

**Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012**

**Subject: Queen Elizabeth II Fields Scheme**

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Kirkstall, Temple Newsam, Adel & Wharfedale, Farnley & Wortley, Crossgates & Whinmoor, Morley North, Ardsley & Robin Hood, Weetwood		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

**Summary of Main Issues**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Executive Board with information on the Queen Elizabeth II Fields scheme and seeks approval to submit nominations for a selection of sites vested with Leeds City Council.
2. Fields in Trust are working with a number of national partners to achieve the goal of 2,012 sites nominated for the Queen Elizabeth II Fields scheme by the end of the year including ASDA, SITA Trust, LV=, Princes Foundation, Sport England and a range of other trusts and foundations.
3. Given the objectives of the scheme and the opportunities it could potentially generate for business and volunteer participation, a number of sites have been selected for inclusion in this scheme. The nominated sites are:

Site	Ward
Butcher Hill playing fields	Kirkstall
Halton Dene	Temple Newsam
Holt Park	Adel & Wharfedale
Post Hill Woods	Farnley & Wortley
Skelton Woods and playing fields	Crossgates & Whinmoor
Street Lane Recreation Ground	Morley North
Thorpe Wood	Ardsley & Robin Hood
West Park playing fields	Weetwood

## **Recommendations**

4. Executive Board is recommended to note the content of this report and approve the nomination of the selected sites for inclusion within the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Trust scheme.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Executive Board with information on the Queen Elizabeth II Fields scheme, the principal objectives and the nomination process. The report highlights the opportunities presented to develop volunteering in Parks and Countryside, along with the positive impacts of volunteering and the growth in corporate volunteering facilitated by the service. In addition, the report seeks the approval of Executive Board to submit nominations for a selection of sites vested within Leeds City Council for inclusion within the Queen Elizabeth II Fields scheme.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Fields in Trust was founded in 1925 as the National Playing Fields Association by King George V. The vision is to have a nation which enjoys the multiple associated benefits from using open recreational spaces.
- 2.2 The Queen Elizabeth II Fields challenge is the current flagship UK-wide programme to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee, London Olympic and Paralympic Games, as well as the 2014 Commonwealth Games. The objective is to permanently protect 2,012 outdoor recreational spaces by the end of this year.
- 2.3 Fields in Trust are working with a number of national partners to achieve this goal including ASDA, SITA Trust, LV=, Princes Foundation, Sport England and a range of other trusts and foundations.
- 2.4 Fields in Trust are promoting this scheme on the principle that access to outdoor space is vital for communities and plays an important role in providing a place for both physical activity and relaxation. Green spaces of all typologies can be included within the scheme, ranging from playing fields to nature conservation areas. However, there are designated criteria that a site must satisfy in order to be eligible as a candidate for the Queen Elizabeth II Fields scheme:
- The site must be owned by the organisation putting the field forward to become a Queen Elizabeth II Field.
  - Evidence of ownership and where relevant freehold interest, permitting the use of the site for outdoor, sport, play and/or recreation must be produced.
  - Sites may be provided with facilities and equipment or used as general open space, and established for that purpose by way of planning requirements.
  - Each site's principal use should be outdoor sport, play or recreation.
  - Satisfactory evidence that the use or proposed use is a lawful use in planning terms.
  - Generally the minimum size is 0.2 hectare (0.5 acre).
  - Sites need to be accessible in terms of location.
  - Sites need to be affordable for the local community.

- Sites should be open to the public, established charitably, be held by a sports club under the Community Amateur Sports Club regime, or held as Public Open Space.
- All sites will need local managers, who will be responsible for the quality of the facilities, the maintenance and development, improving participation and use and financial and operational sustainability.
- Sites must be compliant with existing legislation relating to sport, play or open space.

2.5 Each location needs entering into a Deed of Dedication which provides protection for the site in perpetuity. Fields in Trust then assume a custodial role for each site nominated, which will include a requirement to attain formal consent from Fields in Trust prior to undertaking any material changes on site. Management and operational responsibility will remain vested with Leeds City Council. Each site nominated will receive a plaque of dedication and a Royal Oak sapling to be planted on site.

2.6 Leeds City Council has been approached by Fields in Trust to nominate sites as part of the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Trust scheme. The closing deadline for nominations is the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012.

### **3 Main issues**

3.1 There is an opportunity for Leeds to participate in the scheme and provide a lasting legacy of the Queen's jubilee, Olympics and Paralympics. In addition, national sponsors of this initiative, including ASDA and LV= have highlighted their intention to work with the council to improve sites in Leeds for recreational use.

3.2 The Queen Elizabeth II Fields initiative will provide a unique opportunity to encourage and involve volunteer participation from individuals and businesses in varying aspects of green space development and maintenance. Since late 2010, the Parks and Countryside service has been working to increase volunteering opportunities with the aim of engaging communities in the management of their local sites. As a consequence, 2011 saw a large increase in volunteering resulting in the service now working with over 1,000 volunteers, including members of about 150 volunteer community groups. These volunteers work to maintain and improve the green spaces, wildlife and general environment of Leeds in partnership with Parks and Countryside staff.

3.3 People of all ages and backgrounds can benefit from volunteering and in doing so can increase their knowledge or gain new skills in many different subjects. This includes increasing wildlife knowledge, improved horticultural skills, nature conservation, community work, administration and fundraising. In addition, volunteering also has a social aspect and provides an opportunity to meet new people and collectively realise an improvement in the local environment.

3.4 The benefits of volunteering in parks are becoming increasingly apparent to companies operating across the city. In 2011 within the Parks and Countryside service there was a 6 fold increase in corporate volunteering as demonstrated in the table below:

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13 (so far)
Corporate tasks	9	41	59
Volunteers	179	695	1,317
Volunteer hours	970	3,837	6,861

3.5 ASDA and LV insurance are key partners in the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Trust scheme, and both companies have an operational presence in Leeds. These organisations have expressed an aspiration to work with Leeds City Council in helping to protect and enhance some of the potential sites for the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Trust scheme.

3.6 Potentially there are hundreds of sites that would meet the criteria for selection. Fields in Trust have indicated that other neighbouring authorities are putting forward between 2 and 5 sites, however given the relative size of Leeds it is felt that putting forward 8 sites would be a manageable number. Sites have been selected on the following criteria:

- The potential to enhance opportunities for volunteer involvement in green space development
- The relative proximity to flagship ASDA stores, for example the ASDA store at Owlcotes in Pudsey have expressed a wish to become involved with the nearby site of Post Hill Woods.
- They provide a range of differing habitats across the sites nominated.

3.7 Taking the above into consideration the following sites are proposed for nomination under this scheme and included in the table below:

Name	Ward	Size	Typology	Brief description
Butcher Hill Playing Fields	Kirkstall	14.9 acres	Outdoor sports facility	The site comprises of open grass areas, 2 senior football pitches and 1 mini football pitch.
Halton Dene	Temple Newsam	84.9 acres	Community Park	Facilities include a playground, football pitches, two tennis courts, bowling green, car park and large open grass areas.
Holt Park	Adel & Wharfedale	9.3 acres	Community Park	Facilities include tennis courts, summer bowling green, bowls pavilion and large open grass areas.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Ward</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Typology</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
Post Hill Woods	Farnley & Wortley	69.3 acres	Natural Areas	This wooded slope, which rises up between Pudsey and Farnley, forms an important place for people and wildlife, which is reflected in its designation as a Leeds Nature Area. Much of the site is canopied by trees, through which run a number of woodland paths. At the foot of the hillside flows Pudsey Beck and this enhances the biodiversity of the site.
Skelton Woods & Playing Fields	Crossgates & Whinmoor	27 acres	Outdoor sports facilities	A site comprises a mixed broadleaf woodland plantation and playing field. It forms an important landscape feature, is a recreational resource for residents and contributes to the wildlife habitat of the area. The playing pitches consist of 2 senior football pitches, 2 junior football pitches and 2 mini football pitches.
Street Lane Recreation Ground	Morley North	7 acres	Outdoor sports facilities	The site is a valuable area of public open space, popular with local residents. It comprises 2 senior football pitches.
Thorpe Wood	Ardsley & Robin Hood	20.7 acres	Natural Areas	This Ancient Semi-natural Woodland and Leeds Nature Area (LNA) is dominated by oak and birch trees. A water course (Dolphin Beck) and marshy area form the southern boundary of the wood, providing a valuable wildlife corridor.
West Park Playing Fields	Weetwood	36.9 acres	Outdoor sports facilities	The site is a valuable area of public open space. It comprises of open grass areas and 2 senior football pitches.

3.8 Site plans are included in Appendix 1 of this report.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 Fields in Trust are working with a number of national partners to achieve the goal of 2,012 sites nominated for the Queen Elizabeth II Fields scheme by the end of the year including ASDA, SITA Trust, LV=, Princes Foundation, Sport England and a range of other trusts and foundations.
- 4.1.2 Ward Members have been consulted regarding proposals to include the relevant site within their ward into the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Trust scheme. No adverse comments have been received.
- 4.1.3 The Executive Member for Environmental Services has also been consulted and is in support of the proposals.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.4 An equality, diversity cohesion and integration screening exercise has been carried out for the inclusion of these selected sites within the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Trust scheme and is included in appendix 2 of this report. This has affirmed that equality, diversity, cohesion and integration considerations have been effectively considered in relation to this proposal and that a full impact assessment was not required.

### **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 This proposals comply with various Council policies and strategies relevant to improving the city and overall level of service provision.
- 4.3.2 The Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030 sets out a revised vision for the city with the specific objective for Leeds to be the best city in the UK by 2030. In establishing this vision one of the top priorities to emerge from consultation was for the city to be a cleaner greener city. Aspects of this priority can be found in all of the areas in which the vision is intended to make a difference, although specific reference can be made to the commitment within the vision for Leeds to be the best city to live with good green spaces where everyone can enjoy a good quality of life. The engagement in this scheme is likely to raise the profile of those sites nominated. The successful implementation of a programme of volunteer led activity should have a positive effect on the quality of those green spaces in question.
- 4.3.3 Leeds 2015, the City Priority Plan 2011-2015, sets out the vision to be the best city in the UK, and identifies 5 key action plans which will help the city progress towards achieving this objective. A case could be advanced that developing a capital project of this nature will in someway contribute towards attaining development across all of the key headline indicators contained within this document. More specifically, the engagement in this scheme has the potential to make a tangible contribution to 4 year priorities to get more people involved in the city's cultural opportunities, by increasing the proportion of adults and children who regularly participate in cultural activities. The continues extension of volunteer opportunities in Parks will make significant contributions to the cultural offer within the city, whilst improving green and open spaces by making them

more accessible to aid the health and well being of all citizens and visitors to Leeds.

- 4.4 The commitment to develop volunteering opportunities was included as an aspiration in the Parks and Green space strategy which was endorsed by Executive Board in February 2009. Proposal 8 states that 'We will engage with communities and encourage and enable people to get involved in developing our parks and green space'.

#### **4.5 Resources and value for money**

- 4.5.1 The scheme will make a recognisable commitment to local people to safeguard recreational land and protect public access to outdoor space.

- 4.5.2 The Queen Elizabeth II Fields Trust scheme represents a cost effective way for the Council to simultaneously mark the Queen's diamond jubilee, the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, along with the forthcoming 2014 Commonwealth Games.

#### **4.6 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.6.1 Each location needs entering into a Deed of Dedication which provides protection for the site in perpetuity. Fields in trust then assume a custodial role for each site nominated, which will include a requirement to attain formal consent from Fields in Trust prior to undertaking any material changes on site. There are no access to information issues associated with this report.

- 4.6.2 The deadline for nominations to the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Trust scheme is the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012. The Call In period for the decisions taken by Executive Board on 12<sup>th</sup> December will conclude at 5pm on 21<sup>st</sup> December. However if the matter was open for Call In, then a Scrutiny meeting may need to be held to consider the issue within 7 clear working days which would then be delayed due to the Christmas break. This decision is therefore considered to be urgent as any delay would seriously prejudice the Council's ability to successfully nominate the sites. Therefore this decision should be exempt from Call In.

#### **4.7 Risk Management**

- 4.7.1 There are no risks involved with the inclusion of these sites within this scheme.

### **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 This initiative safeguards outdoor recreational spaces and protects public access to them. The commemoration of Queen's diamond jubilee, the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and the 2014 Commonwealth Games provides a unique opportunity to promote local green spaces and develop opportunities for Leeds businesses and residents to volunteer in the development and maintenance of green spaces.

### **6 Recommendations**



6.1 Executive Board is recommended to note the content of this report and approve the nomination of the selected sites for inclusion within the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Trust scheme.

**7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.