



EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT COVER SHEET

Title of Report:	Washlands Strategy and Landscaping Vison
Meeting of:	Council
Date:	3 rd December 2018
Is this an Executive Decision:	NO
Is this a Key Decision:	YES
Is the Report Confidential:	NO
If so, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A LGA 1972:	N/A
<p>Essential Signatories:</p> <p>ALL REPORTS MUST BE IN THE NAME OF A HEAD OF SERVICE</p> <p>Monitoring Officer: Angela Wakefield</p> <p>Date Signature</p> <p>Chief Finance Officer: Sal Khan</p> <p>Date Signature</p>	

EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Council

Date: 3rd December 2018

REPORT TITLE: Washlands Strategy and Landscaping Vision

PORTFOLIO: Planning

HEAD OF SERVICE: Sal Khan

CONTACT OFFICER: Anna Miller **Ext. No. x1630**

WARD(S) AFFECTED: Winshill, Stapenhill, Brizlincote, Branston,
Anglesey, Burton and Stretton

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To meet corporate target PSC31 and the adoption of a Washlands Strategy by December 2018.
- 1.2. To demonstrate that Corporate target PSC32 has already been met and that detailed work on the identification and delivery of projects via a landscape vision, is ongoing.
- 1.3. To request that in principle match funding is made available of up to £1.26M following further financial analysis, to be undertaken by the Environment Agency, and a capital monies receipt coming forwards.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Washlands performs a vital flood defence role for Burton upon Trent whereby annual and often severe flooding is stored by the Washlands and slowly released over time. As a consequence some parts of the Washlands remain underwater for much of the year which supports a rich variety of flora and fauna.

- 2.2. The Washlands also provides a resource which is used by residents and different parts of the Washlands have different functions and attract different users. There are many paths around the Washlands including a sculpture trail, the ornamental Stapenhill Gardens, the Riverside area which includes family friendly facilities such as the Viking Playground and Library café and finally the sports and recreation opportunities which include rugby, cricket, rowing and fishing.
- 2.3. Organisations such as the Environment Agency (EA), and Transforming the Trent Valley (TTTV) Landscape Partnership Scheme have identified the Washlands as an area that would benefit from investment. A £17M two and half year EA project will make Burton upon Trent's flood defences more resilient, of which approximately £500,000 will be set aside for enhancements to the Washlands. Approximately £240,000 of this money will be given to TTTV which unlocks additional funds (matched lottery funding) and can be used to support some of the projects along the Trent including the Washlands. A further £260,000 will be available to focus on enhancements in a central area which is located around the Library and Meadowside Area.
- 2.4. A significant funding bid has been lodged with the Local Economic Partnership (£3M) that has the potential to radically transform the landscape of the Washlands. This potential level of investment in the Washlands is a once in a lifetime opportunity for partner organisations to build on the existing momentum and to deliver a unique environment, long term legacy and enhanced visitor experience
- 2.5. High quality dialogue through Community Conversations held in 2017 with partnership organisations, including the Borough Council and local residents, started a discussion on the future of the Washlands and in particular how to strengthen the connections between people, places and nature, unique to the setting of the Washlands. This early work led to the appointment, by the Environment Agency with a financial contribution from the Borough Council, of Black and Veatch an organisation specialising in maximising community engagement particularly around change and large infrastructure projects.
- 2.6. Supported by a partnership comprising East Staffordshire Borough Council, the Environment Agency, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Transforming the Trent Valley Partnership, The National Forest and Trent Rivers Trust a **Landscape Vision** was prepared. This overarching Vision resulted in an imagined and ambitious set of proposals which look long term at both hard and soft infrastructure improvements including ecological and historic landscape projects which could be delivered on the Washlands.
- 2.7. The work focussed on three key areas: nature and conservation, access and recreation and local history and heritage. This involved looking at the way the area is currently used and managed, it's environmental and design qualities, its history and cultural heritage, existing natural and

built assets. The challenge was to determine how to balance the regular flooding of the area with the requirement for public access and recreation, whilst promoting nature conservation and a more environmentally sustainable approach to green space management.

3. Contribution to Corporate Priorities

- 3.1. This report meets corporate target PSC31: Adoption of Washlands Strategy.
- 3.2. This report also sets out how the detailed business case is emerging for delivering enhancements and improvements which meets Corporate Target PSC32.
- 3.3. The Washlands Strategy supports the following Corporate Priorities:
 - ***Promoting Local Economic Growth*** in terms of attracting visitors to the Washlands and the complimentary relationship that the Washlands has with the town centre regeneration project.
 - ***Protecting and Strengthening Communities*** in terms of improving the Washlands which has the perception by local communities of being unsafe and unloved.
- 3.4. A Member Briefing was held on Thursday, 13th September where the Landscape Vision was presented to all Councillors.

4. A Strategy for the Washlands

- 4.1. There is nothing wrong with the Washlands per se, however, users describe it as tired and unloved and it is recognised that the resource is generally underused.
- 4.2. Added to this is the momentum already created for the delivery of ecological and heritage related projects on the Washlands as a result of current funding already secured or applied for. Projects identified have been coordinated between various partner organisations and in consultation with others. This work will go ahead and be delivered so that the Washlands and its landscape will be improved and enhanced.
- 4.3. What the Washlands Strategy seeks to do is capture a long term view of the way in which the Washlands needs to be improved to take advantage of the work already programmed to be undertaken but also to secure additional funding to make further changes. The draft Washlands Strategy is in Appendix 1.
- 4.4. Members are advised to agree the following Washlands vision:

- ***To develop the Washlands and the surrounding areas into a regional tourist destination.***
- ***To enhance the wildlife and conservation of the area, whilst increasing opportunities for education.***

4.5. The first bullet point recognises that an improved Washlands will contribute to a much larger network of environmental sites along the Trent Valley and also in the National Forest which draw in users to enjoy accessible and transformed landscapes. Residents in the Trent Valley and National Forest areas have grown accustomed to having facilities and amenities on their doorstep which provide family activities, outdoor adventure and opportunities for accessing nature. The unique offer at the Washlands has the potential to capture these people and provide facilities, amenities and activities to support a larger visitor cohort. The intention therefore is to transform the Washlands from a very local dog walking and duck feeding facility to one which offers family friendly and accessible activities including trails, events and running/walking routes within a safe and well-managed environment, and into one which complements other visitor attractions in the Borough.

4.6. The second bullet point recognises that the Washlands has the potential to improve and enhance its ecological offer which would increase the diversity of the flora and fauna. Raising the natural capital of the Washlands will bring more visitors wanting to enjoy the environment, for example bird watchers, and create opportunities for education both in a formal way with an education centre and informal way through the use of information boards or a bespoke mobile phone App.

4.7. The Borough Council's Vision in the Washlands Strategy takes a holistic approach to the promotion of the Washlands in its own right whilst at the same time recognising the benefits that more visitors could bring to the town centre and the wider economy.

4.8. In contrast the Landscape Vision is only a subset of the Council's Vision with a clear focus on environmental assets.

4.9. ***The Landscape Vision is:***

- **Connecting People and The River:** Improving access to the river for everyone, addressing issues of accessibility during flooding and providing facilities that will encourage people to visit the Washlands.
- **Connecting People and Wildlife:** Enhancing the habitat value and biodiversity of the Washlands and providing opportunities for people to interact with and learn about the wildlife around them.

- **Connecting People and Heritage:** Promoting the Heritage of Burton upon Trent and the Washlands and celebrating the history that has made the Washlands the place it is today. Restoring historic landscape features and improving the information available to tell their story.
 - **Connecting Land and Water:** Improving the lands and river as habitats for wildlife. Understanding the natural processes at work in the area in order to work with them, not fight them.
- 4.10. The Vision brings together and builds upon existing plans and strategies of partner organisations and has been supported by the production of a Natural Capital Register and Ecosystem Services Assessment. This involved mapping the existing environment, including the types of habitat present and whether they are in good or poor condition. Ecosystem services are the goods provided by the environment.
- 4.11. To access further information on the Landscape Vision the following weblink will take you to the story boards which provide illustrations and an interactive story map (Appendix 2)
- www.eaststaffsbc.gov.uk/washlands-project
- 4.12. The Landscape Vision is integral to the Washlands Strategy. It provides the framework to embed ecology and culture into improvements works that will ultimately be the unique selling point that attracts visitors.
- 4.13. The Washlands Strategy itself is a corporate document that pulls together different Borough Council departments each with the responsibility of delivering services to customers. Enterprise, tourism, communications, car parking and open spaces all feature very heavily in the document. The Strategy presents different potential projects that will support an improved visitor experience which builds upon its central location within Burton upon Trent and proximity to the town centre.
- 4.14. The Strategy has been developed following community consultation and a SWOT analysis (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats). The Strategy that has evolved has been broken down into the following aims:
- Give the Washlands an Identity
 - Provide/manage car parking to accommodate an increase in users
 - Ensure safe access for all
 - Resilience to flooding
 - Creating a unique day out where people can learn and interact with the Washlands
 - Improve the interface with the town centre and promote the facilities available around the Washlands

- Explore remembrance and sponsorship opportunities to assist with ongoing improvements and support The Friends of the Washlands Volunteer Group
- ESBC Open Spaces
- Environmental Enhancement

4.15 The Strategy does not have all of the answers and is currently aspirational until the funding becomes available. It is not necessarily for the Borough Council to finance and deliver the strategy however it may be the case for example with the Open Spaces Washlands management contract that a different mowing regime which would support a higher biodiversity of flora, costs less due to a reduced mowing frequency and area. Until further investigative and evidential work is undertaken, as suggested in the strategy, it is unknown what financial impact the Strategy will have, if at all, on the Borough Council's budget. If future proposals are considered which require Borough Council funding then they will be subject to the Council's financial procedures.

4.16 The Strategy is a signpost which has a global view of how The Washlands should develop in a holistic way. Should any partner organisation or parish or community group secure funding there is a strategy which focuses on what's important. The Strategy does not provide the answers but exists to guide funding bids or support future financial decisions. The strategy essentially puts The Washlands on the map and in doing so opens up the potential for visitors to discover the rest of Burton on Trent town centre, the regeneration of which has become a Council priority.

5. Background to GBSLEP Funding

5.1 Ongoing partnership working with the Environment Agency has led to the preparation of a bid following engagement with the GBSLEP on the potential to secure Local Growth Fund monies. Earlier this year, an outline business case for £3m was accepted by the GBSLEP, which is apportioned as £1m towards the enhancement projects and £2m towards the flood deference improvements. In recent communications with the GBSLEP the Supervisory Board has approved the conditional of the full £3m and has accepted the project onto the GBSLEP's programme. This means that the funding has been approved and allocated, subject to the final details to be submitted in a full business case.

5.2 The full business case is still being developed in partnership with the EA, however much of the information needed has now been included. Between now and June 2019, the partnership will be working on securing the final details needed to complete the full business case, such as exact costings of works and delivery mechanisms, and so the business case will be submitted as soon as that has been established. This timescale

fits with the EA's plans for improving the flood defences and so should complement the programme plan for the project.

- 5.3 As stated, the allocation of funding is still conditional at this time and so this information is not for public disclosure until such time that the grant has been fully approved. Members will be updated as this progresses in 2019.

6. Financial Considerations

This section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit: Anya Murray.

- 6.1. Appendix 2 to this report, the Burton Washland's Landscape Vision, prepared by Black and Veatch for the Environment Agency supported by ESBC, identifies Enhancement Projects within Appendix 3.

- 6.2. The report notes:

'Guide budgets are very high level, and not based on fully quantifiable or fully defined / definable projects. They therefore reflect proposed levels of expenditure but not necessarily 'cost estimates'. Budgets can, in many cases, be amended to align with funding availability, and design development can be tailored to fit budgets. Where some level of estimating has been possible, it is highly approximate, and assumptions are shown. Where budgets are derived from other sources, those sources are stated in the assumptions column. An overall guide capital budget for all the above projects is in region of £6M'.

- 6.3. These guide budgets form the basis of the proposals for the initial scheme 'Central Area Enhancement' which the Borough Council is looking to support as shown in Appendix 3 to this report. This is referenced to the specific items identified within Appendix C of the original Burton Washland's Landscape Vision and totals £2,501,000.

- 6.4. The proposed financing for the initial scheme is identified in the table below:

Source of funding	Amount	Report Paragraph reference	Timescale
	£		
LEP (conditional on submission full business case by EA)	1,000,000	5.1	Business case submitted by end June 2019

Environment Agency funding	260,000	2.3	Within current scheme proposed
Sub-total	1,260,000		
ESBC Match Funding	1,260,000	12.3	See para 6.8
Total Financing being sought for scheme	2,520,000		

- 6.5. The Borough Council has had confirmation from the GBSLEP supervisory board of elected members that funding is conditionally allocated subject to full business costings being submitted by the Environment Agency during the first half of 2019.
- 6.6. The LEP funding is not reliant on ESBC match-funding being obtained but this will mean only a selection of works contained in Appendix 3 will be completed. Consideration will need to be given to the revenue implications in deciding which elements can go ahead.
- 6.7. The analysis of the revenue impact of the scheme and whose responsibility it will be has only just begun. Equally the long term maintenance and replacement of the desired projects (lifetime considerations) are unknown. These will be covered in a full business case subject to Cabinet approval prior to the match-funding being made available.
- 6.8. ESBC does not currently have the capital receipts available to fund the desired match funding commitment. It is therefore recommended that whilst a provisional allocation of £1.26m is made this is subject to monies being received from the Bargates capital sale and the success of the LEP bid.

7. Risk Assessment and Management

- 7.1. The main risks to this Report and the Council achieving its objectives are as follows:
- 7.2. **Positive** (Opportunities/Benefits):
- 7.2.1. The strategy provides an opportunity to coordinate effort across multiple partners and organisations who have an interest in seeing improvements to the Washlands. The Strategy will support future funding bids and demonstrate commitment to any awarding body.
- 7.3. **Negative** (Threats):

7.3.1. If current funding bids are unsuccessful it would result in a loss of momentum for the improvement work and it would take longer to secure other funding losing a crucial window of opportunity afforded by the EA improvement works.

7.3.2. There are ongoing discussion around Local Enterprise Partnerships and the potential for them to be merged or have their boundaries changed as part of a wider review designed to shake-up the current system.

8. **Legal Considerations**

This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team: Sherrie Grant

There are no significant legal issues arising from this Report.

9. **Equalities and Health**

9.1. **Equality impacts:** The subject of this Report is a strategy that is new. An equality and health impact assessment is attached as Appendix (3).

9.2. **Health impacts:** The outcome of the health screening question requires a full Health Impact Assessment to be completed. An equality and health impact assessment is attached as Appendix (4).

9.3. The main equality or health issues arising from this Report are as follows:

Equalities

- A positive impact on health, mental health and wellbeing by delivering improved useable open spaces and opportunities for recreation and leisure.
- A positive impact on health, mental health and wellbeing by delivering educational opportunities.
- A positive effect on an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing by making the Washlands a safer place to be.

Health

- A significant positive health impact through increased opportunities for physical activity
- A significant positive health impact through increased opportunities for education.

9.4. The equality and health impact assessment did not identify any actions to be carried out.

10. Human Rights

10.1. There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report.

11. Sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures)

11.1. Does the proposal result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures) Yes

11.2. **Positive (Opportunities/Benefits)** - the proposal will result in a net biodiversity gain.

11.3. **Negative (threats)** - An increase in visitor numbers will result in additional car trips.

12. Recommendations

- 1) Adopt The Washlands Strategy.
- 2) Approve the Landscape Vision.
- 3) A provisional allocation of £1.26m capital receipts towards the capital scheme subject to:
 - a. monies being received from the Bargates capital sale.
 - b. the ongoing success of the LEP bid dictated by the EA's full business case.
 - c. Cabinet, following the final business case development, approving the detailed business case covering revenue and lifetime considerations of the capital scheme proposed.

13. Background Papers

13.1. None.

14. Appendices

- 14.1. Appendix 1: The draft Washlands Strategy.
- 14.2. Appendix 2: Landscape Vision Storymap
- 14.3. Appendix 3: Key Focus – Central Area Enhancements
- 14.4. Appendix 4: EHIA for the Washlands Strategy

