

Item: 6

Development and Infrastructure Committee: 5 June 2018.

Happy Valley Management Plan.

Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the Happy Valley Management Plan 2017 to 2021.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

The background to the Council's ownership of Happy Valley and development of a Management Plan, as detailed in sections 3 and 4 of this report.

2.2.

That the Happy Valley Management Plan has now been reviewed and updated to cover the period 2017 to 2021, and identifies a range of actions to enable maintenance and, where possible, improvement of the Happy Valley Local Nature Reserve.

2.3.

The Happy Valley Management Plan Progress Summary, attached as Appendix 2 to this report, which details progress made in implementing the Plan.

It is recommended:

2.4.

That the Happy Valley Management Plan, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be endorsed.

3. Background

3.1.

Happy Valley was created in the grounds of Bankburn, Stenness, by Edwin Harrold, who lived there for many years. Mr Harrold planted the site with trees and shrubs, creating a unique and attractive environment along the banks of the burn which flows through the property. He welcomed visitors to Happy Valley and it became a popular place with both locals and visitors to Orkney.

3.2.

Following Mr Harrold's death, the Council was approached by the landowner of Happy Valley who wished to gift the site to the Council to ensure its future protection and continued use as a popular public amenity area.

3.3.

The Council subsequently agreed to the transfer of ownership in the summer of 2004, with the legal agreement being completed in December 2005. This agreement confirms that, should the Council wish to dispose of Happy Valley through sale, transfer or any other means, the property and associated land must first be offered back to the original owner or his successors for the sum of £1, with the Council responsible for the payment of any costs incurred in the transaction.

3.4.

A local group, the Friends of Happy Valley, came together in 2005 and its members have been involved in the upkeep of the property, along with the Council, ever since.

4. Happy Valley Management Plan

4.1.

In 2013, a draft Management Plan was prepared by consultants, on behalf of the Scapa Flow Landscape Partnership Scheme, as part of the restoration works to Bankburn Cottage and the designation of Happy Valley as a Local Nature Reserve. This Plan contained significant financial implications for the Council, for which there was no budget.

4.2.

The refined Plan, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, has sought to ensure there are no financial implications for the Council beyond a modest amount of staff input and advice and that almost all actions, beyond routine inspections, are predicated upon external grant funding being identified. All efforts have been taken to seek to make this clear in the Plan and it has been communicated to the Friends of Happy Valley.

4.3.

The Happy Valley Management Plan Progress Summary, attached as Appendix 2 to this report, details the progress that has been made so far in implementing the Plan.

5. Equalities Impact

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.

6. Links to Council Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities, as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority of Thriving Communities.

7. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities, as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority of Strong Communities.

8. Financial Implications

8.1.

Implementation of the Management Plan will lead to no additional financial implications for the Council, beyond infrequent modest contributions from existing revenue budgets and a small amount of staff time.

8.2.

At present, the land on either side of the Bigswell Road is leased for conservation grazing with the revenue being used to fund minor maintenance and repair works. There is also potential for additional revenue streams to be identified relating to the use of the former house and land for events, to ensure that the maintenance and management of the site becomes cost neutral. It is however anticipated that this would require a significant level of investment to bring the facilities up to the required standard.

8.3.

A number of the projects are aspirational and, where these are to be progressed, they will require to be fully costed, in order to ensure that they incur no additional expense to the Council.

9. Legal Aspects

There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

10. Contact Officers

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Happy Valley Management Plan 2017 to 2021.

Appendix 2: Happy Valley Management Plan Progress Summary.

Appendix 3: Equality Impact Assessment.