

# Scarning Water Meadows - Options Note

## 20 June 2011

Note Prepared by the Water Meadows Sub-Committee  
Seaming Parish Council

### 1. Preface

- 1.1. This note considers the possible management/governance options for the Water Meadows area of Seaming. The Note follows on from the last Parish Council Meeting on 16 May 2011, when it was agreed to form a Water Meadows Sub Committee. A Draft Terms of Reference for the Sub-Committee is appended to this report. A draft of this report has been discussed with the Wensum Valley Trust (WST) and the Water Meadow's Sub-Committee.

### 2. Option 1 - Maintain Existing Arrangements

- 2.1. The Parish Council leases two part of the Water Meadows from Breckland District Council for the purposes of public recreation space comprising:
- (a) Play ground and equipment installed by the Parish Council; (b) Obstacle course equipment;
  - (c) Adult exercise equipment;
  - (d) Large field for recreation including two goals; and
  - (e) A smaller football area off Ted Ellis Walk.
- 2.2. Under this option existing arrangements for the leasing of the above areas would be maintained. Breckland District Council (SDC) would continue to maintain all existing paths, fences and be responsible as landlord for the general management of the area.
- 2.3. However, under these existing arrangements there have been difficulties in securing an effective management strategy for the area and it is felt by the Parish Council and others that parts of the meadows have been neglected e.g. paths, bridges, hedgerow and meadow areas.

### 3. Option 2 - Parish Council Take over all responsibilities

- 3.1. This option considers approaching Breck/and District Council and seeking full responsibility by Seaming Parish Council (SPC) for the Water Meadows area. This would extend SPC's role from those aspects, outlined in paragraph 2.1 above, to include further responsibility for:
- (a) Paths;
  - (b) Fences; (c) Hedgerow;
  - (d) Meadow Areas; and
  - (e) General litter collection (including dog bins etc).

3.2. This option would effectively see the existing lease arrangement extended so that SPC would be responsible for all the "day to day" aspects of the Water Meadows. This would give SPC considerably more control and influence over the area and allow it to negotiate and liaise with other bodies such as the Wensum Valley Trust and others to secure the long-term management of the area. Under such governance arrangements there would have to be some form of financial agreement with BDC to enable SPC to maintain the Water Meadows area.

3.3. This option could potentially be very onerous to SPC both in terms of financial responsibilities and overan management (i.e. the Parish Council does not have the available resources (staff) to thoroughly manage the Water Meadows area). There might also be other health and safety issues to consider as well as the possible need to extend the Parish's existing public liability insurance etc. All these issues would need thorough investigation if this option were to be taken forward any further.  
Option 3 - Partnership Approach with Breckland and other Agencies

4. This option combines many of the key features of the above two options and would involve:

4.1.

- (a) the existing lease arrangements remaining in place;
- (b) the existing responsibilities of SPC and BDC remaining as they currently are.

4.2. However, the main difference would be the setting up of a Joint Management Committee (JMC) to oversee all aspects of the Water Meadows. The JMC would comprise:

- Breckland District Council;
- Seaming Parish Council; and
- Wensum Valley Trust.

The two Councils would have equal governance arrangements and meet on a monthly or two monthly basis. The meetings would also involve, as necessary, the following bodies:

• Police - Safer Neighbourhood Team; •

Internal Drainage Board

" Local Schools (e.g. Dereham Church Infant, Seaming Primary School and Dereham St Nicholas Junior School).

4.3. The existing Parish Council Water Meadows Sub-Committee could be combined into the JMC and basically have the same Terms of Reference as outlined in the attached Appendix. These terms of reference would have to be agreed with in the respective bodies.

4.4. A key component to this approach would be the development of a long-term Management Plan for the area, which is not only environmentally sustainable but also financially viable for all partners. The benefits of such an approach is that it brings together all the relevant players and thereby ensuring a more "joined-up/holistic" approach to the management of the Water Meadows area which is a valuable resource for both Dereham and Scarning alike.

5. Recommendation

5.1. It is recommended that:

- (a) The attached Terms of Reference (ToR) for Water Meadows Sub-Committee should be agreed;
- (b) Option 3 for a Joint Management Committee (JMC) for the area should be investigated with Breckland DC;
- (c) The clerk arrange a meeting with the relevant officers at Breckland DC in late July or August to discuss setting up a JMC;