

## **NEW LOCAL NATURE RESERVE DESIGNATIONS**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members' agreement to proceed with the necessary actions, in conjunction with English Nature, to achieve the designation of Grove Woods, Kingley Woods and Betts Woods as local nature reserves.
- 1.2 This designation would not affect ownership of the land, but increases the opportunity to obtain external funding to assist in the management of these areas

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan objectives include promoting a green and sustainable environment, and improving the quality of life for people in the District.
- 2.2 The designation of four existing sites as local nature reserves in this District has certainly achieved these objectives over the last 6 years. These four well known sites are at Kendall Park in Hullbridge, Marylands in Hockley, Magnolia in Hawkwell, and Hockley Woods, Hockley.
- 2.3 Since their designation, all these sites have benefited from increased biodiversity, community use and grant income.
- 2.4 Planning Objective I5 and N2/N4 of the Natural Resource section of the Local Plan confirm that this Authority will, where it is possible, protect areas of conservation value.
- 2.5 The three proposed new reserves, owned by Rochford District Council, all have excellent conservation value and would benefit from their increased conservation status, associated potential grant income and sustainable community use, if they were to be designated as local nature reserves.
- 2.6 Plans of the three sites are provided at Appendix A of this report

### **3 GROVE WOODS**

- 3.1 These woods are located between Rayleigh and Eastwood, adjacent to Connaught Road.
- 3.2 They are secondary woodlands that have developed through natural succession, across approximately 8 hectares of former plot lands.

- 3.3 The woodlands are a varied species and mixed age stand of native broad leaves with the occasional exotic garden tree or shrub. Managed for conservation and community access, the sites are now well used by local residents.

#### **4 KINGLEY WOODS**

- 4.1 The woodlands are growing on a steep hill slope adjacent to the A127 and accessible by foot from Hollytree Gardens and Weir Farm Road.
- 4.2 This is an ancient woodland site with high ecological value.
- 4.3 It has been a part of local life since the ancient Lawless Courts of Rayleigh Manor to the present day.
- 4.4 Managed for conservation and community use, although access is a little more difficult because of the steep slope.

#### **5 BETTS WOODS**

- 5.1 Another ancient semi natural woodland, managed for the benefits of wildlife and the local community.
- 5.2 The wood is approximately 2.16 hectares in size and is situated next to Hockley Community Centre.
- 5.3 Coppicing of the Hornbeam within this wood has been successfully re-introduced over the last 5 years.

#### **6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 This Authority will be confirming its commitment to sustainable conservation and species protection, in accordance with both its corporate objectives and planning policies.

#### **7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The designation of these sites as local nature reserves will significantly help this Authority make successful grant applications to a potential variety of sources listed in the next paragraph.
- 7.2 The Cory Environmental Trust, English Nature, the Countryside Commission and several larger private companies (Shell, etc.) all provide monies for community based conservation projects in local nature reserves. These grants vary but can be up to £10,000.
- 7.3 On designation (the process of which will cost approximately £700 and can be met from existing budgets), a five year management plan will be produced by the Woodland Section, that will cover areas such as controlled suitable

access and public information, alongside conservation and biodiversity works. These plans will ensure that an increase in visitor numbers and use of the three sites will be sustainable and not damage any sites of ecological value.

## **8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Council has power under Sections 19 and 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to designate areas as local nature reserves for the purposes of either preserving the flora, fauna or geological features of special interest or providing an opportunity for the study of and research into these features. The area should be of some special interest and high value and must be recognised by English Nature as being suitable for such designation. The designation places a statutory duty on the Council to maintain the area appropriately and in accordance with a management programme for which dedicated capital and revenue budget must be provided.
- 8.2 The designation procedures require public notice and advertisement, the cost of which is estimated at £700.

## **9 RECOMMENDATION**

- 9.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That, in conjunction with English Nature, the designation of Grove Woods, Kingley Woods and Betts Woods as local nature reserves be achieved.

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### **Background Papers:-**

None

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