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| <b>CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b> | AGENDA ITEM No. 7 |
| <b>18 SEPTEMBER 2023</b>                                 | PUBLIC REPORT     |

|                                |  |              |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------|
| Report of:                     | Adrian Chapman, Executive Director: Place & Economy            |              |
| Cabinet Member(s) responsible: | Cllr Angus Ellis, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport |              |
| Contact Officer(s):            | Darren Sharpe - Natural and Historic Environment Manager       | 01733 453596 |

**Bretton Woods Management Plan (5 Year Revision)**

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| <b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>  |                           |
| <b>FROM:</b> Adrian Chapman - Executive Director Place & Economy  | <b>Deadline date:</b> N/A |
| <p>It is recommended that Climate Change &amp; Environment Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the current decline of the Council's owned and managed Ancient Woodland (Bretton Woods) and the potential pressures imposed,</li> <li>2. Consider the draft Bretton Woods Management Plan and provide further views prior to wider consultation.</li> </ol> |                           |

**1. ORIGIN OF REPORT**

1.1 This report is submitted to the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee having undertaken a 5 yearly review of the 2013 Woodland Management Plan for Bretton Woods. This 20-year plan, first drafted in 2013, made provision for 5 yearly reviews to detail the progress made during this period and to also highlight problems that have arisen.

**2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT**

2.1 The purpose of this report is to allow the Committee to receive and comment on a draft revised Bretton Woods Management Plan and the measures outlined within it.

2.2 This report is for Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference Part 3, Section 4 - Overview and Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions determined by Council:

- 6. Biodiversity;
- 7. Green Space;
- 8. Trees and Woodland

**3. TIMESCALES**

|   |    |                                  |     |
|---|----|----------------------------------|-----|
| Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan? | No | If yes, date for Cabinet meeting | N/A |
|---|----|----------------------------------|-----|

## 4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

### Background

- 4.1 As stated above this is a revision of the original 20-year Woodland Management Plan produced in 2013 for the Bretton Woodlands, Bretton, Peterborough. Provision was made in the plan for five-yearly reviews of which this is the second.

This review sets out essential management to ensure the integrity of the woodlands is preserved and that management will be on an ecologically sound and sustainable basis. Any changes to the plan will conform to the UK Forestry Standard (Forestry Commission 2023).

- 4.2 The review sets out a new management strategy aimed at making the woodlands as resilient as possible by removing failing ash in small areas spread across the woods and replanting with a wider range of native broadleaved trees. The method is designed to limit the landscape impact of disease. The previous review (2018) set out a programme of cutting small 0.031 ha coupes centred on ash in poor condition; 48 were completed and planted in 2018 with a further 45 programmed to be cut in 2024 (this work has yet to be completed). The attached management plan reaffirms that this is the correct manner in which to proceed however the number of coupes will now increase to 51 and are scheduled for late summer 2025, in an attempt to minimise ground disturbance, due to wet weather. The slow implementation of the strategy will allow time to establish the level of tolerance to ash dieback that may exist in the woodland ash population.

### Key issues

- 4.4 A key change that has occurred during the last 5-year period is the further spread of ash dieback in Bretton Woodlands. This fungal disease has the potential, over time, to kill the ash within the woods which is a serious problem given that ash forms a major constituent of all three woods. In addition, many of the Ash stools have extensive decay at their base due to one or more stems having been removed in the past. These factors, along with the wood decay fungus *Inonotus hispidus* being endemic within the woodland means that regular Health and Safety surveys, with intervention, when required, is essential.

The Council Ash Dieback Strategy aims to remove any class 3 or 4 trees that present a risk. The most recent survey undertaken to formulate this revised management confirms the presence of a large number of class 3 and 4 trees, now within the woodlands. The large-scale removal of all of these trees is not desirable in terms of public perception of woodland conservation management, particularly given the low target in the dense woodland. However, there is a risk to the public using the main paths and on the woodland boundaries. In the first year of the next five-year period class 3 and 4 trees within falling distance of the main paths or boundaries will be removed. Where possible these trees will be removed in the next tranche of small coupes, but those which are not suitable for inclusion will be dealt with separately in the autumn 2024.

## 5. Corporate Priorities

- 5.1 The recommendations are linked to the following Corporate Priorities:

### The Economy & Inclusive Growth Environment

The loss of Ash trees within the woodland will have a negative impact on the city through the loss of biodiversity and the broad range of ecosystem service Ash trees provide.

Measures to replace felled trees will provide a sustainable tree cover for the city.

Carbon Impact Assessment - Implicated trees are assumed to be close to death and thus there will be an impact in terms of capturing carbon from the atmosphere. Once dead or felled the tree/s would obviously stop that carbon capture, albeit any replacement trees would over time, should they mature, likely capture a similar level of carbon. Whilst difficult to quantify, it is considered that the Management Plan to be carbon negative, or it will take a long time to become carbon neutral. There will be a slight increase in carbon emissions from the increased transport required to fell implicated trees.

### Our Places & Communities

Action to fell dangerous trees will create a safe environment where people want to live, work, visit and play.

The management plan clearly communicates the Council's intention, offering reassurance to all the community.

#### Sustainable Future City Council

The proactive nature of the Management Plan allows the Council to budget and prepare for the management challenges posed, in a sustainable and transparent manner.

The management plan linked with strong data will help refine management practices, offer clear services to residents and enable forward planning.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 No external consultation has been undertaken on any matters referred to in this paper. It is however intended that following this meeting the draft management plan will be published on the council's Website and shared with relevant stakeholders, Parish Councillors and Ward Councillors. A briefing session on Teams will be offered, if required, to add further clarity.

In parallel to this the council will apply to the Forestry Commission for a Felling Licence that will also go on a public register for comments.

## **7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT**

- 7.1 It is anticipated that Climate Change & Environment Scrutiny Committee will consider and comment on the report and set out its views for Officers implementing the Bretton Woods Management Plan.

## **8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 8.1 The proposed Bretton Woods Management Plan has considered current best practice and has been developed alongside the framework of resources available to the Council and extensive working knowledge of the tree resource within the city.

The revised management plan adds clarity on the woodland current condition, prepares the authority for the potential financial impacts and provides a clearer understanding for the wider community.

## **9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 Other alternative options include:

Have no Action Plan - This was dismissed as it was considered that if no management is undertaken, it is likely that the woods will become too dangerous for public access. The character of the woods in the landscape would change dramatically. More open conditions would see an increase in regeneration of non-native tree and plant species and a marked deterioration of wildlife habitats within the woods.

## **10. IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 10.1 The costs of such are somewhat unknown, as the work has yet to be tendered. The estimated cost of undertaking the proposed works is in the region of £30K, which will be a new cost pressure for the financial year 2025/2026 to be contained within the directorate's overall cash limit. Higher Priority Health & Safety works implemented this year will be covered within existing service revenue budgets.

## **Legal Implications**

- 10.2 There is a legal duty to maintain any trees on land that the Council owns and is responsible for, as defined in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Highways Act 1980 and The Occupiers Liability Act 1957.

## **Equalities Implications**

- 10.3 There are no known implications, positive or negative.

## **11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 11.1 [Trees and Woodland Strategy](#)

[Tree Management: Ash Dieback Action Plan\\*](#)

## **12. APPENDICES**

- 12.1 Appendix 1- Bretton Woodland Management Plan 5 year Revision 2024