

Report to: Executive
Date: 26 February 2008
Report of: Executive Member for Regeneration
Subject: Environmental improvements to Pit Heaps Site, Wingate
Wards: Wingate

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the Executive to provide a financial contribution to an environmental improvement scheme, being undertaken by Groundwork East Durham on Council owned land in Wingate.

2 Consultation

- 2.1** In preparing this report all the necessary service departments within the District Council, Local members for the Wingate ward and the Parish Council have been consulted.
- 2.2** Public consultation events have taken place throughout last year and this scheme was highlighted within the Wingate Play Strategy. Members of the public, local residents and allotment holders have been given the opportunity to view the plans and to make comments and were very supportive of the scheme as they are eager to make the site safe in terms of restricting cars.

3 Background

- 3.1** The Wingate Play Strategy was undertaken by Groundwork East Durham on behalf of Wingate Parish Council. The aim of the Play Strategy is to improve the opportunities for play for all ages within the Parish of Wingate. The study looked at the potential for play improvements within the parish boundary and highlighted the Pit Heaps as a key site for informal play.
- 3.2** The former colliery pit heap site, now reclaimed is a substantial area of grassed public open space. The site is rural in character, linking Front Street with the rural fringes of Wingate. Access onto the site is very open to both pedestrians and vehicles via paths and tracks, which are in poor conditions.
- 3.3** The Pit Heap Site is described as being centrally located, therefore Groundwork East Durham designed a scheme aimed at keeping cars off the site, improving footpaths and lighting for local residents and screening views of the allotments so that it could be used for informal play activities.

4 Position Statements: Environmental Enhancements

- 4.1** The purpose of the scheme is to undertake environmental improvements on the Wingate Pit Heaps site as shown on the attached plan. The aim is to develop the site as an attractive open space to be used by the local community, in particular children and young people, for informal recreation activities, and to improve and extend the footpath system within the site to provide a comprehensive pedestrian system between residential areas.
- 4.2** This will be achieved by reducing the conflict between vehicles and pedestrians and increasing safety by restricting vehicular access and improving footpaths with new surfacing and lighting. Removing remnant areas of tarmac, planting new trees and resurfacing the pot-holed allotment road will transform the derelict and unattractive entrances to the site.

- 4.3** The overall cost of the works is £148,000. Durham County Council are providing £20,000 from the Local Transport Plan, The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is contributing £118,000 and it is suggested that the Council make a contribution of £10,000.
- 4.4** The council will take on the responsibility for the future maintenance of the site including un-adopted paths, fencing, car park and planting areas. Durham County Council will take on maintenance responsibility for the adopted paths.
- 4.5** Residents and allotment holders are very supportive of the scheme as they are eager to make the site safer in terms of restricting cars. However the allotment holders did raise an access issue specific to their plots which have been incorporated into the proposals.
- 4.6** The nature conservation value of the site will be enhanced by encouraging longer grass and wildflowers in selective areas and by new trees and hedges.

5 Implications

Financial

- 5.1** The Council's contribution of £10,000 can be accommodated within the 2007/2008 Regeneration budget.

Legal

- 5.2** It is not considered that there are any legal implications not otherwise referenced in the report.

Policy

- 5.3** It is not considered that there is any policy implications not otherwise referenced in the report.

Risk

- 5.4** A risk assessment has been completed and the necessary actions required to manage the identified risks will be implemented.

Communications

- 5.5** The District Council's contribution to the improvements will be fully recognised in any media articles or press releases.

6. Corporate Implications

Corporate Plan and Priorities

- 6.1** This scheme fits into a number of Council priorities as identified in the Corporate Plan. Firstly it will help to meet the target of creating 'creating clean and tidy communities'. It will do this by improving surroundings by tackling pollutants such as litter, abandoned vehicles and environmental improvement.

- 6.2** It will also meet the target of 'building a healthy community'. It will do this by improving, promoting and encouraging the use of locally accessible, high quality open space.

Equality and Diversity

- 6.3** The scheme will provide an improved and comprehensive footpath system between residential areas and will therefore make the amenity space more accessible.

E-Government

- 6.4** It is not considered that there are any E-Government implications not otherwise referenced in the report.

Procurement

- 6.5** It is not considered that there are any procurement implications not otherwise referenced in the report.

Crime and Disorder

- 6.6** It is not considered that there are any crime and disorder issues not otherwise referenced in the report.

Local Government Review

- 6.7** It is not considered that there are any local government review implications not otherwise referenced in the report.

7 Recommendations

It is recommended the Executive:

- a) Endorse the environmental improvements scheme in Wingate.
- b) Approve a contribution of £10,000 to the Wingate Improvements scheme from the Liveability Budget, 2007/2008
- c) Grant Landlords consent for the works being undertaken by Groundwork East Durham on land in Wingate as shown on the attached plan.

Background Papers/Documents referred to:

Wingate Play Strategy 2007 (Regeneration and Partnerships Unit)
District of Easington Corporate and Performance Plan 2005/06 (Regeneration and Partnerships Unit)
Proposal from Groundwork East Durham and associated Drawings (001)