

Some underlying principles for the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Bid

Landscape

1. The landscape of the Commons is its greatest attribute; the general wilderness and windswept aspect must not be vulgarised by making the Commons a well-ordered parkland. This project is not about looking to return the landscape to the state in which it was in when created in 1871 but it is much more about making small changes to enhance the site's ecology and creating a more diverse mosaic of habitats to encourage wildlife and flora to thrive. For example, opening up some of the rides to create a more open aspect could transform the woodland edges and the creation of open glades in woodlands with bramble edges would provide nesting sites for birds.

Structures and Infrastructure

2. There is a great diversity of structures and infrastructure on the Commons; in many cases, buildings appear on a localised basis with no overall strategy to guide the appearance and coherence with the natural aspect of the Commons. This is particularly true of the two main enclosures around the Windmill complex and REMPF pavilion where subtle changes would provide for a more coherent, welcoming and integrated approach. We need to achieve a consistently high standard across the entire infrastructure portfolio (ie, buildings, structures, pathways and signage) whilst retaining the uniqueness of the site, which is fundamental to its charm and character. The project is about achieving a uniform theme and consistently high standard; it is not about sanitising the built environment nor destroying the character.

Visitors/Users

3. The Commons is a precious resource for those who come to enjoy the natural world, whether through walking, quiet reflection or physical exercise. There is a balance to be struck between making the Commons more accessible and ensuring that we safeguard the Commons and protect its sensitive habitats. We need therefore to create the gateways where information about the habitats, heritage and management will help better inform visitors. In addition, improving the main arterial path network will reduce footfall in particularly sensitive areas; the less frequented areas must be left unmade and natural.

Ethos/Culture

4. Income generating events could play an important role in realising and sustaining our vision for the future of the Commons. The events that we currently organise on the Commons are primarily designed to promote awareness and use of the Commons. We recognise however that there are opportunities to generate income either through these events or through different types of events that would be designed primarily to raise income.

In developing an income generating strategy, we need to ensure that we do not create barriers that would deter use of the Commons or damage the existing goodwill of the public. As such, we need to recognise the fundamental importance of retaining our culture and the dangers inherent in moving to a more income generating approach whilst simultaneously recognising the goodwill that exists in the public and the need to provide clear opportunities for financial contributions.