

Pros and Cons of Strategic Options

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) has to fundamentally review everything it does and how it does it; it has to develop new and different ways of achieving outcomes with less resources. The Council is keen to retain what works well but challenge itself to develop new ways of working and delivering to respond to the challenges and opportunities ahead. Through this approach, nine strategic options have been initially identified for Chasewater Country Park:

1. SCC continues to implement improvements with the resources available to run Chasewater as a country park
2. SCC transfers the freehold by selling or gifting the Park, or agreeing to a long-term lease*. This option is not necessarily restricted to Chasewater Country Park and could include other SCC land holdings
3. A multi-agency public sector partnership which runs Chasewater as an outdoor public amenity
4. SCC commissions a private sector company to run Chasewater as an outdoor public amenity
5. SCC commissions a not-for-profit organisation to run Chasewater as a country park
6. SCC enters into a cross-sector partnership to run Chasewater as an outdoor public amenity, including a multi-sport outdoor centre
7. SCC enters into a partnership with an education establishment to run Chasewater as an outdoor public amenity and a centre for learning
8. SCC enters into a partnership with a not-for-profit organisation to run Chasewater as an outdoor public amenity and a community garden
9. SCC creates an independent, not-for-profit organisation focused on raising money from individuals and organisations to run and enhance Chasewater

Option 1.	SCC continues to implement improvements with the resources available to run Chasewater as a country park	
Description of Option		
SCC will implement the Development Plan and continue to run and enhance Chasewater as a country park, using existing resources, generating new incomes streams and securing external investment. The improvements will follow SCC's operating model and embrace best practice. This option will ensure that opportunities are taken to enhance Chasewater and threats to Chasewater's long-term future are minimised.		
Pro's (Benefits)	Con's (Risks)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to SCC's outcomes • Supports SCC's operating principles • A safe country park experience for users is maintained • Statutory, legal and compliance requirements will be met • Has a small impact in reducing the financial pressure on SCC • Continues the momentum gathered during the implementation of the Development Plan • Opportunities to enhance and widen facilities and experiences offered to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlikely to have a significant impact in reducing the financial pressure on SCC • Does not fully embrace SCC's operating principles • All risks and liabilities associated with the Park will be retained • Sustainability and resourcing of facilities / activities • Difficulty in managing and responding to expectations 	

local community and visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds on the working relationships developed with stakeholders 	
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Option 2.	SCC transfers the freehold by selling or gifting the Park, or agreeing to a long-term lease*. This option is not necessarily restricted to Chasewater Country Park and could include other SCC land holdings
	<small>*Long-term lease of 90 or 120 years but could be as short as 40 years</small>

Description of Option

Transferring the freehold of the Park by selling or gifting it to an external organisation would have an immediate impact. However, SCC is not the only organisation with a freehold on the Park; part of the north shore is owned by the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO) and is on a long-term lease to SCC. CISWO would need to agree to sell their holding or agree to the transfer of the lease; The Canal and Rivers Trust also owns land integral to the Park as well as having rights over the water in the reservoir.

Chasewater has a negative land value with limited development potential, making it difficult to find a buyer. Finding an organisation, possibly in the voluntary sector who shares similar aspirations to SCC and who wishes to continue to run Chasewater as a country park may be easier; although a dowry may be required and the organisation may not want to take on all the risks and liabilities associated with the Park. In 2011, Highgate Common was gifted to Staffordshire Wildlife Trust from SCC. SCC made a one-off payment to the Trust of £270,000, equivalent to 5 years running costs. In the case of Chasewater, a one-off payment may exceed £1m.

A variation on this option is to explore the possibility of working with a range of other landowners, such as the Forestry Commission and district councils, to create an independent charitable trust. The trust will provide long-term sustainable management of open public spaces across the county and not restricted to SCC's land holdings. This type of model could be funded through an endowment, which is a sum of money given to an organisation alongside the ownership of the land. The endowment is added to its investment portfolio and the interest earned on this investment covers the maintenance of the sites in perpetuity. A similar example is www.landrestorationtrust.org.uk/

Pro's (Benefits)	Con's (Risks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The financial burden on SCC ceases (although a dowry may be required) • A new organisation may have resources to invest into the Park or able to access new sources of funding • All statutory, legal and compliance requirements will transfer • Opportunities to enhance and widen facilities and experiences offered to local community and visitors • The methodology for calculating endowments has been sanctioned by government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Momentum gathered and the improvements made during the implementation of the Development Plan may be lost • A one-off dowry payment or endowment may be required • Sustainability of facilities / activities • Difficulty in identifying a suitable organisation to take on the Park • Potential loss or reduction in an outdoor public amenity • Opposition from the local community, stakeholders and tenants • Managing and responding to expectations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational implications if the Park is not maintained to SCC's standards or fails to contribute to SCC's outcomes • Unclear if it adds value to residents, businesses and visitors • May be difficult to find anyone willing to take on the liabilities attached to the dam
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Option 3.	A multi-agency public sector partnership which runs Chasewater as an outdoor public amenity
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Description of Option

In recognition of the wide-range of social, cultural and environmental benefits green spaces provide, SCC will formalise a public sector partnership with all government departments and public agencies benefiting directly or indirect from Chasewater Country Park, ensuring that they contribute towards its operating costs. Examples of where public agencies contribute towards the costs of green spaces include:

- Police - <http://www.wiltshire.police.uk/index.php/diversity-a-community-affairs-splash>
- Health - Healthy Hillingdon
- Prisons - <http://www.emeraldnecklace.org/>.

Other public sector agencies that could benefit or use green spaces and therefore contribute towards the Park's operating costs include the Fire and Rescue Service, Probation Trust, universities and colleges. The wider benefits that green spaces contribute to Staffordshire's economic prosperity and health agenda should also be highlighted to the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Health and Well-being Board respectively. Each of these has funds available to support initiatives that contribute towards their aims.

Pro's (Benefits)	Con's (Risks)
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to SCC's priority outcomes • Supports SCC's operating principles • Provides added value to residents and visitors • Continues the momentum gathered and the improvements made during the implementation of the Development Plan • A safe country park experience for users is maintained • Spreads the financial pressure across public sector agencies • Spreads the benefits across public sector agencies • Spreads the risks and liabilities across public sector agencies • Statutory, legal and compliance requirements will continue to be met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlikely to have a significant impact in reducing the financial pressure on SCC • Difficulty in making a convincing case to potential partners • Tracking the costs and benefits across public sector agencies would be complex • Managing and responding to partner expectations might prove difficult • Demanding performance management regime may be created
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Option 4.	SCC enters a partnership with a private sector company to run Chasewater as an outdoor public amenity
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Description of Option	
<p>SCC will enter a partnership with one or more private sector companies whose involvement could range from minimal to hands-on. In the case of the former, a company may see their involvement as them fulfilling their corporate social responsibility, providing some financial support, volunteers and business acumen. In the case of the later, a company may wish to enter a formal partnership with SCC, getting a return on their involvement. Companies that run courses, holidays, commercial events, team building activities or 'try before you buy' services may be particularly interested in this level of involvement. Entrust (www.entrust-ed.co.uk) - a joint venture between SCC and Capita - is an obvious partner as it already operates the outdoor education centre and café on the Park, and has the maintenance contract on the buildings. Other commercial examples include www.opendooradventure.co.uk and www.cinnamon-active.com.</p>	
Pro's (Benefits)	Con's (Risks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to SCC's priority outcomes • Supports SCC's operating principles • Private investment could enhance the Park's facilities • Private sector acumen • Located in an area of deprivation and poor health • Reduces the on-going financial pressure on SCC • Provides added value to residents, businesses and visitors • Could enhance the country park experience for users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in securing a suitable partner(s) • Need to work within the Park's environmental and land-use constraints • Cost of developing the site and facilities • Careful management in order to satisfy all statutory, legal and compliance requirements • Sustainability of facilities / activities • Conflicts with existing users • Opposition from the local community, stakeholders and tenants • Managing and responding to expectations • Potential loss or reduction in an outdoor public amenity • SCC does not control water levels in the Reservoir

Option 5.	SCC commissions a not-for-profit organisation to run Chasewater as a country park
Description of Option	
<p>SCC enters into a partnership with one or more not-for-profit organisations that manage and maintain the Park, contributing time and labour, encouraging community development and local ownership.</p> <p>Chasewater is already a valued local asset and many stakeholders care passionately about its future, including Burntwood Town Council and its current tenants. By harnessing this passion, SCC could work with interested parties to set up a not-for-profit organisation. Alternatively, SCC could approach an existing not-for-profit organisation. Examples of not-for-profit organisations, which successfully run parks on behalf of local authorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wigan Leisure (http://www.wlct.org/), a social enterprise and charitable trust, aims to provide leisure and culture, creating opportunities for people to change their lives, investing in facilities and adding value for public benefit. Wigan Leisure currently manages 19 parks. • Greenwich Leisure Ltd (http://www.gll.org/) is a not-for-profit organisation which 	

runs over 115 sport and leisure facilities and libraries on behalf of local authorities. It claims to have halved the costs of leisure services to councils while increasing the quality and availability of local facilities.

- In May 2002, Surrey County Council entered a partnership with Surrey Wildlife Trust (<http://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/>) for the management of its countryside estate. On the 10th anniversary of the agreement, a report showed that there was a 23.9% saving on the original Surrey County Council contribution and a 19% growth in estate income.
- Rockingham Forest Trust is a social enterprise that runs Stanwick Lakes (<http://www.stanwicklakes.org.uk/>) on behalf of East Northamptonshire Council on a 125 year lease.

It is a long-term aspiration of Amey - the preferred bidder in SCC's new infrastructure contract - that Staffordshire Wildlife Trust manages and maintains some of SCC's countryside estate. Amey is also a member of the community interest company that runs Colne Valley Regional Park in Buckinghamshire (<http://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/>)

Pro's (Benefits)	Con's (Risks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to apply for new sources of funding so will reduce the on-going financial pressure on SCC • Contributes to SCC's priority outcomes • Embraces SCC's operating principles • Provides added value to residents, businesses and visitors • Empowers individuals and communities - localism • Risks and liabilities could be transferred • Complies with the Park's Green Belt designation • Builds mutual support and social capital • Located in an area of deprivation and poor health • Provides benefits to other public services • Ability to maintain and enhance a safe and enjoyable experience for users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying a suitable partner or creating a new organisation may be a difficult and lengthy process • Risks and liabilities would, especially in the short-term, remain with SCC • Public scepticism to new approach • Managing and responding to expectations • Demanding performance management regime may be created • Sustainability and resourcing of facilities / activities • Limited ability to reduce the on-going financial pressure on SCC • Need to work within the Park's environmental and land-use constraints • Careful management in order to satisfy all statutory, legal and compliance requirements • Conflicts with existing users • Opposition from the local community, stakeholders and tenants • Measuring and quantifying the benefits would be complex • Potential land contamination issues related to mining activities

Option 6.	SCC enters into a cross-sector partnership to run Chasewater as an outdoor public amenity, including a multi-sport outdoor centre
Description of Option	
Linked to Sportshire, Chasewater will become one of the country's best sports facilities and competition venues for water-skiing, sailing, windsurfing, wakeboarding, triathlon and BMX. It will offer facilities suitable for international competition while	

preserving essential green space for the local community. The overall aim will be to increase access to outdoor sports for all, irrespective of age, gender, ability, income, ethnicity, etc. Outreach programmes will provide equipment and training for the public and the reservoir will become a Centre of Water-Sports Excellence.

SCC would ideally do this in partnership with both private and voluntary sector organisations, including Sports Across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, Sports England, Entrust and individual sports' governing bodies.

SCC has already been approached by Lichfield Cycling Club who would like to create a multi-discipline Cycling Hub and Chasewater is one of their suggested locations. The Hub will include a 3km closed road circuit, pump track, BMX track and a mountain biking facility. A similar initiative is Cyclo Park in Kent (www.cyclopark.com), which is managed by a charity on behalf of Kent County Council.

Creggan Country Park (www.creggancountrypark.com) in Northern Ireland is an example where a social enterprise runs a watersports, outdoor pursuits and angling centre.

Pro's (Benefits)	Con's (Risks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widen Chasewater's social amenity value to an increased target audience • Benefits to other public services • Contributes to SCC's priority outcomes • Supports SCC's operating principles • Private investment could enhance the Park's facilities • Located in an area of deprivation and poor health • Reduces the on-going financial pressure on SCC • Provides added value to residents, businesses and visitors • Could enhance the country park experience for users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of developing the site and facilities • Need to work within the Park's environmental and land-use constraints • Conflicts with current existing users • Opposition from local community, stakeholders and tenants • May comprise a safe and enjoyable country park experience for users • Careful management is needed in order to satisfy all statutory, legal and compliance requirements • Need to work within the Park's environmental and land-use constraints • Sustainability of facilities / activities • SCC does not control water levels in the Reservoir • Potential competition with Twin Rivers

Option 7.	SCC enters into a partnership with an education provider to run Chasewater as an outdoor public amenity and a centre for learning
Description of Option	
<p>Chasewater becomes an outreach centre for one or more higher/further education providers. The centre will run accredited courses and research projects, and potentially become a Centre of Vocational Excellence in Outdoor Learning. It will offer practical courses to students as well as a range of adult and community education courses and volunteering opportunities. Many of these activities will involve improving the Park's facilities and meeting the statutory and legal requirements associated with the Park. Outdoor classrooms, and regular school and group visits will ensure the Park is thriving.</p>	
<p>There are number of local providers that might be interested in this option, including:</p>	

- South Staffordshire College's Rodbaston campus specialises in further and higher education courses in land-based activities such as fisheries, aquaculture and animal care. Its Rural Enterprise Academy is the first dedicated land-based free school in England, offering 14 to 16 year olds qualifications in English, Maths and Science, as well as learning in rural enterprise, environmental sustainability and land-based subjects.
- Stafford College already offers a BTEC in Countryside Management and has links with SCC's Countryside Volunteer Programme.
- Harper Adams University is a leading specialist in agriculture and land-based studies. It runs undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Countryside Management, Countryside and Environmental Management, Wildlife Conservation and Natural Resources Management.
- Birmingham University was involved in Chasewater Green Park Project and regularly has students undertaking research on Cannock Chase's protected landscapes. Its Faculty of Technology, Engineering and Environment plays a national role in urban-rural interrelationships, ecosystem services and environmental planning.

Pro's (Benefits)	Con's (Risks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country's first Centre of Excellence in Outdoor Education • Contributes to SCC's priority outcomes • Located in an area of low education attainment and skills levels and high unemployment • Supports SCC's operating principles • Provides added value to residents, businesses and visitors • Complies with the Park's Green Belt designation • Education establishments might have more opportunities to apply for new sources of funding, reducing the on-going financial pressure on SCC • Spreads the risks and liabilities across agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in securing a suitable partner(s) • Careful management in order to satisfy all statutory, legal and compliance requirements • Sustainability and resourcing of facilities / activities • Managing and responding to expectations • Conflicts with existing users • Opposition from the local community, stakeholders and tenants • Potential loss or reduction in an outdoor public amenity

Option 8.	SCC enters into a partnership with a not-for-profit organisation to run Chasewater as an outdoor public amenity and a community garden
Description of Option	
<p>By learning from best practice, Chasewater will support a variety of community growing models including a community farm, gardens, orchards, allotments, community supported agriculture and community-managed market gardens. It will meet a wide range of food-related community and small-business needs in a direct and practical way, as well helping individuals to learn about and live healthier lives, boosting physical fitness and increasing confidence levels.</p>	
<p>SCC would ideally do this in partnership with voluntary sector organisations that seek to promote environmental conservation, healthy living and community empowerment. Examples of community garden schemes are numerous and include:</p>	

- <http://www.riversidemarket.org.uk/>
- <http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/>
- <http://cultivatingcommunitynv.org/>

An excellent local example is Urbivore (www.urbivore.org.uk/) in Stoke-on-Trent. The City Council has granted Urbivore a 25-year lease on an old golf course at a peppercorn rent. Urbivore say it will generate £1 million for the local economy.

Pro's (Benefits)	Con's (Risks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to SCC's priority outcomes • Located in an area of deprivation and poor health • Complies with the Park's Green Belt designation • Supports SCC's operating principles • Provides added value to residents, businesses and visitors • Ability to apply for new sources of funding, reducing the on-going financial pressure on SCC • Empowers individuals and communities – localism • Builds mutual support and social capital • Benefits to other public services • Ability to maintain and enhance a safe and enjoyable experience for users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of developing the site and facilities • Sustainability and resourcing of facilities / activities • Limited ability to reduce the on-going financial pressure on SCC • Need to work within the Park's environmental and land-use constraints • Careful management in order to satisfy all statutory, legal and compliance requirements • Managing and responding to expectations • Conflicts with existing users • Opposition from the local community, stakeholders and tenants • Measuring and quantifying the benefits would be complex • Potential land contamination issues related to mining activities

Option 9.	SCC creates an independent, not-for-profit organisation focused on raising money from individuals and organisations to run and enhance Chasewater
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Description of Option

Creation of a not-for-profit organisation focused on raising money from individuals and organisations to run and enhance Chasewater and its facilities. Park advocacy organisations, foundations and conservancies play a major role in funding many city parks in the USA. Examples include:

- <http://www.centralparknyc.org/>
- <http://www.brooklynbridgepark.org/>
- <http://seattleparksfoundation.org/>
- <http://www.snomishparksfoundation.com/home.html>
- <http://www.pittsburghparks.org/>
- <http://www.emeraldnecklace.org/>

A number of these organisations have matured and taken over some of the day-to-day maintenance of parks, including the cleaning of facilities, repairs and capital improvements.

Pro's (Benefits)	Con's (Risks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces the on-going financial pressure on SCC • Contributes to SCC's priority outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks and liabilities would, at least in the short term, remain with SCC • Failure to raise substantial and perpetual donations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embraces SCC's operating principles • Provides added value to residents, businesses and visitors • Ability to raise substantial funds for investment • Risks and liabilities could be transferred • Builds mutual support and social capital • Empowers individuals and communities – localism • Could enhance the country park experience for users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tendency to focus on advocacy, planning and one-off projects • Public scepticism to new approach • Managing and responding to expectations • Uncertainty about ability to satisfy all statutory, legal and compliance requirements
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