

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 12 JANUARY 2012
title: BIODIVERSITY OFFSETTING
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: DAVID HEWITT, COUNTRYSIDE OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To seek Committee approval to, through the planning process, introduce biodiversity offsetting and to register Primrose Lodge as a receptor site with the Environment Bank in order for the site to receive conservation credit funding.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Council Ambitions – To help make peoples lives safer and healthier, biodiversity helps to safeguard the natural environment.
- Community Objectives – Safeguarding local vision amenity value.
- Corporate Priorities – To maintain the environmental quality of Ribble Valley.
- Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

Biodiversity Offsetting

2.1 Biodiversity offsetting is a compensation for impacts of development on the environment through conservation efforts undertaken elsewhere.

2.2 It allows environmental loss to be calculated and compensated for elsewhere rather than just on site. In order to do this, receptor sites have to be identified for which developers can purchase conservation credits in order to discharge their environmental obligations and the funds from these credits pay for offsite biodiversity/conservation enhancement.

2.3 The process however does not allow the facilitation of developments by providing a licence to trash the environment and statutory site specific planning conditions will still apply for all developments.

Conservation Credit

2.4 Conservation credit is a measure of the quantity and quality of habitat or potential habitat and can be applied to Greenfield and Brownfield sites and therefore the various developments will require different types of conservation credits depending on their impacts.

Receptor Sites

- 2.5 Receptor sites are the conservation/restoration sites where conservation credits are generated and sold to developers as offsets. Receptor sites are permanent, protected and managed in the long term, a number of pilot projects are currently being run and the first one was with the Wild Fowl and Wetland Trust that through the process of conservation credits will receive 3.2 million over the lifetime of the project.

Environment Bank

- 2.6 The Environment Bank acts as independent broker for conservation credits by channelling private sector money into biodiversity this provides working capital for biodiversity, conservation and landscape enhancement.

Primrose Lodge

- 2.7 Primrose Lodge was included in 1992 Primrose Area Planning Brief produced in order to establish a proper framework for the development of Primrose Lodge and surrounding area. The planning brief recognised that Primrose Lodge has apparent ecological merit (Appendix 1) and has subsequently been designated as a County Biological Heritage Site (See Appendix 2).
- 2.8 County Biological Heritage Sites are non - statutory designations that recognises a site's nature conservation value within the context of the County of Lancashire – Primrose Lodge can be best described as an artificial habitat.
- 2.9 Primrose Lodge is a manmade reservoir built for manufacturing processes and generation of power for Primrose works. The site has always been considered for development that has public amenity with nature conservation value and has the potential through appropriate management to build on its biodiversity value.
- 2.10 Over the years the water levels have reduced due to silt accumulation and disrepair of the dam and associated infrastructure. As a consequence, the site requires considerable investment in order to create a condition that will serve both nature conservation and public amenity.
- 2.11 The current estimate for development of the land is £425,000 (See Appendix 3). Whilst some Section 106 Agreement money will be made available to a maximum of £250,000, there will still be a shortfall of approximately £175,000.
- 2.12 Other funding streams have been explored more recently remade Lancashire but as of 2011, this process has been largely dispended and reduced in scale, therefore as a consequence there are insufficient funds and resources available in order for the development to go ahead.
- 2.13 Registering Primrose Lodge as a receptor site with the Environment Bank has the potential to raise the outstanding capital required in order to carry out the schedule of works needed in order to create a site of biodiversity and public amenity value.

3 RISK ASSESSMENT

3.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – N/A
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – N/A
- Political – N/A
- Reputation – Enhances the councils reputation for working in partnership with agencies for the delivery of biodiversity action plans.

4 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

4.1 Approve the use of biodiversity offsets to enable offsite biodiversity/nature conservation enhancement management work to be implemented and to register Primrose Lodge as the first receptor site in this process.

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1 Environment Bank statement.

For further information please ask for David Hewitt, extension 4505.