flower and shrub beds. This is in addition to the on-going works including applying woodchip to beds to keep the weeds down.

The regular works on the Borough's parks and open spaces is continuing, as well as in the relevant housing areas. The team has also assisted with tree thinning at Brocks Hill, as mentioned in the previous section.

Moving forward, the team is preparing areas for the beginning of the mowing season, which starts from mid-March onwards depending on the weather conditions. Other works include the upkeep of the Borough's bowling greens, football pitches and cricket pitches.

3.4. **Tree Planting Programme**

Plans are currently in action for planting 38 Heavy/Extra Heavy Standard size trees across 6 sites in the Borough. The sites are a mixture of highways and parks including Launceston Road, Welford Road, Ervins Lock, Blaby Road Park, Florence Wragg Way and Uplands Park. Species and planting locations have been carefully considered and include a mixture of native and non-native species.

The Borough's three Rotary Clubs are taking part in a national campaign to plant a tree for every member. This will consist of 60 whips of native species on the green space adjacent to Hamble Road, Oadby. The Council will be providing 2 Heavy Standard trees as part of this.

'Greening the Borough' have funding for approximately 10 trees to be planted along Dorset Avenue and Gloucester Crescent in Wigston. Final locations and species are being determined, currently a mixture of Alder, Sorbus and Liquidambar are proposed.

Moving forward the Tree Officer is looking to identify sites and areas that would benefit the most from new planting as well as funding opportunities. Sites under consideration for the next round of planting include Brabazon Road, Sandhurst Street Car Park, William Gunning Park and Wigston Road.

Background Documents:

Appendix A - Natural Discovery Volunteer Project - Evaluation Report
Appendix B - Brocks Hill Country Park Management Plan (2018-2022)
Accessible at goo.gl/EW6aBb

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Implications Greening of the Borough and Operational Services Update	
Finance Chris Raymakers (Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits)	There are no financial implications directly from this report
Legal David Gill (Head of Law & Governance / Monitoring Officer)	The report is satisfactory.
Corporate Risk(s) (CR) Avril Lennox (Head of Health & Leisure Services) Brian Kew (Head of Operational Services & Street Clean)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decreasing Financial Resources (CR1) Some projects are reliant on external funding and volunteer input; therefore if these are reduced it could impact on service delivery
Corporate Priorities (CP) Avril Lennox (Head of Health & Leisure Services) Brian Kew (Head of Operational Services & Street Clean)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An Inclusive and Engaged Borough (CP1) Working in partnership to provide access to all. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Effective Service Provision (CP2) Utilising external funding and volunteer input to delivery local projects. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Green & Safe Places (CP4) Utilising and improving our green spaces, protecting habitats. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wellbeing for All (CP5) Increasing the range of opportunities, and providing opportunities for volunteers to engage with projects.
Vision & Values (V) Avril Lennox (Head of Health & Leisure Services) Brian Kew (Head of Operational Services & Street Clean)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> "A Strong Borough Together" (Vision) Continuing the positive working arrangements with new and existing partners to deliver an effective service. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accountability (V1) We are accountable through regular monitoring and evaluation reporting and check and challenge groups. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Respect (V2) Equality and fairness is at the heart of what we deliver, as is listening to staff, volunteers and residents to gain valuable insight <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teamwork (V3) Stakeholder teamwork, both internal and external is key to the delivery of projects. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Innovation (V4) The new Brocks Hill service re-design is one of the many

	<p>key innovations Leisure Services is continually driving forwards</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customer Focus (V5)</p> <p>Leisure Services and Operational and Street Scene Services continually go above and beyond stakeholder's and customer's expectations, which can be judged by the number of positive comments received.</p>
<p>Equalities & Equality Assessment(s) (EA)</p>	<p>There are no implications directly from this report.</p>
<p>Avril Lennox (Head of Health & Leisure Services)</p> <p>Brian Kew (Head of Operational Services & Street Clean)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable (EA)</p>