

Environment and Sustainability Committee



9 November 2021

Title	Spelthorne BC proposal to re-join the Colne Valley Regional Park as a member through a formal agreement
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	Craig Hatton Senior Planning Officer (Strategic Planning)
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	<i>None</i>
Corporate Priority	This item is not in the current list of Corporate Priorities but still requires a Committee decision
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: Agree to Spelthorne BC re-joining as a member of the Colne Valley Regional Park through a formal agreement and to agree funding the subscription fee from the Green Initiatives Fund
Reason for Recommendation	Parts of the Borough are located within the Colne Valley Regional Park. The Park provides funding to its members to carry out initiatives and projects aimed at improving the local natural environment. This can include biodiversity projects or initiatives aimed at improving green infrastructure networks in the Borough. The Climate Change Working Group offered their support to re-joining the Colne Valley Regional Park and that it should be taken to the Environment and Sustainability Committee to agree funding from the Green Initiatives Fund

1. Key issues

- 1.1 The CVRP holds significant geographic importance in Spelthorne due to its proximity to Staines and its accessibility from across the northern part of the Borough. As part of the CVRP, Staines Moor is a vitally important feature of the Borough's landscape, offering an abundance of wildlife and recreation opportunities. Staines Moor feeds into Hithermoor to the north which both alone, and in combination, provide significant areas of green spaces separating the M25 and Heathrow Airport. In addition, the network of reservoirs, the Wraysbury, King George VI and Staines, form part of the CVRP and contribute to the Borough's landscape as well as playing a significant role in local biodiversity and as part of the wider Southwest London Waterbodies Special Protection Area (SPA) network.

- 1.2 The River Colne and Wraysbury River connect through the CVRP into Staines Moor and Two Rivers shopping area before flowing into the River Thames. The River Ash branches off from the Colne just south of Staines Moor and runs through the Borough to the south.
- 1.3 The Council was previously a member of the Colne Valley Partnership however withdrew in 2010, largely due to the lack of benefits being secured for the Borough. Since then, the CVRP has established a new governance structure that enables the Park to achieve significantly more than in the days of the former Colne Valley Partnership.
- 1.4 By re-joining as a member, Spelthorne would be able to have regular review meetings with CVRP and an officer can be designated as the main point of contact for this. This can allow for the identification of projects to be undertaken and a more coordinated approach to improvements within the Borough, at a strategic level to complement the Local Plan.
- 1.5 Re-joining the CVRP was considered by the Climate Change Working Group at their meeting on 13 October 2021. The Group agreed a proposal should be taken to the Environment and Sustainability Committee on 9 November with a recommendation of support and for the subscription fee to come from the Green Initiatives Fund.

2. Options analysis and proposal

- 2.1 Option 1 (recommended) By re-joining as a formal member of the CVRP and having an agreement in place will allow Spelthorne to access to projects and other initiatives within the Borough to improve the natural environment. Additionally, the CVRP can secure external funding for environmental projects in Spelthorne. This could also help to enhance appropriate uses of Green Belt as required by national planning policy.
- 2.2 The decision to re-join the CVRP through this agreement, will cost the Council an annual contribution to be paid to the CVRP to gain access to these benefits. However, the annual contribution is relatively low of between £5k and £8K and work is being done to agree a fee at the lower end of this scale. Subject to the agreement of the Environment and Sustainability Committee the subscription will be funded from the Council's Green Initiatives Fund.
- 2.3 **Option 2** Not to join would limit our ability to maximise opportunities to fund schemes associated with improving both Staines Moor and the River Ash. Additionally, membership may assist in the longer term with provision of linked cycling and walking routes to the River Thames scheme.

3. Financial implications

- 3.1 To re-join as a member, Spelthorne would be expected to make an annual financial contribution. This would be between £5,000 and £8,000 and presently discussions are focused on agreeing an annual fee of between £5K and £6K. This contribution will help to finance future projects and initiatives that could be brought into place in Spelthorne, to improve the natural environment. Similar previous projects have included works to the River Ash. Agreement is sought from the Environment and Sustainability Committee to fund the subscription from the Council's Green Initiatives Fund.

4. Other considerations

4.1 There are no other considerations.

5. Equality and Diversity

5.1 There are no identified impacts of the proposal on equality and diversity

6. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

6.1 The proposal to re-join as a member will support sustainability and change issues by presenting opportunities to undertake projects for the benefit of the natural environment. This could include re-planting, greater wildlife habitat management and opportunities to educate young people and others to be aware of climate change issues and how biodiversity solutions can be utilised to best support this.

7. Timetable for implementation

7.1 There is no formal timetable in place, however, subject to agreement, there is an indicative timeline for Spelthorne to re-join as a member of the Colne Valley Regional Park in early 2022. If agreement to re join is approved, then further detail over the formalising of the relationship with Colne Valley can be reached setting out when this can be implemented.

Background papers: *(These are unpublished papers upon which you have relied in preparing this report). If none state, There are none.*

Appendices:

Appendix A – Colne Valley Regional Park and relationship with Spelthorne BC