

Community Impact Assessment

Countryside Estate – New Vision

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➤ Equality Assessment

The Public Sector Equality Duty is part of the Equality Act 2010 and this Duty requires us as a public body to have ‘due regard’ to eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act. It requires us to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a ‘relevant protected characteristic’ and people who don’t.

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Age - older and younger people	<p>The Monitor of Engagement in the Natural Environment (MENE) report 2018-19 shows that there are “larger proportions of infrequent visitors in the oldest age groups, lower socio-economic groups and people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds”.</p> <p>The MENE Children’s report 2018-19 also found disparities in the numbers of children spending time outside between more affluent / deprived areas, and that</p>	<p>Financial pressures on Council budgets could impact on service delivery in future due to retaining the estate mainly in house.</p> <p>However current MTFS commitments have been delivered.</p>	<p>The proposal includes measures to increase the long-term financial sustainability of the estate to address the potential financial risks.</p> <p>The focus the proposal gives on delivery rather than further transformation would deliver benefits more rapidly to site users.</p>
Disability - people who are living with different conditions and disabilities, such as: mental illnesses, long term conditions, Autism and other neurodiverse conditions, learning disabilities, sensory impairment and physical disabilities.			
Gender reassignment - those people in the process of transitioning from one sex to another			
Marriage & Civil Partnership - people who are married or in a civil partnership should not be treated differently at work			
Pregnancy & Maternity - women who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby, including breast feeding mothers			
Race - people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins			

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>Religion or Belief - people with any religious or philosophical belief, including a lack of belief. A belief should affect a person's life choices or the way they live for it to be considered</p>	<p>children from BAME backgrounds were less likely to spend time outdoors.</p>		
<p>Sex - men or women</p>	<p>Under the revised proposal, resource would be focused on frontline delivery and improving facilities rather than management</p>		
<p>Sexual orientation - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes</p>	<p>arrangements. This would enable more rapid delivery of improvements and investment in the sites that would address the barriers to use by some protected groups, such as those referenced above.</p>		

➤ **Workforce Assessment**

Who will be affected – consider the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>Staff within the Countryside Service with responsibility for the sites.</p> <p>Due to ongoing selection processes under the staff review, specific data for staff cannot be provided at this time.</p>	<p>Under this proposal, the uncertainties regarding job security which have been ongoing since 2013/14 would come to an end. This would be a huge benefit to staff following the impacts of both the uncertainty of change processes but also the impacts of service delivery during COVID. This would support staff health and wellbeing.</p> <p>It also reduces the risk of staff leaving and of absence which may be high if further change processes were to be required.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

➤ **Health and Care Assessment**

A key priority within our Strategic Plan is to ‘Encourage good health and well-being, resilience and independence’. This section should therefore be used to identify the impact of the proposal on delivery of this priority.

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>The proposal will impact resident and visitor mental health and wellbeing and help enable positive choices around healthy lifestyles.</p>	<p>The proposed model includes focus on opportunities to support health and wellbeing through improved access to green space and offering targeted activities / offers.</p> <p>Research has concluded that "green prescribing" by medical professionals could help people maximise the therapeutic benefits of spending more time in outdoor green spaces.</p> <p>Research carried out by 'Fields in Trust' calculated that UK country parks and green spaces provide over</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>£34bn of health and wellbeing benefits, saving the NHS at least £111 million per year through prevented GP visits.</p> <p>The Houses of Parliament publication, 'Green Space and Health' (2016), sets out various health-related facts including:</p> <p>Levels of physical activity are higher in areas with more green space, with people living near the greenest areas achieving the recommended amount of physical activity.</p> <p>A correlation has been observed between those living closest to greener areas and reduced levels of</p>		

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>mortality, obesity and obesity-related illnesses.</p> <p>Some indicators of psychological stress, including blood pressure and heart rate, are reduced in participants exposed to visual and auditory stimuli associated with nature.</p>		
<p>The proposal also impacts upon risks in relation to accidents and falls.</p>	<p>Earlier investment in site infrastructure would reduce risks of accidents and falls on sites.</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

➤ **Communities Assessment**

Use this section to identify the impact of the proposal on communities.

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>The proposal will impact on communities living near the countryside estate, many of which are in rural areas. Impacts include those relating to community capacity; crime and community safety; and education, attainment, training and associated outcomes for children and young people.</p>	<p>The 2018 Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces report references a range of research summarising evidence in support of how green spaces benefit communities, including: “Playing and learning outside is a fundamental part of childhood, and strong evidence from a four-year project commissioned by Natural England showed that learning outdoors results in children being happier, healthier and more motivated to learn.”, and: “Parks and green spaces improve community cohesion by offering shared spaces for community</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>n/a</p>

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>connections and to tackle social isolation (Cohen-Cline et al., 2015; Hartig et al., 2014; White et al., 2013).”</p> <p>The MENE Children’s Report 2018-19 identified a range of positive visit outcomes reported by adults who had spent time outdoors with children – with the strongest levels of agreement relating to outcomes of enjoyment, feeling calm and feeling relaxed and revitalised. It also found that family and other guardians are an important influence on children’s engagement with nature.</p> <p>Benefits of the proposal include potential to build community capacity & cohesion and involvement in the</p>		

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>estate – including in rural communities located near countryside sites. Greater community capacity and involvement will increase pride of place in these local amenities. This helps create a safer and more welcoming visitor environment.</p> <p>The proposal presents opportunities for forest schools and educational activities to support learning and to achieve positive outcomes for children from outdoor visits.</p>		
<p>The proposal will impact on participation in social and leisure activities.</p>	<p>Improved facilities will enhance the leisure offer on sites, enabling regular participation in leisure activities.</p> <p>The 2018 Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces report (as above) summarises how</p>	<p>Car parking charges could impact on affordability to park vehicles on site. These charges are now common at countryside sites, however their</p>	<p>The mitigations as outlined in the proposals – no extension of charges to new sites until 2023; phased approach with initial voluntary period; annual permits at reduced cost for regular users; freeze rate to April 24 - would reduce the impact</p>

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	“access to local green spaces has a positive impact on health by encouraging people to be active every day”.	introduction at a time of significant cost of living pressures required consideration.	of car parking charges on the countryside estate.
The proposal impacts on opportunities for volunteering	The proposal includes an enhanced volunteering offer provided by the service.	n/a	n/a

➤ Economic Assessment

A key priority within our Strategic Plan is to ‘**Support Staffordshire’s economy to grow, generating more and better paid jobs**’. This section should therefore be used to identify the impact of the proposal on delivery of this priority.

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
The proposal will impact businesses linked to countryside and hospitality sectors, and businesses local to the countryside estate. There are also impacts on businesses more generally. Please also see ‘Workforce Assessment’.	Green and natural spaces are fundamental to people’s prosperity. They underpin sustainable economic growth by attracting	Car parking charges may impact but are now commonplace at countryside sites.	Mitigation measures relating to car parking charges are included in the proposals. We will also work with businesses on the sites to explore any further mitigations required.

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>businesses and investment and can improve workforce productivity.</p> <p>Green spaces provide important functions to society, which have an economic value. These functions are known as 'ecosystem services', helping reduce costs to local and wider communities. For example, woodlands absorb pollution and lock up carbon, which cleans our air.</p> <p>A Staffordshire Ecosystem Assessment (2014) considered around 35% of the total geographical area of the county. The ecosystem services assessed were</p>		

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>valued at more than £110m annually.</p> <p>Research by 'Fields in Trust' calculated the Total Economic Value to an individual of country parks and green spaces is £30.24 per year, and included benefits gained from using green space and non-use benefits such as the future preservation of parks.</p> <p>A case study in the Economic Value of Our Green Spaces Report (Land Trust, 2018) demonstrated how the creation and maintenance of a green space can add value to nearby houses, create and safeguard jobs and generate revenue for local businesses.</p>		

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>The 2018 Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan states “our natural assets are of great importance locally and nationally and form a major part of our offer to investors.”</p> <p>Investment and improvement of the countryside estate strengthens the part it plays in underpinning Staffordshire’s role as a visitor destination and great place to live / work, attracting inward investment. An improved countryside estate can also support Staffordshire’s workforce to be</p>		

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	healthier and improve wellbeing.		
The proposals may affect site users on low incomes.	Free to use green spaces.	Car park charges may be a deterrent for those with low incomes.	The mitigations as outlined in the proposals – no extension of charges to new sites until 2023; phased approach with initial voluntary period; annual permits at reduced cost for regular users; freeze rate to April 24 - would reduce the impact of car parking charges on the countryside estate; explore better walk / cycle links so local people can be less dependent on cars.

➤ Climate Change Assessment

A key priority within our Strategic Plan is to 'Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable'. This section should therefore be used to identify the impact of the proposal on delivery of this priority.

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
The proposal has climate change implications in relation to the county council's countryside estate	The proposal will make a positive contribution to net zero and adaptation	n/a	The focus the proposal gives on delivery rather than further transformation would deliver benefits more rapidly to the sites.

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
			Conversely, if the proposal and associated recommendations are not agreed; the alternative model (a focus on management arrangements) would reduce the timeliness and delay the impact of any contributions to net zero and adaptation, where prompt action is vital.

➤ Environment Assessment

Use this section to identify the impact of the proposal on the physical environment. How does the proposal support the utilisation and maintenance of Staffordshire's built and natural environments, thereby improving health and wellbeing and strengthening community assets?

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
The proposal will impact on the physical environment in a variety of ways	In the UK, 56% of species declined and 15% are extinct or were threatened with extinction between 1970 and 2013 (State of Nature 2016). We have also lost 80% of our heathland since 1800 –	n/a	n/a

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>in Staffordshire, probably more like 90%.</p> <p>13% of heathland and grassland species are threatened with extinction in Great Britain (State of Nature 2016).</p> <p>Green spaces provide important functions to society, which have an economic value. These functions are known as 'ecosystem services', helping reduce costs to local and wider communities. For example, wetlands store water, reducing flows and help reduce the risk of flooding.</p> <p>A Staffordshire Ecosystem Assessment (2014) considered around 35% of the total</p>		

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>geographical area of the county. The ecosystem services assessed were valued at more than £110m annually.</p> <p>The proposal will offer environmental benefits and improve the environmental quality of the (rural) natural environment making up the countryside estate, as well as access to it. Improved physical access to the countryside estate will be achieved through better infrastructure.</p>		