Appendix 4

PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

Hic Bibi Local Nature Reserve

Release: 1.1

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This Project Utilises Chorley Borough Councils Project Management Methodology

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Programme Board: Capital

Outline Business Case

Revision History

Date of this revision: 20/02/06

Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Version
27/01/06	First Draft	1.0
20/02/06	Minor changes following quality assurance	1.1

Approvals

This document requires the following approvals:

Name	Date Approved	Link to Approval Minutes	Version
Capital Programme Board	01/02/06		1.0
Executive Cabinet			1.1

Distribution

This document has been distributed to:

Name	Title
Jane Meek	Head of Development and Regeneration
Rebecca Huddleston	Project Support Officer
Capital Programme Board	
Executive Cabinet	

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Hic Bibi Local Nature Reserve is an 8-hectare site owned by Northern Venture Capital Limited. It has been leased for 999 years to Chorley Borough Council since 1993 when it was designated as a County Biological Heritage Site. The location is a former brick works and clay quarry site situated off Coppull Moor Lane near Chorley. The nature reserve was created on the site in 1997 when rubbish was cleared, paths and ponds created, and new planting, fences and stiles provided. The key habitats are species rich grasslands, ponds, scrub and mire. Chorley Borough Council and its partners Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Chorley and District Natural History Society, Coppull Parish Council and Lancashire County Council have managed the site since 1994 and it became a Local Nature Reserve in 2000. The site is very important for amphibians, birds, dragonflies and damselflies and mammals. Notable species include Stonewort, Reed Bunting, Black Darter Dragonfly, Water Voles, which are UK Priority Biodiversity species, and Great Crested Newts that are 'European Protected Species'.

A five-year ecological management plan has been prepared for Chorley Borough Council running from April 2002 to March 2006. As part of the management plan the following ecological monitoring has taken place biannually to guide further site management.

a) Recording and monitoring all ponds, amphibian populations and aquatic invertebrate to assess impact and guide to future management.
b) Maintaining and enhancing hedgerows.
c) Recording and monitoring invertebrate populations of dragonflies, damselflies and butterflies and to assess the impact of management.
d) Monitoring changes in the structure of the site's vegetation

Following site monitoring of grasslands and ponds in 2005, the Council's Ecological Consultant strongly recommended that ecological enhancement work be undertaken.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- To halt the processes of natural succession for the benefit of flora and fauna already living on the site.
- To create new ponds and remove surface vegetation to expose clay substrates suitable for natural colonisation of species rich grasslands.
- To create extensive new breeding habitats for great crested newts and other amphibians.
- To safeguard the grasslands.

SCOPE

The scope is to restore and enhance one of the most ecologically important Nature Reserves in the Borough.

The works includes creation of new ponds, ditches, and establishment of species rich grasslands. The project will be carried out with help and advice of site partners. English Nature will be consulted throughout.

The site works have to be carried out at the optimum times in order to not disturb breeding or hibernating birds and amphibians. It is therefore essential that preliminary works start in August at the latest and work beings on site in September with a finish date of November 2006.

ASSUMPTIONS

The assumption made is that:

- The capital bid for Hic Bibi Nature Reserve is successful.
- The site will be managed and remain ecologically important for future generations

OVERVIEW OF THE BUSINESS CASE AND BENEFITS

Grassland management is a problematic issue at Hic Bibi. At present a relatively small number of compartments have been cut by strimming on an annual or rotational basis. Most of the species-rich compartments have not been subject to cutting due to many factors, such as ground topography, access issues and costs.

It is now apparent that many of the species-rich grassland areas at Hic Bibi are under threat from processes of natural succession. In particular the following features and processes directly threaten the species-rich grasslands:

- Continued expansion and new colonization of scrub, particularly willow species and bramble. Multi-stemmed re-growth of previously cut scrub contributes to the problem, e.g. Compartment G23.

- Expansion of existing areas of tall ruderal herbs and areas of reed canary-grass, e.g. Compartments G17, G28, G26 and G25. In addition less desirable species seem to be more frequent within species-rich grassland compartments, e.g. increase in marsh thistle throughout the reserves grasslands, particularly within important grassland Compartments G14, G15, G16 and G24.

There is a now an urgent need to address these management issues in order to safeguard the grasslands. The following recommendation is made to enhance the grassland habitats.

- Extensive scrub control and removal is needed. Cut scrub must be treated with stump killer herbicide to prevent re-growth. The locations and methods need to be agreed with PENNINE *Ecological* to safeguard other interests including; birds and great crested newts.

- The creation of new ponds and ditches surrounded by scrapes cleared of vegetation. In particular this will include compartments where floristic interest is limited and / or some of the scrub compartments. Following vegetation removal, a series of multiple small ponds and linear ditches will be created surrounded by bare exposed clay substrates. The following areas of the reserve are considered particularly suitable for this. The area comprising Compartments G24 and G29, and, in particular G12 and part of W4. A new glade in Compartment W4 could be cleared of scrub in order to link Compartments G12 and G7. Other areas also need to be considered, although there are issues relating to both water voles and great crested newt. Evidence of significant water vole activity in the form of runs and feeding stations has been noted in terrestrial grassland compartments at considerable distances from ponds. In particular the area west of Ponds 3 and 4, including Compartments G17, G25, G14, G26 and G28 supports many signs of habitual use and dispersal from the ponds which are considered to be the main breeding locations.

- To carry out the methods outlined above there is a legal requirement to apply for a DEFRA Conservation licence due to the presence of the protected great crested newt. This is a costly exercise both in terms of applying for the licence and the production of associated method statements, and, not least, the implementation of protective measures and terrestrial clearance of the species. In basic terms the areas affected by the vegetation clearance would initially need to be enclosed by temporary amphibian fencing. A number of pitfall traps would then need to be installed within the fenced compartments and checked on a daily basis until such time newts were deemed to have been cleared from the areas. The pond creation and vegetation clearance could then take place. The benefits of this scheme would be two fold. Firstly, the creation of extensive new breeding habitats for great crested newts, and secondly, the creation of new exposed clay substrates which will provide suitable conditions for the natural establishment of species-rich grasslands.

The adoption of the above measures are considered essential to safeguard the sites intrinsic botanical interest. The adoption of the pond creation with scrapes will also enhance the sites value for amphibians. Although the amphibian status of the site is not considered to be threatened, it is noticeable that Ponds 1, 2 and 3 are becoming increasingly dry and have excessive vegetation colonization. In particular Pond 1 is now virtually dry throughout the year. The new ponds *(Ponds 3, 5 and 6)* created by Chorley Borough Council are without doubt the sites main breeding locations. Without the creation of Ponds 3, 5 and 6, the sites status for the species would now be significantly threatened.

This project meets our corporate priority in reducing ‘pockets of inequality’, getting people involved in their communities as well as developing the character of Chorley as a good place to live, work and visit.

BENEFITS PLAN

- Safeguard the sites intrinsic botanical interest for future generations.
- Providing an environment that is good for nature.
- Protecting European Protected Species and UK Priority Biodiversity Species.

GERSHON EFFICIENCIES

	Efficiencies
Corporate Services	None anticipated.
Procurement	Competitive tendering will be sought.
Productive Time	No implication to Chorley BC in terms of additional staff time and cost.
Transactions	None anticipated.

THE DO NOTHING SCENARIO

The result of doing nothing can be summarised as follows:

- The designation of Biological Heritage Site and Local Nature Reserve could be removed
- The site will become neglected and will revert to woodland through the process of natural succession
- The importance of the site for breeding great crested newts will decrease due to loss of suitable habitat.
- The species rich grasslands will loose flora diversity due to being out competed by ruderal weeds.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COSTS

Description	Year	Capital Cost Estimate	Revenue Cost Estimate
English Nature Licence Application	Aug 06	£610.00	
Interest Group Consultation	Aug 06	£210.00	
Scrub Clearance (timed to **not** disturb breeding birds)	Sept 06	£6,920.00	
Erection of Temporary Amphibian Trapping Fences / Bucket Traps	Sept 06	£3,000.00	
Bucket Trapping (30 nights)	Sept – Oct 06	£2,700.00	
Ground Clearance, Tree and Scrub Clearance and Pond Creation	Oct – Nov 06	£11,025.00	
Removal of Trapping Fences/Bucket Traps & Report to English Nature	Oct – Nov 06	£1,075.00	
Contingency (10%)		£2,554.00	
Total		**£28,094.00**	

RECOMMENDED HIGH LEVEL PROJECT MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Position	Name	Title
Project Sponsor	Executive Cabinet	
Senior User	Jane Meek	Head of Development & Regeneration
Project Manager	Sagheer Akhtar	Regeneration Projects Manager
Landscape Assistant	Lindsey Ralston	Landscape Assistant
Senior Suppliers	Pennine Ecological	Ecological Consultant