

## Corporate Review Committee

Friday 5 February 2021

**10:00**

Meeting to be conducted using Microsoft Teams - Microsoft Teams

**NB.** Attendance by the public and press is via webcast only which can be viewed here - <https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

John Tradewell  
Director of Corporate Services  
28 January 2021

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## A G E N D A

### PART ONE

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Consideration of the Call In of the Cabinet Decision - Protecting Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation for Future Generations** (Pages 1 - 26)
4. **Exclusion of the Public**

The Chairman to move:-

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of Local Government Act 1972 indicated below”.

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### PART TWO

(All reports in this section are exempt)

#### Membership

Charlotte Atkins	Jeremy Pert
Mike Davies	Bernard Peters
Helen Fisher	Natasha Pullen
John Francis	Stephen Sweeney
Colin Greatorex (Chairman)	Conor Wileman (Vice-Chairman)
Jeremy Oates	Susan Woodward
Ian Parry	

## **Note for Members of the Press and Public**

### **Filming of Meetings**

The Open (public) section of this meeting may be filmed for live or later broadcasting or other use, and, if you are at the meeting, you may be filmed, and are deemed to have agreed to being filmed and to the use of the recording for broadcast and/or other purposes.

### **Recording by Press and Public**

Recording (including by the use of social media) by the Press and Public is permitted from the public seating area provided it does not, in the opinion of the chairman, disrupt the meeting.

**Scrutiny and Support Manager:** Nicholas Pountney Tel: (01785) 276153

<b>Local Members Interest</b>
N/A

## **Corporate Review Committee - Friday 05 February 2021**

### **Consideration of the Call-in of the Cabinet Decision – Protecting Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation for Future Generations**

#### **Recommendation**

That following consideration of the Call In, the Corporate Review Committee either:

- a. Agree for the decision to be implemented as set out in the original decision notice;
- b. Refer the matter on to Cabinet with specific issues for Cabinet to consider; or
- c. Refer the matter on to Full Council should the impact of the decision be deemed to have exceptional significance of public interest.

#### **Report of the Director of Corporate Services**

#### **Report**

#### **Background**

1. In accordance with Section 7 of the County Council's Constitution County Councillors, that are not members of the Cabinet, are permitted to Call an item in if certain criteria are met in terms of the number of Members willing to put their name to an issue being Called In. Where a matter has been Called In then that decision cannot be implemented until such a time as the decision is scrutinised by Corporate Review and any subsequent recommendations of the committee dealt with.
2. Corporate Review Committee has 3 options when scrutinising the decision:
  - a. If having heard evidence in response to the Call In, Corporate Review is satisfied the decision is in the best interests of the communities of Staffordshire and the County Council then they can agree that the decision proceeds without further delay.
  - b. If the committee has concerns over the proposals that aren't resolved at the committee then it has the ability to refer the matter on to Cabinet with specific matters they would ask Cabinet to consider.
  - c. Should it be felt that the decision will have exceptional significance of public interest or is a decision that cannot rightly be taken by Cabinet or a Cabinet Member then the committee could refer the matter on to Full Council.
3. The procedure for the consideration of the call in is set out at Appendix 1. Any further course of action will be determined by the Committee by either committee consensus or by means of a vote.

## The Decision

4. The decision that has been called in was taken by the Cabinet on 20 January 2021. The specific decision set out in the decision notice (attached at Appendix 2) was:

**Reasons for the Decision** – To consider proposals for Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to mitigate impacts of recreational pressure associated with a growing resident population. The plans include a range of on-site measures across the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to reduce pressure on the most sensitive habitats, improve infrastructure and facilities in more robust locations and raise public awareness of the sensitivity of the site.

**Decision** – (a) That the proposed mitigation plans for Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) be noted.

(b) That the recommended approach and proposed scheme of delegation (as follows) be agreed:

- (i) Operational delivery to be overseen by the Assistant Director - Culture, Rural and Safer Communities; and
  - (ii) Agreement of options appraisal / feasibility study outcomes for Chase Road and Marquis Drive by delegated decision by the appropriate Cabinet Member in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities.
5. The detailed report considered by the Cabinet when making the decision is attached.

## Contact Details

<b>Report Author:</b>	Nick Pountney
<b>Job Title:</b>	Scrutiny and Support Manager
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**Consideration of the Call In of the Cabinet Decision – Protecting Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation for Future Generations**

Process	People	Timings
Lead Member nominated by those members who called-in the decision to attend and speak (but not vote)	Charlotte Atkins	<i>5 minutes per speaker</i>
Other call-in members to attend to speak or answer questions raised by the Committee at the invitation of the Corporate Review Committee Chairman		<b>5 minutes</b>
Chairman of the relevant Select Committee to speak at the invitation of the Corporate Review Chairman on any discussions/involvement which the Committee might have had on the issue.	Ian Parry - Chair of Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee	<i>5 minutes per speaker</i> <b>5 Minutes</b>
Cabinet Member, Cabinet Support Member and any supporting Directorate Officer/s to respond at the invitation of the Corporate Review Committee Chairman	Victoria Wilson - Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture  Helen Riley - Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities  Janene Cox OBE, Assistant Director for Culture, Rural and Safer Communities  Sarah Bentley, Environmental Advice Manager	<i>5 minutes per speaker</i>  <b>15 minutes</b>

Corporate Review Committee deliberation and outcome (i.e. do they wish to refer the decision back to Cabinet or Council)	Corporate Review Committee members	
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**NB** The Chairman may direct questions from the Corporate Review Committee members to individual speakers during this process

## Decision details

### Protecting Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation for Future Generations

- [Find out more about this issue](#)

**Decision Maker:** Cabinet

**Decision status:** **Item Called In**

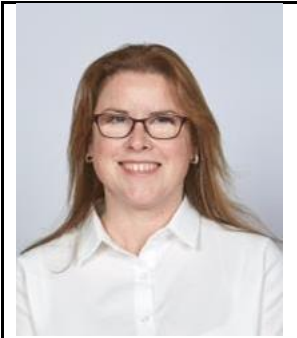
**Is Key decision?:** Yes

**Is subject to call in?:** Yes

#### **Purpose:**

To consider proposals to mitigate the impacts of increased visitor numbers to Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation, including changes to visitor infrastructure at the Council-owned country park such as car parking and site infrastructure.

#### **Decisions:**

	<p>“Not only is Cannock Chase a place of outstanding natural beauty, it is a home of national and international significance to rare plants and wildlife. Staffordshire County Council has a legal and moral duty to protect that vulnerable flora and fauna while maintaining open access for increasing numbers of visitors.</p> <p>This investment of housebuilders’ money over 15 years will improve trails, way signs and interpretation boards, carrying out conservation education in schools and influencing where people park so that we reduce footfall where the landscape and wildlife are most vulnerable and increase capacity where it is more robust.</p> <p>This way we can protect the very things that people come to enjoy, the very things that make Cannock Chase so special and so loved by those who know it”.</p>
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	Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture
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**Reasons for the Decision** – To consider proposals for Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to mitigate impacts of recreational pressure associated with a growing resident population. The plans include a range of on-site measures across the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to reduce pressure on the most sensitive habitats, improve infrastructure and facilities in more robust locations and raise public awareness of the sensitivity of the site.

**Decision** – (a) That the proposed mitigation plans for Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) be noted.

(b) That the recommended approach and proposed scheme of delegation (as follows) be agreed:

- (i) Operational delivery to be overseen by the Assistant Director - Culture, Rural and Safer Communities; and
- (ii) Agreement of options appraisal / feasibility study outcomes for Chase Road and Marquis Drive by delegated decision by the appropriate Cabinet Member in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities.

**Report author:** Sarah Bentley

**Publication date:** 21/01/2021

**Date of decision:** 20/01/2021

**Decided at meeting:** [20/01/2021 - Cabinet](#)

**Issue status:** The decision is currently being reconsidered


**This decision has been called in by:**

- [Charlotte Atkins](#) who writes 1.The Cabinet approach appears piecemeal and lacks evidence of a long term plan for the protection and conservation of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation. 2. The plans do not fully address the needs of people living with a range of disabilities. 3. Despite the County Council's focus on volunteering both before and during the pandemic, the plans do not incorporate a role for volunteers in the protection and conservation of the site. 4. No evidence has been presented to demonstrate that closing car parks and directing people into larger car parks will change the behaviour which is impacting adversely on the SAC. Nor has the environmental impact of expanding some car parks been assessed. 5.The lack of an ecological



assessment of some areas over the last five to ten years raises concerns about the evidence base for these plans."

**Accompanying Documents:**

- [Protecting Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation for Future Generations](#)  PDF 282 KB
- [Appendix 6b - CIA Summary Checklist](#)  PDF 249 KB



## Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 20 January 2021

### Protecting Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation for Future Generations



**Cllr Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture**

“Not only is Cannock Chase a place of outstanding natural beauty, it is a home of national and international significance to rare plants and wildlife.

Staffordshire County Council has a legal and moral duty to protect that vulnerable flora and fauna while maintaining open access for increasing numbers of visitors.

This proposed investment of housebuilders’ money over 15 years is aimed at improving trails, way signs and interpretation boards, carrying out conservation education in schools and influencing where people park so that we reduce footfall where the landscape and wildlife are most vulnerable and increase capacity where it is more robust.

“This way we can protect the very things that people come to enjoy, the very things that make Cannock Chase so special and so loved by those who know it.”

#### **Report Summary:**

Plans have been developed for Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to mitigate impacts of recreational pressure associated with a growing resident population. The plans include a range of on-site measures across the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to reduce pressure on the most sensitive habitats, improve infrastructure and facilities in more robust locations and raise public awareness of the sensitivity of the site.

The report outlines the implications of the plans on Staffordshire County Council’s (SCC) landholding at Cannock Chase Country Park. The proposals do link to SCC’s broad aims and will ultimately help achieve the essential balance between people’s enjoyment of the area and the protection of its special qualities. Flexibility and appropriate phasing will be required in their delivery to ensure that they are integrated with wider site management needs. Implementation of the plans will be funded by developer contributions made to the relevant district and borough councils over the next 15 years.

#### **Recommendations**

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Considers the proposed mitigation plans for Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC);

- b. Agree the recommended approach and proposed scheme of delegation as follows:
- i. Operational delivery to be overseen by the Assistant Director - Culture, Rural and Safer Communities;
  - ii. Agreement of options appraisal / feasibility study outcomes for Chase Road and Marquis Drive by delegated decision by the appropriate Cabinet Member in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities.

<b>Local Members Interest</b>
N/A

## **Cabinet – Wednesday 20 January 2021**

### **Protecting Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation for Future Generations**

#### **Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture**

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Considers the proposed mitigation plans for Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC);
- b. Agree the recommended approach and proposed scheme of delegation as follows:
  - i. Operational delivery to be overseen by the Assistant Director - Culture, Rural and Safer Communities;
  - ii. Agreement of options appraisal / feasibility study outcomes for Chase Road and Marquis Drive by delegated decision by the appropriate Cabinet Member in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities.

#### **Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities**

##### **Reasons for Recommendations:**

##### **Background**

1. The Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is designated under the Habitat Regulations 2017. This designation conveys the highest level of protection, reflecting its international significance. The area is also protected nationally as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and lies within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It supports species which are protected at a national and international level.
2. Cannock Chase is located close to several urban settlements, including Stafford, Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Walsall. In 2018 there were approximately 406,384 residential properties within 15km radius of the AONB and potentially around 1 million people. The area is popular with residents and visitors – an estimated 2.5 million visits are made to Cannock Chase AONB every year. Most visitors are local however they mostly travel to the site by car and the majority are regular site users.
3. Given the vulnerable habitats and heritage features in many parts of the AONB, there have been growing concerns about recreational pressure and the need to actively manage recreation in the area.

4. Detailed studies provide evidence of the impacts of recreational pressure on the Cannock Chase SAC (see appendix 3), including:
  - a. Fragmentation of habitats from people creating new informal paths;
  - b. Disturbance to wildlife;
  - c. Trampling, leading to path widening, vegetation wear, erosion and soil compaction impacting on the heathland habitat;
  - d. Trampling of invertebrate nest sites;
  - e. Damage to tree roots where paths pass close to veteran trees;
  - f. Wildfire;
  - g. Eutrophication – damage to habitats caused by dog fouling;
  - h. Spread of disease (e.g. *Phytophthora*).
5. Within existing local plans, over 30,000 houses are planned to be built within 15km of the SAC. Based upon current patterns of use this is likely to result in an increase of around 15-20% in the number of visits to Cannock Chase, potentially rising to three million visits per year.
6. The Habitat Regulations require that any potential impacts on the SAC must be mitigated and a mechanism for this must be in place for local plans to be approved. Since several district and borough councils' local plans have the potential to impact on the Cannock Chase SAC, the SAC Partnership was created to develop a joint approach to mitigation.
7. The SAC Partnership developed a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Measures plan which set out how this mitigation would be achieved. The plan is funded through developer contributions made for each house built within the agreed 'zone of influence' around the SAC. As part of this strategic approach, two detailed implementation plans have now been developed focusing on:
  - a. Site User Infrastructure, Education and Engagement
  - b. Car parking
8. The implementation plans together identify an estimated £7.8 million programme of potential work that could be undertaken. This goes beyond the current funding that will be available from the current local plans, but it is anticipated that the contributions will continue as further plans develop.
9. As owners of over 90% of the SAC, these plans have management implications for Staffordshire County Council and its operation of Cannock Chase Country Park. This paper summarises the proposals and their implications for the Country Park for consideration by the Committee.

### **SAC Mitigation Implementation Plans**

10. The SAC mitigation implementation plans have been developed by consultants with expertise in managing recreational impacts on heathlands, and in collaboration with landowners and key stakeholders. They have been informed by a robust evidence base, visitor surveys and a public consultation which took place in October / November 2019. In this online consultation, over 6000 separate IP addresses

viewed the consultation web site, with over 400 responses received representing 130 individuals / organisations.

11. The plans include the following broad proposals:

**Site User Infrastructure, Education and Engagement (Appendix 1)**

(representing around 80% of estimated programme costs)

- a. Studies to examine feasibility of enhancing infrastructure at key visitor locations (Birches Valley and forestry land south of the A460; Museum of Cannock Chase and Marquis Drive);
- b. Path improvements and routes;
- c. Directing visitors through improved road and path signage and rationalising the path network;
- d. Face to face engagement;
- e. Digital communication;
- f. Interpretation;
- g. Education;
- h. Targeted information and activities for dog walkers, mountain bikers and other key audiences; and
- i. Monitoring.

**Car Parking (Appendix 2)** (Representing around 20% estimated programme costs)

- a. Reducing the number of parking locations in the most sensitive areas, to help reduce pressure there, and increasing parking capacity in more robust areas so that there will be no overall loss of parking capacity;
- b. Improvements to retained car parks;
- c. Provision of additional parking in sustainable locations;
- d. Opportunities to reduce car use;
- e. Measures to protect the site from displacement (parking on verges etc);
- f. Parking charges at some locations (with any surplus funds reinvested in the sites); and
- g. Monitoring.

12. The implementation plans include measures across much of the AONB, and over multiple ownerships, as measures to protect the SAC often involve diverting visitor pressure away from the more sensitive locations to more resilient areas. This has been informed by detailed sensitivity mapping which has assessed sensitivity of habitats, species and heritage features.

13. The plans identify an ideal approach to implementation to ensure that measures are in place to address issues such as displacement (e.g. parking on verges), and that the long-term car parks are improved ahead of any others being closed to minimise disruption and maintain adequate access for all users.

## Implications of the proposals on SCC land

14. As previously stated, Staffordshire County Council owns a significant area of land and facilities within the AONB and owns over 90% of the Special Area of Conservation and therefore much of the most sensitive and highly protected habitat which is of key interest to the mitigation plans. Several actions are proposed on SCC land at Cannock Chase Country Park and these are set out below.
15. Direct proposals affecting SCC land and the suggested approaches / responses are:

### In relation to Site User Infrastructure, Education and Engagement:

Proposal	Suggested SCC approach
<p><b>Special Project – Marquis Drive Master Plan</b> – a plan to identify how undesignated land at Marquis Drive could be enhanced to upgrade and redesign visitor facilities including parking and recreational trails as well as visitor centre, toilets, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marquis Drive is an important visitor hub for the Chase however its current facilities are dated and unable to cope with visitor demand. There is a significant area of land that is not designated (although parts do have ecological and heritage interest) which could be used more effectively.</li> <li>• A master plan would identify how this area could be used to best effect and enable opportunities for funding to be better utilised to enhance facilities.</li> <li>• Funds are not currently available in the SAC programme for this study; however, it may be beneficial to consider bringing it forward in the programme as it may influence other decisions in this zone and enable other potential funding to be utilised.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Promoted routes</b> from key car parks and hubs targeted to different users</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearer routes aimed at different users may help prevent people getting lost or using unsuitable routes that can create conflicts between users.</li> <li>• Funding for path improvements will be available however there will be ongoing maintenance costs. Identifying key routes would help prioritise maintenance efforts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Managing informal paths</b> by reducing desire lines and unrequired routes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are many unofficial paths on the Chase which cause fragmentation of the heathland. Reducing these allows habitat to recover and enables us to focus maintenance efforts on promoted / key routes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Raising awareness</b> through face to face engagement, digital communication, targeted engagement with key user groups, interpretation and education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence suggests many people are unaware of the importance and fragility of the habitats on the country park, so these measures are important to empower site users to play an active role in its conservation.</li> <li>• It is however important that SAC messages are linked into wider messages about the site and delivered in an integrated way, including through</li> </ul>



	<p>digital technology, to avoid duplication of effort and confusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted engagement and communication for key groups, e.g. mountain bikers, dog walkers, etc, is important and SCC rangers should be fully involved.</li> </ul>
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**In relation to Car Parking:**

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Suggested SCC approach</b>
<p><b>Rationalising car parking</b> locations and options for <b>Chase Road:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measures to prevent parking along roadsides</li> <li>Closure of some small lay-bys in sensitive areas</li> <li>Options appraisal to explore future management of Chase Road bridleway and 22 parking areas along its route</li> <li>Closure of some smaller car parks in sensitive areas</li> <li>Retention and improvement of key car parks</li> <li>Additional parking provision at sustainable locations</li> <li>Reducing car use</li> <li>Introducing car parking charges at key locations to support management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are many parking areas around the country park which currently provide largely free parking in a wide range of locations. However, many of these take people into the most sensitive areas of the SAC and are contributing to negative impacts on habitats. There are also impacts on management resources, since they require regular litter collection, dealing with fly tipping and other anti-social behaviour. Rationalisation, particularly of small informal laybys, would therefore deliver ecological benefits and enable us to better manage resources. Around 50 sites are proposed for closure, however 33 of these are laybys with parking for four or fewer cars. The proposals retain in excess of 70 parking areas around the AONB in a range of locations, so there would still be a mix of busier and quieter areas accessible across the area.</li> <li>Chase Road is a tarmacked bridleway across the site which currently provides permissive vehicular access and has 22 parking locations along it, including laybys. There are various options which require careful consideration, given the sensitive nature of this part of the site, the potential to create enhanced access for people with limited mobility, and the needs of bridleway users (pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists). It is suggested that the options for Chase Road should be discussed with user groups and should be subject to further public consultation.</li> <li>Car park charges (pay &amp; display) are proposed at 17 locations, although five of these will be further considered as part of the Chase Road options appraisal. The proposed locations would need to be considered in terms of whether charging is operationally feasible and before charges came into place the car parks would need to be improved and measures put in place to prevent displacement e.g. parking along verges etc. Around 50 free to park locations would remain around the AONB.</li> <li>SCC currently operates pay &amp; display at Marquis Drive and Milford Common on the Chase and at</li> </ul>

	<p>Chasewater. It is recommended that as pay &amp; display is extended to other SCC locations, charges are rationalised to be the same at all locations and mirroring the Chasewater rates (max £3 per day). Annual permits should be available (currently at £36) and these could be used at any SCC countryside site (costing less than 10p per day). A 6-month permit at £20 should also be considered to ensure affordability for users. Blue badge holders would continue to park for free.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The implementation of these measures would need to consider wider operational needs. Engagement with users would also be important to ensure that car park designs are fit for purpose, e.g. horse box provision and measures for horse riders discussed with the current users, inclusive access discussed with relevant groups, etc.</li> <li>• Improvements to car parks are proposed and this is much needed however it should be in keeping with landscape character.</li> <li>• We note that some changes to the proposals may be required. For example, we will be improving the Toc H trail, a disabled access trail on Brindley Heath which requires significant repair. The location of suitable parking for the trail is currently being considered but we may need to retain Campfield car park as a blue badge only parking area. Access to Brindley Village is also proposed to be retained, while formalising access to Oldacre Lane is not considered appropriate due to the unsuitability of this location.</li> </ul>
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16. The proposals align well with SCC’s aspirations for the site. We recognise the need to enhance the visitor offer through improved facilities, and to raise awareness and understanding of the significance of the site and meet our legal obligations to protect it. There are several factors that would need to be taken into account in implementing the plans on SCC land, including:

- a. The implementation of the plans must be integrated, and appropriately phased, into the wider work on the country park and cannot be considered in isolation. SCC has legal obligations to manage the ecological condition of the SAC and wider legal requirements for the site as a whole. Implementation of these plans will therefore need to be flexible to link in with wider operational and strategic needs.
- b. Work to raise awareness and engage the public must also be integrated with wider site management messages in a coordinated way and not in isolation; this must be carefully considered in implementation models going forward.
- c. There will be a need to ensure ongoing engagement with site users and key stakeholders as the plans are implemented to ensure people are aware of

changes and are able to input to design to ensure the infrastructure is fit for purpose.

## **Community Impact Assessment**

17. A Community Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the proposals – see appendix 6 for details. The CIA indicates that there are many benefits to the community from the proposals and highlights the mitigation that will be required for potential negative impacts, which has been built into the suggested approach outlined above.

## **Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee Recommendations**

18. The proposals were considered by the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020. As part of its consideration, the Committee heard a statement from the Save Cannock Chase group outlining its concerns about the proposals. The Committee supported the need to mitigate recreational impacts on the protected habitats in order to enable new housing development through Local Plans, including the need to reduce visitor spread and pressure on the most sensitive areas. It was resolved that:

- (a) the Select Committee accept the need for mitigating action to protect the SAC but mindful of the frustration of some user groups, asked the Cabinet Member to look again at the consultation which has taken place (by the SAC) and consider whether it was sufficiently inclusive and whether additional work is required so that SCC can move forward with confidence.
- (b) The Cabinet Member report back to the Select Committee in the New Year.

19. The consultation process undertaken by the SAC Partnership in the development of these proposals is outlined in section 10 of this report. As requested by Select Committee, the process was reviewed, and the findings reported to Select Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Key findings were as follows:

- a. The plans are supported by a robust evidence base developed over many years;
- b. In 2018 a visitor survey asked over 1000 people for their views on potential mitigation measures, including charges and closures;
- c. In 2019 a public consultation was held on the proposals as outlined in section 10 of this report;
- d. The findings of these processes influenced the proposals, with suggestions of how concerns regarding less supported measures might be addressed where the conservation requirement meant they were considered essential components of the plans;
- e. Through Community Impact Assessment, the county council has considered how impacts on communities can be addressed through implementation on SCC land, resulting in proposals to keep charges at modest levels with annual permits to reduce costs for regular users, free parking for blue badge holders, protecting access for disabled people, retaining over 70 varied parking locations offering a range of types suited to different users..

- f. There will be further public consultation on proposals for Chase Road and Marquis Drive; and
  - g. There will be further engagement on the detail of proposals for each phase of implementation over the 15-year period and the plans will be reviewed every 5 years against progress and monitoring data.
  - h. Alongside letters of concern, there have also been a significant number of letters of support received for the proposals, plus public statements of support from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Cannock Chase AONB Partnership, North Staffordshire Green Party and West Midlands Bird Club.
20. Select Committee agreed that the proposals, with further consultation on Chase Road and Marquis Drive, plus further engagement on the detail of wider aspects as the programme is implemented, presented a logical way forward, given the need to actively conserve and protect the Chase. The committee asked that efforts be made to engage people through volunteering to actively support the conservation of the site. Also that consideration be given to the needs of people with sensory conditions as well as mobility issues. This has been considered through the Community Impact Assessment and will be built into the more detailed design at the implementation stages.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

21. The plans set out a range of measures to mitigate potential impacts from increased recreational pressure from a growing resident population in the vicinity of the area. They are based on detailed evidence gathered over many years.
22. The plans offer the opportunity to balance the needs of people and environment, ensuring that more visitors can enjoy Cannock Chase without impacting on its special qualities. Mindful of the significant public interest and to ensure people can help shape solutions, it is recommended that the detail of each phase of work should include public engagement prior to detailed implementation. Given the long-term and phased nature of the programme, which will extend over the next 10-15 years, this will enable responses on project details to be considered and ensure awareness of works to be undertaken in a meaningful time frame.
23. It is therefore recommended that the plans are endorsed, and their implementation supported, in order to protect the SAC and reduce visitor pressure in the most sensitive areas. This should include further public engagement on the detail of implementation on the proposals at the appropriate time. Implementation should also be flexible, phasing delivery to integrate with other site management activities.

### **Scheme of Delegation**

24. Subject to Cabinet approval of the proposals, it is proposed that final decisions to implement these proposals should be through delegated authority on the following basis:
- a. Operational delivery to be overseen by the Assistant Director - Culture, Rural and Safer Communities;

- b. Agreement of options appraisal / feasibility study outcomes for Chase Road and Marquis Drive by delegated decision by the appropriate Cabinet Member in consultation with the Deputy CXO & Director of Families and Communities.

### **Legal Implications**

25. The proposals support delivery of requirements of the Habitat Regulations 2017. There are no legal implications to the proposals at this stage. The service is aware of the relevant legislation affecting the Park and appropriate checks against this will be built into project plans at implementation stage and appropriate consents applied for.

### **Resource and Value for Money Implications**

26. The programme is to be funded through developer contributions collected by district and borough councils.

### **List of Background Documents/Appendices:**

[Appendix 1 – The Cannock Chase SAC Strategic Access Management & Monitoring Measures Detailed Implementation Plan: Site User Infrastructure, Education and Engagement](#)

[Appendix 2 - The Cannock Chase SAC Strategic Access Management & Monitoring Measures Detailed Implementation Plan: Car Parking](#)

[Appendix 3 – Evidence Base / Evidence Base Annex](#)

[Appendix 4 – Visitor Survey Part 1 / Part 2](#)

[Appendix 5 – Consultation Report](#)

**Appendix 6** – Community Impact Assessment (a) and Summary Checklist (b)

### **Contact Details**

**Assistant Director:** Janene Cox OBE, Assistant Director for Culture, Rural and Safer Communities

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**Staffordshire**  
County Council

## **Community Impact Assessment Checklist and Executive Summary**

### **Name of Proposal:**

Protecting Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation for future generations

### **Project Sponsor:**

Janene Cox, Assistant Director – Culture, Rural and Safer Communities

### **Project Manager:**

Sarah Bentley, Environmental Advice Manager

### **Date Completed:**

**16/10/20**

## Final Checklist

Prior to submitting your Community Impact Assessment (CIA), please ensure that the actions on the checklist below have been completed, to reassure yourself / SLT / Cabinet that the CIA process has been undertaken appropriately.

Checklist	Action Completed	Comments/Actions
The project supports the Council's Business Plan, priorities and MTFS.	Yes	Delivers legal responsibilities to protect the designated features on SCC land at Cannock Chase
It is clear what the decision is or what decision is being requested.	Yes	Implementation of proposals to protect Cannock Chase following the recommended approach.
For decisions going to Cabinet, the CIA findings are reflected in the Cabinet Report and <b>potential impacts are clearly identified and mitigated for</b> (where possible).	Yes	The recommended approach incorporates mitigation measures identified in the CIA
The <b>aims, objectives and outcomes</b> of the policy, service or project have been clearly identified.	Yes	These are set out in the Cabinet paper
The <b>groups</b> who will be affected by the policy, service or project have been clearly identified.	Yes	Identified in the CIA
The <b>communities</b> that are likely to be more adversely impacted than others have been clearly identified.	Yes	Identified in the CIA
Engagement / consultation has been undertaken and is representative of the residents most likely to be affected.	Yes	Covered within the Cabinet report. There will be further consultation on specific projects / options within the plan and engagement on the detail of wider delivery for each phase of implementation of the wider proposals.
A range of people with the appropriate knowledge and expertise have contributed to the CIA.	Yes	Range of staff provided input including public health.
Appropriate evidence has been provided and used to inform the development and design of the policy, service or project. This includes data, research, engagement/consultation, case studies and local knowledge.	Yes	There is a detailed evidence base including research studies and visitor surveys. The proposals were also informed by stakeholder input and best practice from elsewhere in the UK.
The CIA <b>evidences</b> how the Council has considered its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 and how it has considered the impacts of any change on people with protected characteristics.	Yes	Identified in CIA
The next steps to deliver the project have been identified.	Yes	Development of phased implementation projects with the SAC Partnership



## Executive Summary

The Executive Summary is intended to be a collation of the key issues and findings from the CIA and other research undertaken. This should be completed after the CIA and research has been completed. Please structure the summary using the headings on the left that relate to the sections in the CIA template. Where no major impacts have been identified, please state N/A.

	<b>Which groups will be affected?</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations / Recommendations</b>
<p><b>PSED</b></p> <p>What are the impacts on residents with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010? Highlight any concerns that have emerged as a result of the equality analysis on any of the protected groups and how these will be mitigated. It is important that Elected Members are fully aware of the equality duties so that they can make an informed decision, and this can be supported with robust evidence.</p>	<p>People from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups; women; people with disabilities, and those with more limited mobility.</p> <p>These groups are often under-represented as users of countryside sites and it is important to ensure proposals reduce barriers rather than add to them.</p>	<p>The proposals include measures to enhance access such as car park improvements, better paths, signs / waymarking and interpretation which will make the area more welcoming and usable for all visitors. Car park design will include measures to reduce risks of crime and anti-social behaviour which may help people feel safer and more confident.</p>	<p>Car park closures and introduction of additional pay &amp; display may impact on ease of access to the site however impacts can be mitigated within the proposals – see next column</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall net increase in parking capacity;</li> <li>• Some free parking provision will still be available;</li> <li>• Modest charges on SCC sites with annual lower cost permit available for regular users;</li> <li>• Free parking for Blue Badge holders at SCC sites;</li> <li>• Over 70 parking areas will remain offering a choice from large car parks to small laybys;</li> <li>• Retention of parking access and improvements to all ability trail;</li> <li>• Engagement in detailed design of solutions to maximise benefits to protected groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health and Care</b></p> <p>How will the proposal impact on residents' health? How will the proposal impact on demand for or access to social care or health services?</p>	<p>All – countryside access contributes to physical and mental health, and healthy lifestyles.</p>	<p>The proposals will improve access through better paths, better surfacing, better signs / way markers and interpretation – this will</p>	<p>Car park closures and parking charges may impact on ease of access and discourage some users.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall net increase in parking capacity;</li> <li>• Some free parking provision will still be available;</li> <li>• Modest charges on SCC sites with annual lower cost</li> </ul>

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		make it easier and more welcoming for people to exercise. Better paths, car parks etc can reduce the risk of falls and accidents.	Concerns for some users re social distancing requirements for COVID-19 if people are required to use fewer larger car parks	<p>permit available for regular users;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free parking for Blue Badge holders at SCC sites;</li> <li>• Varied parking at over 70 locations;</li> <li>• It will be some time before closures or charges occur therefore likely that the COVID vaccine will have been rolled out; outdoor environments are low risk.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Economy</b></p> <p>How will the proposal impact on the economy of Staffordshire or impact on the income of Staffordshire's residents?</p>	Local businesses; people on lower incomes	Cannock Chase is a high-profile area within Staffordshire and there are businesses that benefit directly from it, or indirectly through proximity etc. The careful management and conservation of the site, with better infrastructure for visitors, will improve people's experience of the area and ensure it is sustainable.	Car parking charges may impact on low income groups or discourage visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall net increase in parking capacity;</li> <li>• Some free parking provision will still be available;</li> <li>• Modest charges on SCC sites with annual lower cost permit available for regular users;</li> <li>• Free parking for Blue Badge holders at SCC sites;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environment</b></p> <p>How will the proposal impact on the physical environment of Staffordshire? Does</p>	Housing development; land at Cannock Chase	Proposals support sustainable development	Failure to deliver mitigation measures	The proposals are designed to mitigate environmental impacts. The

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<p>this proposal have any Climate Change implications?</p>		<p>of local housing by mitigating potential impacts; significant investment in visitor infrastructure and measures to reduce the negative impacts of recreational pressure to protect wildlife and landscape for future generations; assists with climate change adaptation</p>	<p>could impact on housing or could result in significant damage to protected habitats; changes to public access arrangements</p>	<p>proposals include measures to mitigate the effects of changing access arrangements in some areas.</p>
<p><b>Localities / Communities</b></p> <p>How will the proposal impact on Staffordshire's communities?</p>	<p>Communities around the AONB</p>	<p>Improved infrastructure for visiting the Chase; potential reductions in crime and ASB through fewer and better designed parking areas</p>	<p>Car park closures and charges may impact on people's access to the area but can be mitigated – see next column</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall net increase in parking capacity;</li> <li>• Some free parking provision will still be available;</li> <li>• Modest charges on SCC sites with annual lower cost permit available for regular users;</li> <li>• Free parking for Blue Badge holders at SCC sites.</li> </ul>

