

North York Moors National Park Authority

17 December 2012

Removal of Unsightly Buildings at Carlton Gliding Club

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek Members' approval to contribute grant aid in order to secure the removal of a hangar and associated buildings on Carlton Moor.

2. Background

- 2.1 In March 2012 Members considered a report seeking approval for up to £35,000 in grant aid from the Landscape Intervention Fund for the removal of unsightly buildings associated with the former Carlton Moor Gliding Club. In discussion, Members considered that the buildings were an eyesore that needed to be removed. There was also comment that the runway area would need to be re-vegetated but concern that the report was proposing up to 100% grant aid. In conclusion, Members supported the principle of removing the buildings and of the Authority making a contribution to this but asked that officers have further discussions with the landowner and club and bring a further report back to the Authority.
- 2.2 Carlton Moor Gliding Club is situated on the highest point of the ridge above Carlton Bank. The hangar and associated buildings are in close proximity to the Cleveland Way and other adjoining rights of way. This is a particularly popular section of the Cleveland Way and the buildings create a very unsightly intrusion in open moorland.
- 2.3 The former runways, which are unsurfaced, have created large erosion scars through the heather and in to the mineral soil below. These are subject to continued scouring and have not revegetated to any great extent despite not being in use for a number of years. The buildings have also been disused for a number of years and are derelict in appearance. In short, they create a significant eyesore in an otherwise unspoilt area of moorland which is highly visible from a well-used National Trail. As a result they have been the cause of complaints to the Authority.
- 2.4 The area of the runways and buildings are currently classed as 'excepted land' in terms of open access as it is classed as an airfield. This exception will cease with the removal of the buildings.
- 2.5 In 2009 the remaining representatives of the Gliding Club notified the National Park Authority that they were ceasing to operate. They were also keen to find a mechanism by which the buildings could be dismantled and removed from site, however the Club's own resources were very limited and were committed to charges for rates. Since that time there have been various complications including a change of land ownership. Further discussions have now been held with the new owner of the land and Club members. The conclusions from these are set out in part 4 of this report.

3. Principle of Landscape Grants

- 3.1 National Park Authorities have a long history of providing financial support for measures which contribute to First Purpose with regard to conserving the landscape. This has been particularly so in the North York Moors where the Authority has made a point of maintaining implementation budgets for this purpose. Members have recently approved a set of revised grants schemes one of which is specifically aimed at conserving traditional field boundaries due to their landscape value.
- 3.2 The Landscape Intervention Fund was established by the Authority in 2006 for the purpose of achieving large scale landscape and wildlife improvements. It has been used to deliver landscape scale field boundary restoration, restoration of planted ancient woodland sites, repair of a number of ranges of historic farm buildings, restoration of Caulklands Quarry including revegetation as limestone grassland and a wide range of other valuable projects.
- 3.3 The removal or amelioration of unsightly buildings has been supported by the Authority in the past but the opportunities for such action have rarely occurred. The 1949 National Park and Access to the Countryside Act, which paved the way for National Parks in England and Wales, established the principle of using National Park funding for the removal of buildings and this was extended in later legislation to include other eyesores. Whilst such opportunities are rare, they often provide chance to achieve lasting and significant landscape improvement.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 Further discussions with the owner and Gliding Club have resulted in a revised specification for the removal, the quoted figure now being £16,000. Part of this cost relates to the need for repairs to the access track to allow the passage of lorries needed to remove the buildings. Due to unforeseen savings the Gliding Club is in a position to make a contribution to the cost of removal and the landowner has agreed to contribute towards the cost of track repair. Overall contributions will total £4000.
- 4.2 The owner has also indicated that they are prepared to take on the responsibility of entering and managing the contract for removal and of overseeing the work.
- 4.3 The area of the buildings and runways (totalling approximately 3Ha) will be revegetated as moorland. Discussions have been held to see if this can be funded via a proposed High Level Stewardship Scheme.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The removal of buildings and revegetation of the runways at Carlton Bank Gliding Club will result in a major landscape improvement in a prominent position which will be appreciated by many visitors to the Park. Such opportunities to further the Authority's first purpose on such a scale occur rarely. It is considered that support from the Authority's grant budgets is fully justified.

6. Financial and Staffing Implications

- 6.1 Twenty thousand pounds has been earmarked within the Landscape Intervention Fund budget for this project in this financial year. Total cost to the Authority is now likely to be £12,000. However, it is proposed that £15,000 should be committed to allow for any additional costs that may arise. A very limited amount of staff time will be required for drawing up and managing the grant agreement.

7. Sustainability Appraisal

7.1 In terms of the National Park Management Plan, the recommendations contained in this report will have the following significant *beneficial* sustainability implications:

- There will be a substantial and permanent improvement in the landscape quality of the National Park
- There will be wildlife benefits and reduced erosion arising from revegetation

8. Legal Implications

8.1 An offer of grant will be based on a standard legal agreement used in such cases. These have been drawn up with advice from the Authority's legal service. The buildings are within the North York Moors SSSI and consent for the works will be required from Natural England. Preliminary discussions have been held with Natural England and it is considered that this process should be straight forward.

9. Recommendation

9.1 That Members approve a contribution of up to £15,000 towards the removal of all buildings at Carlton Gliding Club.

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Background papers to this Report

Landscape Intervention Fund Grant for the Removal of Unsightly Buildings on Carlton Moor

File ref

Report to the National Park Authority 26 March 2012