

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL 20 APRIL 2021

EC182: FENS BIOSPHERE

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The Principal Planner, Policy and Water Management Officer presented the report.

The Chair thanked the officer for his report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor Rust stated that this supported the work of Informal Working Groups, Portfolio Holders and was good for climate change. She asked if there would be the potential to extend the protected area under this initiative and the Principal Planner Policy and Water Management Officer provided detail of the other areas in the Borough that had protected statuses.

In response to questions from Councillor Bambridge regarding sustainable housing and resilience building it was explained that ways of achieving this could be looked at as part of the project.

In response to a question from Councillor de Whalley it was explained that proposals would develop once the Council had indicated its support to the project and it moved forward. He explained that things such as silt fens could be looked at by the Steering Group.

Councillor Kemp asked if there would be the potential to extend the designated area further along the Ouse. It was explained that the Steering Group were looking at the designated area and extending it to incorporate more of the Ouse was one of the things that had been highlighted.

Councillor Devereux referred to resilience and explained that there was a broad scope of projects looking at the Fens and this was something that the Environment and Community Panel could potentially be briefed on in the future.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Health highlighted the added benefits of the proposed designation in relation to leisure and tourism and work that could be carried out with schools.

Councillor Bullen stated that he hoped that residents would be engaged in activities and that wildlife should be core of the project.

In response to questions from Councillor Bubb it was confirmed that this designation would have no impact on planning powers and there was no intention of any powers or control being taken away.

Councillor Holmes addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34 and hoped that the project would be publicised and give schools the opportunity to become involved.

Councillor Kunes, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change highlighted the importance of the Fens and agriculture and hoped that no arable land would be lost to re-flood the Fens.

Councillor Blunt addressed the Panel under Standing Order 34 and asked if other Local Authorities had signed up to the project. It was explained that there had been progress with other relevant authorities that were now taking the proposals forward for consideration and a

Steering Group meeting would be held shortly to update on progress. The Environment and Community Panel could be kept up to date on progress.

Councillor de Whalley made reference to sustainability and recreating fenland. He asked what UNESCO's main aims were and referred to a report published by Natural England. The Principal Planner and Water Management Officer provided detail on the creation of new areas and there was the potential to link up with other Local Authorities in the future.

RESOLVED: That the Environment and Community Panel supports the recommendation to Cabinet as set out below.

That the Borough Council expresses in principle support for the designation by UNESCO of a Fens Biosphere.

EC187: EXEMPT – FOOD WASTE CONTRACT

The Waste and Recycling Manager presented the report and responded to questions from the Panel.

RESOLVED: That the Environment and Community Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report.