



Agenda Item

FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

9 September 2021

Report of the Executive Director - Place

**Memorial Planting Scheme at Grassmoor Country Park
(Infrastructure and Environment)**

1. Divisions Affected

- 1.1 The Memorial planting will be created at Grassmoor Country Park within the Division of Sutton, served by elected Member Councillor Jack Woolley.

2. Key Decision

- 2.1 This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral areas in the County. The Memorial planting at Grassmoor Country Park is proposed to be a commemoration for lost loved ones and friends of the people of the whole of Derbyshire.

3. Purpose

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval and funding for the creation of a woodland planting scheme at Grassmoor Country Park as a living memorial for the people lost in Derbyshire during the Covid-19 pandemic and to remember the great effort by the NHS, front line staff and key workers in support of Derbyshire's communities.

4. Information and Analysis

- 4.1 Over the last 18 months, the global Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the United Kingdom and the people of Derbyshire. Every aspect of life; family, school, work, friends, and community has been affected by the virus.
- 4.2 Whilst a commission was announced in May 2021 to consider the design of a national memorial, Cabinet requested that officers looked at the possibility of a Derbyshire Covid-19 memorial planting to act as a focus for residents to remember lost family and friends and to recognise the efforts of the NHS, frontline services staff and keyworkers in keeping us collectively safe throughout.
- 4.3 A memorial tree planting is a fitting act of commemoration for lost loved ones and friends. It is a living, growing space that will develop into an area for quiet reflection and remembrance in the future.
- 4.4 The Countryside Service has identified a potential site for a planting scheme at Grassmoor Country Park, near Chesterfield. It is a popular country park and is easily accessible from Junction 29 of the M1 and the A617 and can be visited by bus.
- 4.5 A surfaced main car park is available at Birkin Lane for visitors by car, which has seen a significant increase in use during the pandemic. It will be suitable in the short term, however, as the planting matures and becomes a popular destination, additional spaces may be required for rising visitor numbers arriving by car. There are options for developing further car parking capacity on site should it be required, but this would require additional planning and funding.
- 4.6 The proposed location for the memorial planting is at the northern end of the Park, indicated on Appendix 2 - Site Location Map.
- 4.7 The site is currently managed as meadow grassland with informal public access. Visitors to the scheme will have the option to explore further and walk up the slope to the recently restored area above which gives magnificent panoramic views of Chesterfield and North Derbyshire.
- 4.8 The proposal is for an informal planting scheme incorporating a mix of native tree species and in keeping with the local landscape character.
- 4.9 The approach will be along a cherry tree avenue with displays of blossom in the Spring and fruit for birds and other wildlife in the Summer and Autumn.

- 4.10 The scheme will replicate the shape of a tree with paths representing the trunk and branches and the small groups of trees representing the leaves. The initial planting will be 7 groups of 7 standard (large, up to 3m in height) trees with around 20 complementary, smaller native shrub species. Tree species will include Rowan, Scots Pine, Hazel, Birch, Dogwood, Oak, Yew, Wych Elm and Alder Buckthorn.
- 4.11 The initial planting will take place in Autumn/Winter 2021 involving the local community, the Friends of Grassmoor Country Park and ceremonial planting by elected members and their guests. It will be followed by further scheme development in 2022.
- 4.12 As Grassmoor Country Park was developed on a reclaimed colliery site, ground preparation will be undertaken incorporating suitable growing mediums and soil improvers to ensure the success of the scheme. Phase 2 of the scheme will see the development of the seating area with distinctive furniture which it is proposed could be built by Bolsover Woodland Enterprise to provide an area for quiet contemplation looking over the woodland as it matures. In addition, construction of paths and fencing and seeding under the tree groups with appropriate woodland wildflower species will take place. Finally, it is intended to interpret the planting scheme with on-site panels and a dedicated web-presence. Existing staff resources within the Countryside Service will develop and implement the scheme on the ground. Any future developments (such as sculpture/events, etc) will require additional resources.
- 4.13 The estimated cost of the proposed scheme is £57,000. The breakdown of this cost is £36,300 for the Phase 1 planting and £20,700 for the Phase 2 elements.
- 4.14 A grant application has been submitted to the Forestry Commission Local Authority Treescapes Fund for the Phase 1 planting elements. The outcome of this application is not now expected to be communicated before mid-September 2021 at the earliest.
- 4.15 The planting scheme will contribute to the Council's target of planting a million trees by 2030. Ongoing maintenance of the trees once planted, to ensure their successful establishment and health, will be overseen by Countryside Service staff.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Grassmoor Country Park has an active and very supportive Friends of Group which has indicated its in-principle support for the scheme and wish to help with planting and maintenance.

6. Alternative Options Considered

- 6.1 The option of waiting for national memorial proposals was considered and discounted on the grounds that whatever is done nationally, it was appropriate to create a memorial accessible to the people of Derbyshire.
- 6.2 The option of purchasing land and developing an entirely new site and planting scheme was considered and discounted as not providing value for money.

7. Implications

- 7.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 None identified.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Implications
- 9.2 Appendix 2 - Site Location Map

10. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 10.1 Approves the memorial woodland planting scheme at Grassmoor Country Park as detailed in the report.
- 10.2 Approves financial support from the Council's £15m Covid Recovery Fund of £36,300 to fund Phase 1 of the scheme and of £20,700 to fund Phase 2 of the scheme.

11. Reasons for Recommendations

- 11.1 To provide a suitable memorial planting as a focus to remember the Pandemic and its impact on the people of Derbyshire.

12. Is it necessary to waive the call in period?

- 12.1 No.

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Appendix 1

Implications

Financial

- 1.1 The project costs as proposed will be £57,000 in total. It will be planned in two phases, which are set out below. A grant application has been submitted to the Forestry Commission, as set out in section 4.14 above to cover the costs.

However, if the bid is unsuccessful, the costs will be met from the Council's £15m Covid Recovery Fund which was set up last year.

Phase 1 Tree Planting Autumn/Winter 2021	£36,300
Phase 2 Landscaping Works 2022	£20,700

Legal

- 2.1 The Council, as a Country Park provider under the Countryside Act 1968, for the purpose of providing, or improving, opportunities for the enjoyment of the countryside by the public, is also empowered under the Act to do all things appearing to it desirable for that purpose in connection with the Country Park provision..

Human Resources

- 3.1 Existing staffing resources within the countryside service will develop the scheme to deliver the first phase. Any further developments will require additional resources as the scheme grows

Information Technology

- 4.1 None.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1. The memorial site will be designed with access for all.

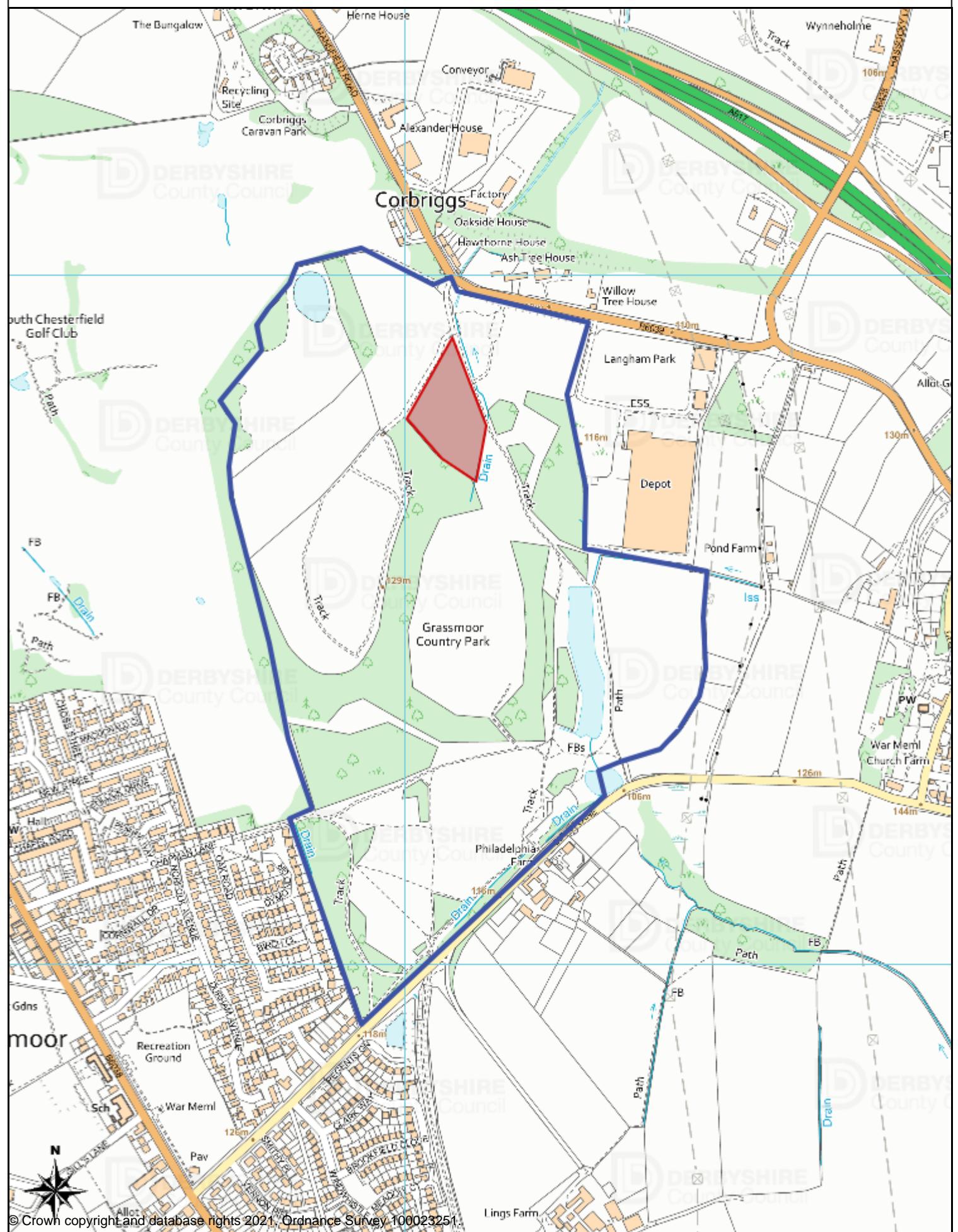
Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 6.1 This environmentally sustainable project will contribute to the Climate Change programme and the Million Tree planting target.

Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)

- 7.1 None.

Appendix 2 - Site Location Map



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