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**TITLE: ELY COUNTRY PARK IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2015 - 17**

Committee: Commercial Services

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Author: Community Development Officer

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[P167]

1.0 ISSUE

1.1 To provide Members with an update on progress made with delivering Phase III of the Improvement Plan, and to seek approval for a Phase IV Improvement Plan 2015-17.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Members are recommended to:

- (i) Note the progress update made with Phase III of the Ely Country Park Improvement Plan 2013-15
- (ii) Approve the Phase IV Ely Country Park improvement priorities for 2015-17 and authorise the Corporate Unit Manager to explore funding options from Section 106 funds
- (iii) Attend a site visit in July 2015 to view all works completed in Phase III of the Improvement Plan

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 On 15<sup>th</sup> January 2013, Members approved a third phase of improvements works.

3.2 All works were shaped by consultation with community groups including Ely Cycle Campaign, Ely Access Group, local schools, site users and local families.

3.3 The following table provides a progress update on these works:

Priority area	Work to be undertaken 2014-15	Approved budget	Actual cost	Completion status
Brown tourism signage	Directional signage for vehicles and pedestrians in Ely	£3,000	£1,000	Order placed with CCC for tourism road signs  Awaiting quotes from CCC for pedestrian signs  CCC to install by 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2015
Improving play and family facilities	Installation of picnic area, cycle racks and new play equipment for toddlers, juniors and youth (including inclusive play equipment).  Installation of additional litter bins	£133,000	£71,535.06	Complete April 2014  Additional bins added August 2014
Cresswells Lane entranceway and access improvements	New bollards, gate removal and new fencing  Installation of solar lighting	£9,000	£7,114.35	Contractor appointed and works to be completed February 2015  Solar lighting installed April 2014
Totals		£145,000	£79,649.41	

3.4 Below are some of the other developments and achievements that have taken place in the country park during 2014-15:

- In August 2014, the country park successfully obtained Green Flag status. This status is recognition that Ely Country Park is one of the best green spaces in the country.

- In December 2014, Ely Country Park became an ‘accredited country park,’ following a successful application to Natural England. Ely Country Park is now one of just seven accredited country parks in the East of England.
  - Following a site visit and successful negotiation with the Sainsbury’s Store Manager, the following improvement works were agreed:
    - Access improvements between the store car park and the Cresswells Lane entrance to the country park. Sainsbury’s completed this work at their own cost in December 2014
    - Country Park promotional materials to be displayed in Sainsbury’s store
    - Regular litter picks to be carried out by Sainsbury’s staff
  - The District Council’s Open Spaces team planted over 3,000 of spring bulbs along the main routes within the site in March 2014.
  - The Community Development Officer now undertakes weekly site inspections and consultation with users to gain valuable feedback.
- 3.5 While the Green Flag award and Natural England accreditation were national achievements, the negotiation of partnership working with Sainsbury’s has been a major achievement of 2014-15.

### 3.6 Ely Country Park Improvement Plan 2015-17

The Ely Country Park Improvement Plan 2015-17 has been developed following user feedback and Council obligations. The Plan proposes four priority areas for improvement, including a pest management system, seasonal toilets, access improvements and an assessment of seating requirements. Many of the proposals were flagged within the Green Flag feedback report and are essential to the park retaining its Green Flag status for 2015-16, below is the rationale for these improvement proposals:

#### 3.6.1 Pest Management System

The Council has had contact from site users about damage to the grass areas caused by rabbits, specifically around the play area. Families have reported that children are unable to play some games in the area due to the surface damage.

The rabbit population is damaging the wildflower planting and the coppicing programme and poses a risk of damaging equipment.

The Council has a duty of care towards wildlife within the country park and if not managed effectively there are risks of myxomatosis. The Pests Act 1954 states that occupiers of land have a legal responsibility to control rabbits.

Pest control was highlighted as an issue for improvement in the Green Flag Award Feedback Report due to the risks to new planting.

There is a risk of contamination exposure due to the area being an historic landfill site. If the topsoil is breached by rabbit scraping then the contamination could become exposed, the Council's Environmental Services Scientific Officer advises that this is a risk that needs to be managed.

### 3.6.2 Seasonal toilets

The nearest public toilets are approximately 10 minutes walk from the country park. Lack of toilets was the most common issue raised by site users during consultation (35% of respondents). This is particularly an issue amongst families with young children.

Feedback indicates that families would like on-site toilet provision, preferably during the summer months.

Based on industry guidance, the toilets will need to be serviced once weekly.

Toilet provision could be vulnerable to vandalism and needs CCTV to be operational on-site to reduce this risk. Council staff will also inspect the toilets once a week to ensure that facilities are maintained to an acceptable standard.

In accordance with the British Standards Institute 'Sanitary Installations Code of Practice for Building Toilets,' water is not required as the location does not have access to running water.

### 3.6.3 Springhead Lane Access Improvements

The Council has received numerous concerns from site users and Ely Access Group regarding access to the country park from the Springhead Lane/Lisle Lane entranceway. The issues of concern include:

- The existing gate at Springhead Lane is impractical and has restricted access, and is not suitable for wheelchairs or larger pushchairs.
- The surfacing around the gate is uneven and not user friendly for wheelchair users.
- The current surfacing between the Springhead Lane/Lisle Lane entrance and the slope to the wildflower meadow is uneven and not user friendly for wheelchair users.
- The gradient of the ramp that leads from Springhead Lane up to the wildflower meadow is too steep and has a difficult camber, especially for people pushing and using wheelchairs.
- A resting point and new handrail are required along the ramp to improve access.

#### 3.6.4 Assessment of Seating Requirements

The requirement for additional seating was the second most popular issue raised by site users during consultation (21% of respondents). Although new seating was installed in April 2014, demand has increased due to the growing popularity of the site.

#### 4.0 ARGUMENTS/OPTIONS

4.1 The Council needs to continue to build on the success of the Country Park project and achieve the following objectives:-

- Continue to develop Ely Country Park as an area of high quality open space usage for a growing local population
- Ensure a high quality visitor experience
- Achieve good value for money for both current and new investment put into the facilities on the site

4.2 Development of the country park is being carried out using a phased approach so that proposals can be influenced through consultation with users and local interest groups.

4.3 Below are the options available to the Council for addressing the priorities detailed in 3.6:

##### 4.3.1 Pest Management System

The Council has sought professional, technical expertise in dealing with this matter and has explored both short-term and long-term options.

One-off population control solutions would not be effective, due to quick breeding rates and some would require the park to be closed whilst taking place.

A long-term solution using an integrated pest management system would be a more effective and sustainable solution. This solution would include fencing and would prevent rabbits from other areas migrating back into the country park, whilst enabling the Council to repair any damage. The rabbit fencing would also discourage children and dogs from accessing the railway tracks. This solution would need to be reviewed and evaluated after two years, and additional action carried out if required.

##### 4.3.2 Seasonal toilets

The Council could install a permanent, compostable toilet or trial a temporary, portable solution.

Compostable toilets generally include more maintenance than standard toilets and improperly or poorly maintained systems can lead to odors, insects, and health hazards. Due to this it is proposed that a temporary portaloos facility is trialed from the beginning of April until the end of September (where demand is highest) for two years so that the scheme can be evaluated based on public feedback, site visits, a people counter and any reports of misuse.

It is proposed that if the trial is a success, then a longer-term, compostable solution could be considered.

It is proposed that an alcohol based gel is used as the site has no running water.

#### 4.3.3 Springhead Lane Access Improvements

Cambs County Council has approved up to £35,642 of Section 106 money for the following access improvements:

- Removal of existing gate at Springhead Lane
- Installation of a new, personalized gate at Springhead Lane
- Resurfacing part of Springhead Lane
- Decrease gradient of ramp and the creation of a resting point

This funding is available until May 2016 and these improvements will be completed by this deadline.

#### 4.3.4 Assessment of Seating Requirements

It is proposed that seating usage is monitored and specific consultation is carried out. The Council will install additional seating if there is a demand. Any additional seating will be in-keeping with the surrounding area and complimentary of any existing provision.

4.4 The detailed work proposals for the Ely Country Park Improvement Plan 2015-17 are outlined as follows:-

<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>Work item</b>	<b>Estimated budget required</b>	<b>Work required before implementation</b>
Pest Management System	Implementation of an integrated Pest Management System	£12,000	Obtain 3 quotes for the works
Seasonal toilets	Trial the installation of a seasonal toilet facility for a period of two summers	£2,000	Obtain 3 quotes for the works

Springhead Lane access improvements	Replacement of gate, resurfacing and slope access improvements	£10,000 (CCC S106 contribution to deliver Waterside and Springhead Lane footpath improvements)	Obtain 3 quotes for gate design  Consult volunteer groups with design ideas  Obtain 3 quotes for gate installation, slope and surfacing
Assessment of seating requirements	To assess the demand for additional seating	£4,000	Conduct consultation with site users
	Total	£28,000	

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Members are asked to consider the priorities set out in 3.6 and recommended options in 4.0 and agree the Improvement Plan 2015-17 and instruct officers to proceed with undertaking the works within the estimated budget specified.

## 6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 A total project budget of £28,000 is required to deliver the Ely Country Park Improvement Plan 2015-17 (based on estimated costs). £18,000 is required from District Council Section 106 funding. £10,000 will come from CCC Section 106 budget which will meet the full improvement works detailed for Springhead Lane.

## 7.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Photo's of Phase III of the improvement works 2013-15.

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

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**Background Documents**

None

**Location**

Room FF103  
The Grange  
Ely

**Contact Officer**

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## Appendix 1 - Photo's of Phase III improvement works 2014-15

Fitness trim trail for teenagers



Inclusive play for all ages



Installation of cycle parking provision, picnic area and toddler play



Green Flag flying



Promotional poster to be displayed in Sainsbury's



# Ely Country Park

An adventure on your doorstep...



Entrance, picnic & play area

Car Park

Cresswells Lane

Sainsbury's

Lisle Lane

... a short walk across Sainsbury's Car Park



East Cambridgeshire District Council

ACCREDITED

NATURAL ENGLAND

New link pathway installed by Sainsbury's



**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) FORM**

<b>Name of Policy:</b>	Ely Country Park Improvement Priorities 2015-17
<b>Lead Officer (responsible for assessment):</b>	Lewis Bage
<b>Department:</b>	Commercial Services
<b>Others Involved in the Assessment (i.e. peer review, external challenge):</b>	
<b>Date EIA Completed:</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> December 2014

**What is an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?**

As part of any effective policy development process, it is important to consider any potential risks to those who will be affected by the policy's aims or by its implementation. The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process helps us to assess the implications of our decisions on the whole community, to eliminate discrimination, tackle inequality, develop a better understanding of the community we serve, target resources efficiently, and adhere to the transparency and accountability element of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

**The word 'policy', in this context, includes the different things that the Council does. It includes any policy, procedure or practice - both in employment and service delivery. It also includes proposals for restructuring, redundancies and changes to service provision.**

(a) **What is the policy trying to achieve?** i.e. What is the aim/purpose of the policy? Is it affected by external drivers for change? What outcomes do we want to achieve from the policy? How will the policy be put into practice?

The Council needs to continue to build on the success of the Country Park project and:-

- Continue to develop Ely Country Park as an area of high quality open space usage for a growing local population
- Ensure a high quality visitor experience
- Achieve good value for money for both current and new investment put into the facilities on the site

(b) **Who are its main beneficiaries?** i.e. who will be affected by the policy?

Site users and ECDC staff (e.g. Open Spaces team)

(c) **Is the EIA informed by any information or background data (quantitative or qualitative)? i.e. consultations, complaints, applications received, allocations/take-up, satisfaction rates, performance indicators, access audits, census data, benchmarking, workforce profile etc.**

The proposals have been determined by community needs following consultation and legislation requirements. The outcomes of the Plan are to implement a pest management system, to trial seasonal toilets, improve access and to assess requirements for additional seating.

**(d) Does this policy have the potential to cause a positive or negative impact on different groups in the community, on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics?** (please tick all that apply)

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Age</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Gender</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Religion and Belief</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Disability</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Caring Responsibilities</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please explain any impact identified:** i.e. What do you already know about equality impact or need? Is there any evidence that there is a higher or lower take-up by particular groups? Have there been any demographic changes or trends locally? Are there any barriers to accessing the policy or service?

People with disabilities will benefit from access improvements to the site.

<b>(e) Does the policy have a differential impact on different groups?</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>(f) Is the impact <i>adverse</i> (i.e. less favourable)?</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>(g) Does it have the potential to disadvantage or discriminate unfairly against any of the groups in a way that is unlawful?</b>	<b>YES</b>

**(h) How have you engaged stakeholders in gathering evidence or testing the policy proposals?** Who was involved, how and when where they engaged? Does the evidence show potential for differential impact? How will you mitigate any negative impacts? Where there is the potential for an adverse impact that cannot be addressed immediately, these should be highlighted in your recommendations and objectives at the end of the EIA.

Consultation with site users, site visits with Ely Access Group and volunteer groups. consultation with ECDC’s Scientific Officer regarding contaminated land, consultation with ECDC’s Senior Open Spaces and Maintenance Officer regarding pest control legal requirements and consultation with ECDC’s Building control team regarding the requirements of portable toilets.

\* The Consultation Register is available to assist staff in consulting with the Council’s stakeholders.

**(i) Summarise the findings of your research and/or consultation (please use a separate sheet if necessary).**

See separate sheet

**(j) What are the risks associated with the policy in relation to differential impact and unmet needs/requirements?** i.e. reputation, financial, breach of legislation, service exclusion, lack of resources, lack of cooperation, insufficient budget etc.

If the proposals are not implemented there is a Health & Safety risk to ECDC staff and site users (pest control) and some people with disabilities will be excluded from accessing parts of the site.

**(k) Use the information gathered in the earlier stages of your EIA to make a judgement on whether there is the potential for the policy to result in unlawful discrimination or a less favourable impact on any group in the community, and what changes (if any) need to be made to the policy.**

Option 1:	<b>No major change</b> - the evidence shows that the policy is robust and no potential for discrimination.	X
Option 2:	<b>Adjust the policy</b> - to remove barriers or to better promote equality.	
Option 3:	<b>Continue the policy</b> - despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunity to promote equality, provided you have satisfied yourself that it does not unlawfully discriminate.	
Option 4:	<b>Stop and remove the policy</b> – if the policy shows adverse effects that cannot be justified.	

**(l) Where you have identified the potential for adverse impact, what action can be taken to remove or mitigate against the potential for the policy to unlawfully discriminate or impact less favourably on one or more communities in a way that cannot be justified?** Include key activities that are likely to have the greatest impact (max. 6). Identified actions should be specified in detail for the first year but there may be further longer term actions which need to be considered. To ensure that your actions are more than just a list of good intentions, include for each: the person responsible for its completion, a timescale for completion, any cost implications and how these will be addressed. It is essential that you incorporate these actions into your service plans.

N/A

This completed EIA will need to be countersigned by your Head of Service. **Please forward completed and signed forms to the Principal HR Officer.**

All completed EIAs will need to be scrutinised and verified by the Council's Equal Opportunities Working Group (EOWG) and published on the Council's Intranet to demonstrate to local people that the Council is actively engaged in tackling potential discrimination and improving its practices in relation to equalities. Please be aware that you may be asked to attend a half-an-hour session to summarise the findings of the EIA to the Scrutiny and Verification panel.

**Signatures:**

**Completing Officer:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Head of Service:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_