

SUBJECT:	Littleworth Common.
REPORT OF:	Officer Management Team - Director of Services Prepared by - Head of Environment

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to consider the options for the management works on Littleworth Common in 2011/12.

2. Links to Council Policy Objectives

- 2.1 The management of Littleworth Common contributes to the Council's aim to make our environment measurably cleaner, healthier and managed in a way to preserve it for future generations.

3. Background

- 3.1. Littleworth Common is significant lowland heathland of 16 Hectares/ 39.6 acres and is shown edged in black on the plan at Appendix A. This matter has previously been reported to Members and it was agreed to use previous annual budgets to undertake the following:
- Herbicide treatment of the birch and bracken
 - Scarification as necessary
 - Further tree safety works as necessary
 - Commence work to prepare a new management plan
 - Commence works to prepare a bid for Higher Level Stewardship funding from Natural England
- 3.2 The Council has prepared a new draft management plan for the years 2011 - 2021. This document has been reported to PAG together with the results of a public consultation. The bid to Natural England for Higher Level Stewardship funding will be considered in 2012.

4.0 Discussion

- 4.1 Recent works on the central area of the common have achieved a good amount of heather regrowth and the site is improving. This area shows what the Council is aiming at and further works are necessary to maintain this improvement throughout the central part of the site.
- 4.2 There are certain management works that should be carried out in the latter part of the financial year. These are set out below. Members are asked to approve these works.

	Task	Approx Cost £
A	To cut and treat with herbicide, the taller young birch saplings. Approx. 3 hectares. To stack all arisings in woodland.	2,000
B	To cut and treat selected rhododendron bushes. (invasive species.)	500
C	To cut fallen dead trees by holly trees. To neatly stack all arisings in woodland. (these trees were felled by others and need to be cleared to enable site access.)	300
D	To cut brambles and other encroaching vegetation from all paths around Littleworth Common	500
	Total £	3,300

Other works that have been identified in the new management plan, such as removal of selected trees at the edges of the woodland and scrub around the ponds, will be implemented in future years once the plan has been approved by Natural England. The new Friends group will be involved with some of these tasks.

Future works:

- Herbicide spraying of bracken
- Weed wiping young birch trees
- Thin out larger birch trees along edge (maybe 6-10 trees per year)
- Removal of medium size birch trees and scrub around ponds.
- Selectively thin woodland across the road, open up glades.
- Possible Scarification as necessary

5. Resources, Risk and Other Implications

- 5.1 The works outlined in this report will be met from the 2011/12 capital budget for Littleworth Common of £9K of which £5,580 is for works.
- 5.2 There is a risk that if these management works are not carried out, the site will deteriorate and the results of previous work on the common will be lost.

6. Summary

- 6.1 The Policy Advisory Group is asked to approve the works as set out in this report.

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Background papers	Services working file

