

## **NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET**

**14<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2025**

**Report Title:** The Creation of Lyme Park Countryside Park

**Submitted by:** Service Director Sustainable Environment

**Portfolios:** Sustainable Environment

**Ward(s) affected:** Keele / Silverdale

<b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b>	<b><u>Key Decision</u></b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
To update Cabinet on the proposals for the creation of a Countryside Park on the former Keele Golf Course, to be known as Lyme Park Countryside Park	
<b><u>Recommendation</u></b>	
<p><b>It is recommended that Cabinet:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Notes the contents of the report and agree the timeline for the three phases of development for the Lyme Park Countryside Park.</b></li> <li><b>2. Supports the commencement of phase 1 in the creation of a Lyme Park Countryside Park to allow for the site to be operational from late Spring 2026.</b></li> <li><b>3. Agrees that a Traffic Regulation Order 2025 Amendment is drafted for consultation on the basis that the car park to serve the Lyme Park Countryside Park is free for a 2-hour limit per day, then subject to consultation comments that delegation is given to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth to adopt the amendment.</b></li> </ol>	
<b><u>Reasons</u></b>	
In March 2025, Cabinet agreed to the creation of a Countryside Park as part of the larger development of the former Keele golf course being considered as part of the Councils emerging new Local Plan.	

#### **1. Background**

**1.1** In March 2025 Cabinet approved the creation of a Countryside Park, to be known as Lyme Park Countryside Park on the former Keele Golf Course, with the following recommendations –

- That the development of a Lyme Park Countryside Park on land at Keele, be approved.

- (ii) That the action detailed in the report to progress the project be implemented.
- (iii) That the Portfolio holder for Sustainable Environment work with Officers on those actions and report back to Cabinet.

## **2. Progress to date**

- 2.1** This report provides progress on several of the actions agreed by Cabinet in March 2025.
- 2.2** An officer working group has been set up and has been working up options for the creation of Lyme Park as a new Countryside Park for the enjoyment of residents and visitors to the borough.
- 2.3** Practical achievement in the creation of the Lyme Park Countryside Park is best served in three phases, short, medium and long term. This allows the Lyme Park Countryside Park to develop taking account of potential adjacent housing developments identified in the Councils draft Local Plan.
- 2.4** Details of each of the phases are given below –

### **Short Term – Phase 1**

- 2.4.1** This initial phase of the Lyme Park Countryside Park will be delivered in spring 2026, on land under the ownership of the Council, and will involve refurbishment / improvements to the existing carpark (originally provided for the golf course) signage and gates to all access points onto the site, minor footpath clearance work, seating and bins and safety provisions to 3 areas of open water, i.e. lifebuoys and warning signage.
- 2.4.2** Management of the site at this stage will be undertaken by the Councils Streetscene service who will inspect and maintain infrastructure to ensure safety and enjoyment of the public. The site will be brought into the Councils existing Grassland Management Strategy which is now in its third phase, and the tree stock will be managed through the Council's existing Tree Management Strategy. Costs for this stage will be met from the Council's Capital programme and MTFS revenue budget.
- 2.4.3** Restrictions on the car park will need to be considered to avoid it being used as all day parking by Keele University staff and students. A limit of 2 hours is proposed with no charges. In order to make the car park operational with the options for enforcement, the car park will need to be incorporated into a Traffic Regulation Order. To do this there is a requirement for consultation. It is therefore recommended that this commences shortly in order that the processes can be completed prior to the park opening.
- 2.4.4** At the same time the Council will commission a Master Planning exercise including an ecological study and tree survey to inform further development of the Lyme Park Countryside Park into the medium and long term as development of the housing sites progresses.

### **Timescales**

- 2.4.5** It is considered that this will be a low-cost way to get the site formally open to the public and branded as a countryside park. It is, however, dependent on capital funding being made available.

**2.4.6** The Neighbourhood Delivery team can undertake the design work and project management to keep the costs down, as follows:

- Phase 1a – prepare designs and cost estimates for initial “light touch” works described above; September/October 2025
- Invite tenders/quotations for the work; November/December 2025
- Work on site; January/February 2026
- Completion and soft launch; March/April 2026
- Phase 1b – prepare brief for master planning, ecological survey and tree survey; July – October 2025
- Quotations/tenders for commission; October – December 2025 (costs unknown at this stage and dependent on capital funding being made available)
- Award commission; January 2026
- Estimated duration of commission; 12 months – reports submitted December 2026

#### **Medium Term – Phase 2**

**2.4.7** Utilising the outcomes of the masterplanning exercise the Council will look to ensure effective management of the site as housing development starts to commence. This phase will also consider and provide for any additional infrastructure, relocated car park, public toilets, café, visitor centre which the masterplanning exercise considers would be beneficial to the site for the enjoyment of the public. Costs for provision of any additional infrastructure and ongoing management would be met through developer contributions arising from the adjacent housing sites.

#### Timescales

**2.4.8** Key works in this phase will include:

- Commission management plan for a countryside park, based on findings/recommendations of ecological survey and tree survey and including any further infrastructure proposals (footpaths/car parks/visitor facilities etc to link to residential developments)
- Prepare brief, including community engagement; January – March 2027
- Quotations/tenders for commission; April – June 2027 (costs unknown at this stage)
- Award commission; July 2027
- Estimated duration of commission; 6 months, report submitted December 2027

#### **Long Term – Phase 3**

**2.4.9** The long-term phase 3 will look to how the site is managed once all housing development is completed.

#### Timescales

**2.4.10** Works in this phase will include:

- Implementation of management plan and community engagement strategy, dependent on residential development timescales
- Costs and management model unknown at this stage

**2.5** Assuming capital funding is approved, there is no reason why phase 1 cannot be implemented by Spring 2026.

### **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the contents of the report and agree the timeline for the three phases of development for the Lyme Park Countryside Park.
- 3.2 Supports the commencement of phase 1 in the creation of a Lyme Park Countryside Park to allow for the site to be operational from late Spring 2026.
- 3.3 Agrees that a Traffic Regulation Order 2025 Amendment is drafted for consultation on the basis that the car park to serve the Lyme Park Countryside Park is free for a 2-hour limit per day, then subject to consultation comments that delegation is given to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth to adopt the amendment.

#### **4. Reasons**

- 4.1 The opportunity to create a new Lyme Park Countryside Park for the Boroughs residents is an exciting piece of work and will help in protecting the Boroughs green spaces and biodiversity infrastructure.

#### **5. Options Considered**

- 5.1 Cabinet agreed in March 2025 that they wished to develop a Lyme Park Countryside Park on parts of the former Keele Golf Course.

#### **6. Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 6.1 There are no legal and statutory implications at this stage of the project however as the project moves forward implications around planning and formal accreditation as a countryside park will need to pay heed to appropriate legislation and guidance.
- 6.2 By drafting the Traffic Regulation Order Amendment early in the process, the Council will be able to comply with the requirements for consultation.

#### **7. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 There are no equality issues identified as part of this report. However, in developing detailed proposals for a Lyme Park Countryside Park, a full equality impact assessment will be required.

#### **8. Financial and Resource Implications**

- 8.1 There are significant resource implications in terms of officer time, this will be more defined as the project moves forward.
- 8.2 In terms of financial requirements, the master planning works are estimated at between £20k and £40k based on similar recent master planning works undertaken at Bradwell Dingle and Clough Hall Park.

- 8.3** For phase 1a of the park, an estimate of £50k for tree surveys and works based on recent work at Clough Hall following last winter's storms. Additionally phase 1 ecological survey is likely to cost £10k to £15k
- 8.4** Entrance works in terms of gates/fences/seats/bins and signage and some minor works to the existing carpark and footpaths could be in the region of £80k to be confirmed once quotes are back.
- 8.5** Section 106 funding in relation to the enhancement and maintenance of public open space has been identified to cover the costs detailed in paragraphs 8.1 to 8.4.
- 8.6** Enforcement of the Traffic Regulation Order will be required within the existing staffing resources as there is no intended income from car parking charges.

## 9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1** No major risks have been identified at this stage.

## 10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)



## 11. One Council

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council ☒

*We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.*

One Digital Council ☒

*We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.*

Sustainable One Council ☒

*We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle.*

- 11.1** Creation of a Lyme Park Countryside Park on the former Keele Golf course contributes positively to the Councils open space and green infrastructure strategies, and the ongoing development of the Councils Sustainable Environment Strategy.

**12. Key Decision Information**

**12.1** This is not a key decision at this stage.

**13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

**13.1** Cabinet approval for the creation of a Countryside Park to be known as Lyme Park Countryside Park on the former Keele Golf Course.

**14. List of Appendices**

**14.1** None

**15. Background Papers**

**15.1** None