

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT HART OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE.**

#### **Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

##### **Q1) The Countryside Manager to seek further evidence on the differences between this most recent draft Plan and the previous one**

The purpose of the 2010 -2020 Management Plan was to analyse the following areas and propose management that would be most suitable for the SSSI. These included:

- Obtain Stakeholders perspective about what they value about the common
- Examine the range of management options available to improve/maintain those features that are valued and
- Select the most appropriate management options

This was done under the principles of “common purpose” a method of public engagement recommended by DEFRA. Note: as common land, any formal consent we may have needed from DERA, would have to have shown that we followed these principles, and they were adopted as a precautionary option.

It principally promoted and delivered large areas of restoration where rides, glades and coppicing would be implemented and could be seen as quite drastic.

The proposed plan focuses on routine maintenance of the common and does not contain significant proposals for change.

##### **Q2) Can we improve the pathways in a way that is sensitive to biodiversity and help improve access for the residents**

The proposed plan has struck an appropriate balance between biodiversity, informal recreation, and access to the common

It is worth noting that any increase of recreational activity or the construction or improvement of pathways would have a detrimental impact on the site’s biodiversity value, require additional finances and require consent from Natural England (NE) to implement. Draining the land is also not an option as it is part of the ecological structure of the SSSI. The 2009 consultation also notes the value of the site as “a tranquil and wild” benefit for the local area. Increases in visitation would impact on this.

##### **Q3) The possibility of applying for additional Government funding schemes appropriate to local groups for climate change activities**

The Countryside Service has a good track record at identifying and securing grant funding. We will continue to monitor funding opportunities and submit appropriate applications.

#### **Questions submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee from Residents**

**The Countryside Manager to provide answers to the questions submitted in the Appendix by Stuart Royston to Cabinet**

##### **1. Invite Cabinet to re-assure itself of the financial viability of the plan**

The grant funding identified is based on an annual average over the lifetime of the plan. This can be flexed with additional monies being drawn down as required the plan anticipates that the majority of the labour and resources to deliver the plan will be taken from existing staff budgets with volunteers backfilling when available. If additional works are identified, then bids for additional funding can be made to NE.

**2. In the light of the response from Odiham Parish Council, the residents, and the lack of consultation with Winchfield Parish Council all of which throw doubt on the wisdom of the proposed 'liaison' arrangements: invite Cabinet to consider alternative, more effective consultation arrangements that would bring together and unite the key stakeholders at a local level**

We do not believe there is a need for further "consultation" as this is a management plan which principally sets out the proposed maintenance regime for the common and therefore has little need or ability to vary. When a new "Project" demands the need for future engagement then we will undertake a stakeholder analysis to identify key groups and organisations that will need to be consulted. We will also ensure that this considers consultation with Winchfield Parish Council.

We note Odiham Parish Council's response and have no issue with the Parish Council building a relationship with the residents and passing on information to the District Council. We would advise that the Parish Council need to ensure that any feedback is representative of the entire parish.

**3. Ask Cabinet to appreciate that for a common such as Odiham Common – a SSSI site that offers potential to provide many benefits for people in the community – a successful plan should embrace biodiversity and wider public benefit objectives in a mutually supporting way and that the plan is weak on 'public enjoyment' objectives**

The Plan provides a balance that is "fit for purpose" for a remote nature reserve of this sensitivity.

**4. Paths and rides provide the essential infrastructure for public enjoyment and poor paths are one of the major factors preventing enjoyment of the common: invite Cabinet to prioritise repair and maintenance of waterlogged and muddy paths and earmark any unused resource from the £32,227 budget allocation for this purpose**

Officers have reviewed the 22/23 Odiham Common budget and confirm that there is no unallocated resource available. The majority of the cost in the budget provides a dedicated Ranger for this site.

**5. Invite Cabinet to ensure biodiversity objectives, targets, and performance indicators that particularly enhance public enjoyment are afforded priority and with this in mind:**

**a) Make reduction of bracken a priority with achievement targets at 2 year intervals rather than simply at the end of the plan**

Prescription 1.11 within the "Action Plan and Timetable" of the management plan proposes to treat Bracken in all years (or as necessary)

**b) Review the much reduced mowing regime after 2 years to ensure it is adequate for ensuring Odiham Common is an attractive place for visitors**

Actions 4.6, 4.7 and 5.1 to 5.3 within the "Operational Activity Summary" of the management plan confirm the arrangements for monitoring the operations.

There are a variety of walks around the common totalling over 10km. Which allows visitors to the common to enjoy up to approximately 2 hours of walking.

Odiham Common is not a country park and will be principally managed for nature conservation. which visitors will be able to enjoy.

Prescription 1.12 within the “Action Plan and Timetable” of the management plan proposes a rotational cut that will create the highest value for biodiversity whilst maintaining a clear passage.

**c) Prioritise ditch and water management to keep the common free of unnecessary excess water and its ponds attractive**

Objective 2: Pond and ditch restoration and creation within the “Action Plan and Timetable” of the management plan covers this adequately. It is worth noting that Odiham Common has wet woodland / marshes within it, each supporting its own specialist ecology which are listed as priority habitats under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan

**6. Invite Cabinet to remove from the plan the non-critical, unfunded tree felling in the small compartments in Potbridge that would be detrimental to the people**

There is no uncritical and unfunded tree felling proposed