

CABINET – 2 FEBRUARY 2016

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Public Questions

Question (1) from Julie Brown:

The following points have been raised by Julie Brown:

- Certain animals are 'protected under the wildlife and countryside act 1981'. Have there been any surveys done that show that there will be no adverse effect on protected species and have SCC obtained a licence from Natural England to disturb protected animals that live at Newlands?
- Newlands is an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. Has Natural England been informed of the proposals and if so, what are their views?
- Regarding the Cabinet Meeting on 27th October, paragraph 17; What are the details of the 'revised access agreement' between The Albury Estate and SCC and have the details of the 'share of car parking charges and any future income generated from phase 2 of the proposals' been finalised, and if so what are they?
- What is the estimated capital investment of phase II?
- Has The Albury Estate or SCC put in a planning application to the Planning Inspectorate for consent to carry out works on common land. If so when was this done?
- Can a public meeting be held?

Reply:

There has been an ecological survey, which is being released under Freedom of Information. Officers working on the project have been engaging with their colleagues from Countryside Management & Biodiversity as well as the Ecology Team at the Wildlife Trust to ensure all relevant legislation is adhered to. Further surveys of the site will be taking place, as per recommendations from these discussions.

Natural England are aware of the proposal and we have engaged the AONB Board, where Natural England have a representative, as well as other key stakeholders like the CPRE. Natural England will be formally consulted when applying for commons consent.

These details have not been finalised as they are still under negotiation.

The work for Phase 2 is at an early stage and further work is required before any estimate of capital investment can be made.

The application for Commons Consent has not been submitted as yet. We are waiting for the public engagement exercise to feed into the application.

A drop in session for the public is being held on 9 February 2016 from 15.00 to 19.00 at Albury Parish Hall. There will be an opportunity to speak to members of the Project Team and the Play Tail Designers.

Mr Mike Goodman
Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning
2 February 2016

Question (2) from Allen Johnson:

The following points have been raised by Allan Johnson:

- Where can one get sight of the business plan that describes and cost justifies the proposed changes?
- Upon the results of what research are the proposed changes based? Who did the research and where are the results lodged for public access?
- Why can the existing infrastructure not be modified and thereby saving on the destruction and subsequent construction of that which will be destroyed?
- What are the revenue projections from the business case and who are the parties that will have direct and indirect interests?
- How will the revenues be apportioned?
- How regularly will proposed costs and charges be reviewed and increased?
- What are the impacts on flora and fauna?
- What are the impacts and conditions of Drove Road being lost as a road and what are the contributions from SCC Highways and Transport Services in this respect?
- Why not improve the toilet facilities and leave everything else as it is?

Reply:

The business plan was classed as confidential and taken to Cabinet as a Part 2 item to the 27 October 2015. The business plan went through all necessary challenge and approval processes, including the councils Investment Panel, before being presented to Cabinet.

There were surveys undertaken by the Surrey Wildlife Trust that covered Newlands Corner and Ockham. The information was not published but was shared with the Ockham Liaison Group, who requested a report.

This information is being provided under Freedom of Information.

We are looking at all the options to improve the visitor facilities and there is potential to explore this as an option for Phase 2.

As stated in a response to a previous question, the business case is confidential. The parties with interest are the County Council, the Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Albury Estate, as the land owner.

As stated previously, this is still under negotiation.

It has been proposed that costs and charges will be reviewed annually.

A number of surveys have already been carried out and the advice of Surrey Wildlife Trust experts and the County Council's in house ecologist has been sought to ensure that we are aware of any potential impacts.

There is no potential for Drove Road to be lost as part of this project. The Drove Road is classified as a Public Bridleway and therefore by protected by law. The Countryside Access Team, who look after the Rights of Way network have been consulted and involved in the project.

One of the most important goals of this project is to encourage more people into the countryside, especially those who may have never visited the countryside before or not done so for some time. The toilets are part of the whole project when people visit the countryside and the play trails they expect quality facilities.

Mr Mike Goodman
Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning
2 February 2016

Question (3) from Susan Darling:

There has been confusion about how income from any parking charges at Newlands Corner would be used. If parking charges are imposed, what approximate amounts or proportion of the income are planned to go: a) to investment in a Play Trail, in improvements to the toilets/cafe offer and in parking charge infrastructure b) to servicing the parking regime - wardens, ticket machines, etc, c) to pursuing penalties and legal action on overstayers, d) to maintenance of the Newlands site e) to maintenance of other parts of the SCC countryside estate f) to upfront investment on Phase 2 of the Newlands development plan, and g) to net benefit to SCC.

Reply:

The details of the Business Plan are confidential as outlined above. However I can answer some of your questions. The net revenue from the parking charges will fund the maintenance of Newlands Corner, including repairing signs and picnic tables, keeping paths clear, removing litter, paying for utilities, repairing paths and the car park surface, a warden for the site and running the toilets and visitors centre. If there is additional revenue generated then it will go to fund other countryside sites. An assessment at that time will be on whether this is done on a proportionate basis or because of a requirement for specific investment. There will be no revenue contribution from parking to Phase 2, as that would be a separate capital investment.

What I do want to make clear is that this project is about getting benefits to a whole variety of people from being in, learning about and enjoying the countryside. It is hoped that there will be the direct benefit to SCC by helping to make the countryside self sustaining and thereby making a saving, but there are more broad benefits around health and wellbeing that also need to be considered and not just focusing on pure financials.

Mr Mike Goodman
Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning
2 February 2016