

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD

21 September 2011

Report of the Chief Leisure Officer

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 PUBLIC OPEN SPACES – EXTERNALLY FUNDED IMPROVEMENTS

Summary

This report informs Members of improvements on areas of the Council's Public Open Space, utilising funding from external sources.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 With increased pressure on this Council's budgets it is essential to investigate and utilise external funding opportunities to deliver improvement projects. Opportunities may come in the form of external grants, partnership working or engaging the resources of other organisations and volunteers. This report highlights a number of examples of how this is being progressed in regard to Public Open Spaces at the present time.

1.2 Haysden Country Park

- 1.2.1 Within the Haysden Country Park Management Plan there is the desire to increase the wildlife value of the Water Meadow, immediately west of the Leigh Flood Barrier. This project has been discussed in detail with the Environment Agency which has agreed to utilise its own resources to undertake the work at no cost to the Council. The work, which will include the creation of "mud scrapes" in the meadow, is due to be undertaken this coming autumn.

1.3 Holly Hill Woods

- 1.3.1 In recent years Holly Hill Woods and the surrounding area has suffered from unauthorised access and misuse by off-road vehicles. As part of the Valley of Vision Project the Council sought to secure a section of the western boundary of the wood that had been vulnerable to unauthorised access and suffered heavily from fly-tipping. Through an application to the Kent Downs Area of Natural Beauty/Clean Kent Target Hardening Fund the Council secured £4,500 towards a £6,000 scheme to address this problem and received a further £750 from the Valley of Vision team. The project was recently completed and to date has been successful in achieving its objectives.

1.4 Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground

- 1.4.1 Following a previous survey undertaken by the Kent Wildlife Trust a number of opportunities were identified to improve biodiversity at the Racecourse Sportsground. These opportunities included the potential to enhance the small wooded area, known as Tinkers Island, to the west of the site. Through the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership external funding of £5,000 was secured from a Biffaward with match funding of £250 from the Borough Council and Kent County Council. The works have already commenced and will include coppicing, improving the drainage ditches, interpretation and the sowing of wild flowers.

1.5 Scotchers Field

- 1.5.1 Identified within List A of the Council's Capital Plan is a scheme to enhance play facilities at Scotchers Field, Tonbridge. Following the receipt of contributions from a local housing development, the play area has now been extended with additional equipment and a "goal end" with basketball/netball hoop provided. Landscaping works are also due to be undertaken this coming autumn/winter. The project was fully funded through developer contributions at a cost of £35,000.

1.6 Volunteering

- 1.6.1 The Council has continued to encourage and support volunteering, predominately at its Country Parks. Within the first quarter of the financial year (April to June) 600 volunteer hours were recorded, with work undertaken ranging from wildlife monitoring to the clearance of invasive species such as Ragwort and Himalayan Balsam. Whilst it is difficult to place a value on this type of support, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers does note a widely recognised figure that equates to approximately £6 per hour. Within the first quarter of the year this would equate to £3,600 of volunteer time at the Borough Council's Country Parks.

1.7 Legal Implications

- 1.7.1 None.

1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.8.1 In relation to the projects outlined in the report over £50,000 of external funding has been achieved. Without this funding, the improvements would not have been able to be progressed.

1.9 Risk Assessment

- 1.9.1 All activities and projects are subject to appropriate Risk Assessments.

1.10 Policy Considerations

- 1.10.1 Asset Management, Biodiversity & Sustainability, Community and Healthy Lifestyles

Background papers:

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Nil

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