



Hampshire
County Council



Titchfield Haven



National Nature Reserve

**Countryside, Culture &
Communities Select Committee**

7 December 2022

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Countryside, Culture and Communities Select Committee:

1. Supports the recommendations being proposed to the Executive Member for Countryside, Culture & Communities as detailed in paragraphs 3 to 9 of the Decision Report;
2. Supports the recommendations being proposed to the Executive Member for Policy, Resources and Economic Development as detailed in paragraphs 10 to 13 of the Decision Report.

Haven House



- Visitor centre and reception
- Café and shop
- Toilets
- Offices and residential flat (vacant) on first floor
- Built c.1820 as a residential dwelling (650sqm)
- 85,000 annual visits

National Nature Reserve (Statutory)

- Eight bird hides
- 500m boardwalk network
- Popular with birdwatchers
- Nationally significant sensitive habitats & wildlife
- Environmental designations including SINC, SPA and SSSI
- 15,000 annual visits



Haven Cottage



- Residential property (c.1614) previously occupied by staff
- Vacant for 10 years
- Never used for public access
- Grade II listed (Jan 2022)
- In need of repair

Revenue Income and Expenditure

	Actuals 2018/19 £'s	Actuals 2019/20 £'s	Actuals 2020/21 £'s	Actuals 2021/22 £'s	Budget 2022/23 £'s
Employees	332,596	388,253	363,158	395,869	370,000
Premises	84,206	86,754	72,800	74,772	57,000
Transport	7,036	11,070	8,721	8,654	11,000
Supplies & Services	139,311	194,660	77,955	198,424	203,000
Income	-453,826	-538,169	-240,005	-515,926	-505,000
Grand Total	109,324	142,569	282,629	161,793	136,000

Asset Liability and Revenue Pressures

Estimated costs over the next three years if no changes made to current operating model

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Revenue Budget Pressure - SP23	60,000	60,000	60,000	180,000
Building condition liability – Haven House (current)	137,000	274,000		411,000
Building condition liability – Haven Cottage (current)	263,000			263,000
Forecast condition liabilities – Buildings			226,000	226,000
Forecast condition liabilities - Nature Reserve	280,000	280,000	110,000	670,000
Net revenue running cost increase	25,000	27,000	29,000	81,000
Total pressure against budget	765,000	641,000	425,000	1,831,000

Objectives



Financially sustainable: Long term economic sustainability, whilst still delivering statutory obligations and ensure the best use of assets and resource.

Environmentally sustainable: Develop a future strategy which responds to opportunities for improved habitat management and adapts to be more resilient to climate and coastal change (internationally designated for wildlife)

Community focused: To ensure THNRR has a thriving role within the local community and a strong and supported volunteer network (c.85 active volunteers).

Visitor experience: To increase access at a landscape scale level, understanding and engagement of the local environment, climate, and coastal change (15,000 visits to reserve, 85,000 to café).

Options Considered

Do Nothing/As Is

No change to current management or visitor offer.

- Increasing net revenue cost (currently £136k)
- Asset maintenance (674k) unbudgeted
- Increasing costs of labour, materials and contractors exacerbating managed decline
- Increased risk of legal challenge if continue managed decline.

Develop Offer

Investment in the current visitor centre at Haven House or a new visitor centre.

- + Alternative site could provide additional income streams e.g., parking.
- Additional investment required: c.£1m development cost for Haven House
- Limited return on investment.

Transfer

Transfer to Third Party

- + Revenue costs reduced/removed.
- Would not address condition liability of the assets.
- Would require significant dowry prior to transfer

Change Focus

Prioritise the reserve and manage without café/shop.

- + c. £60k reduction in annual costs
- + retain successful/growth areas of income
- + potential to re-invest capital receipts
- + cost avoidance
- Reputational risk of closure

Recommended Option

Option 4 - Change Focus.

- Prioritise the reserve and manage without the café and shop.
- Most closely aligned with the four key objectives

Key Benefits

- Most viable approach to ensure long-term environmental sustainability of THNNR
- Reduces revenue costs of THNNR while investing capital in long-term future of the Nature Reserve.
- Opportunity for a wider strategic landscape scale approach
- Improve access to the site for volunteers and community.



Proposal Summary

**Closure of
Visitor Centre
and Café**

**Sell Haven
House &
Haven Cottage**



Re-invest in NNR & operational base

Reduce revenue costs by £60k towards SP23

Remaining balance invested in longer term management of reserve

Retain a strong customer and volunteer offer

Financial Impact

REVENUE	Current	Future
Income	505,000	118,500
Expenditure	641,000	194,500
Net Cost	136,000	76,000
Change		-60,000

CAPITAL Estimates	22/23 '000	23/24 '000	24/25 '000	25/26 '000	Total '000
Haven Cottage capital receipt	500				500
Haven House capital receipt		1,500			1,500
Total Income	500	1,500			2,000
Phase 1 estimated costs (asset disposal costs, replacement operational base and urgent works)	10	765			775
Phase 2 estimated costs (works on the reserve e.g., watercourse management, boardwalks, hides etc.)		135	280	110	525
Total Costs	10	900	280	110	1,300

Timescales

Sept – Oct 22

- **Staff Consultation**
- **Public Engagement**

Nov 22

- **Countryside, Culture and Communities Select Committee Briefing**
- **Survey analysis**
- **Report preparation**

7 & 8 Dec 22

- **Countryside, Culture and Communities Select Committee**
- **Executive Member Decision Days**

23 December

- **Proposed Visitor Centre Closure**

Staff consultation – summary of feedback & proposal amendments

Staff Feedback	Amendments
Importance of staff presence at a pay to enter site for visitors	Visitor services staff retained to provide 7 day a week cover to support visitors, members and volunteers
Rangers need to prioritise supporting the reserve rather than visitor queries	Proposal includes a staff and volunteer welfare facility Provide a dual approach for tickets, with both online and onsite sales
Concerns raised about impact of proposals on volunteering	
Concerns introduction of online only booking will deter visits and reduce income	Provide a dual approach for tickets, with both online and onsite sales
Customers want access to the reserve earlier	Preference to adjust opening hours to 9am – 4pm. Identified other opportunities - dawn/dusk events
Yard capacity and access queries raised, and amendments proposed	Alternative options for amendments to the yard identified to better meet operational needs Assessment of the alternative option to utilise current reception building as operational base

Staffing Impact

- 50% of employees currently supporting the site would retain their employment, at the site or redeployed in the service (an increase from 25% in original proposals)
- 50% of employees currently supporting the site remain at risk of redundancy
- Access to Employee Support continues and will be available for 3 months after employees leave HCC
- Close to public 23rd December, however, staff paid contractual notice periods, minimum of one month

Public Engagement approach

Core objectives

1. Sharing the proposals

2. Assessing the impact of the proposals

3. Providing a mechanism for feedback

4. Gather initial ideas to help shape future investment in the reserve

Phase 1 (27 Sep – 1 Nov 2022)

- Member engagement
- Stakeholder communication, including volunteers and THNNR members
- Public survey
- Website – information & FAQs
- Press release and social media channels
- Engagement with organisations

Phase 2 (TBC 2023)

- Involve local community and stakeholders in the future management of the reserve through focus groups

Public Engagement survey

Promoted via a range of channels:

- Press release
- Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
- Direct comms to key stakeholders, annual members & volunteers
- Posters, business cards (QR codes) and paper copies on site

A total of **2997 survey responses** were received. Including from 7 organisations, groups and businesses.

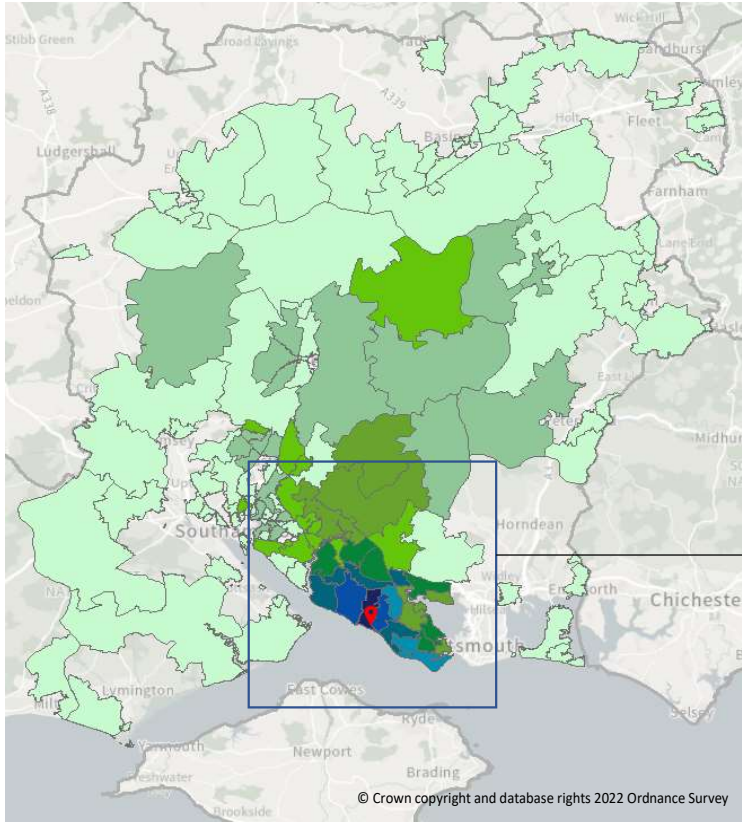
Individuals (2978)



Q: In what context are you responding. . . ?
Respondent Base: 2993 (NB: 4 respondents did not reply to this question)

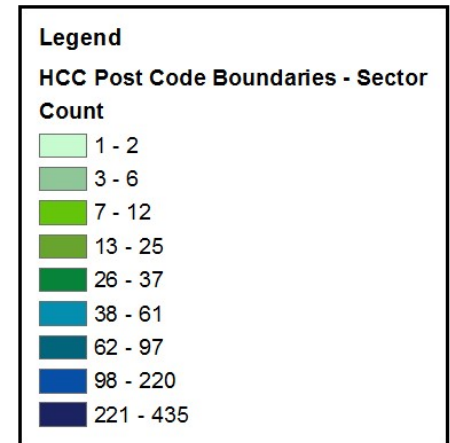
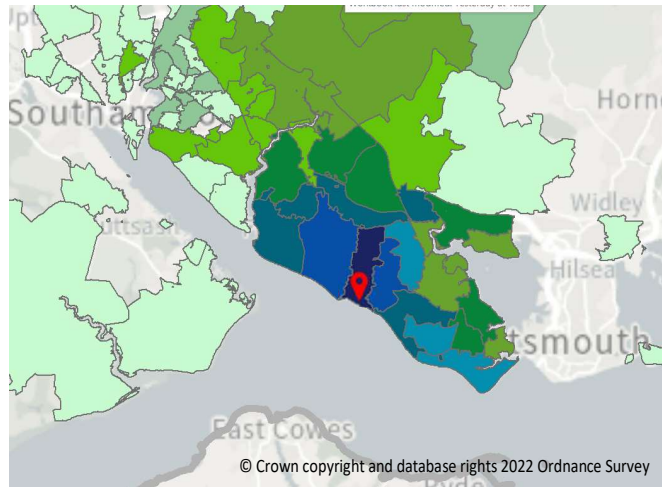
Public Engagement survey – number of responses by postcode

Hampshire



The responses include representation from across Hampshire and beyond, with the highest concentrations from the areas surrounding Titchfield Haven.

Focused view – area surrounding THNHR



 Indicative location of THNHR

Public Engagement – summary of feedback and HCC response

Public Feedback	HCC Response
Community value of Haven House	Asset of Community Value Signed petition 9991, additional emails/letters Other venues in local area offer similar provision
Health and wellbeing / immersion in nature	Reserve to remain open to the public Accessible facilities on site Free green spaces within the wider area
Reduced revenue / visitor numbers due to café closure	Net operating loss of Visitor Centre c.£80k annually Explore option of temporary or seasonal catering offer Visitor services support staff and improved signage/wayfinding
Loss of café detrimental to Reserve visit	Half of annual members and volunteers surveyed would bring own refreshments. Explore option of temporary or seasonal catering offer
Education – opportunities lost	No formal schools programme at Titchfield. Lack of suitable facilities on site (no parking or indoor room) Knowledgeable Rangers and volunteers Improved reserve information and interpretation
Future Use of Haven House and Haven Cottage	Covenants included in any transfer Cottage likely to remain residential (Grade II listed) Haven House change of use – FBC planning authority

Public Engagement – income suggestions and HCC response

Public Suggestions	HCC Response
Let the Flat and Cottage	Heavily constrained by legislation re tenancies Significant investment required to be suitable for holiday lets Cottage on the market
Parking	FBC managed No car parking opportunity within the reserve Accessible parking space and bike racks to be provided
Grants and Funding	Countryside Service already benefits from government grant funding for which it is currently eligible Strategic partnerships in place £5m HLF funding for Country Parks
Increase membership, entrance or café prices Increase retail	Prices reviewed annually in line with other similar attractions Small item sales retained at the ticket kiosk e.g. bird food
Donations, fundraising, crowdfunding	Unreliable - not guaranteed. Does not achieve saving. Actively promote donations on the website/social media/reserve
Room Hire/Events/Exhibitions/Tours	Modest opportunities for income, doesn't meet scale of investment needed No formal meeting room Explore potential for guided walks/tours

Engagement with Organisations and Elected Representatives

Opportunity for thorough discussions and challenge on details of proposal

Broader exploration to understand any viable solutions

Further discussions held with:

- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) – confirmed not a strategic priority and limited funds
- National Trust – position not confirmed
- Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) – position not confirmed
- Hill Head Residents Association - indicated intent to put forward proposal working with HIWWT



**National
Trust**



**Hampshire &
Isle of Wight
Wildlife Trust**



Asset of Community Value (ACV)

- HHRA nominated Haven House as ACV 19 October 2022
- Fareham Borough Council (FBC) approved 11 November 2022
- Gives third-parties or community groups the opportunity to submit a proposal to buy.
- The County Council chose not to contest this application.



ACV Process

- HCC inform FBC of intention to sell
- 6 weeks for EOI from third party org or community group
- 6 month moratorium (of which 6 weeks above are included)
- Allows time for a viable and full-costed proposal to be submitted and considered by HCC



FAREHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Rationale For Proposed Closure Date

It is proposed that the café and shop cease trading and close on 23 December 2022

Haven House would remain open for minimal operations (Visitor Services)

Rationale

- Impact on staff (welfare and redeployment opportunities)
- Reduces running costs as soon as possible
- Would be harder to sell as a going concern
- Current operating model not appropriate for another organisation to take over
- Given the popularity of the café, it is likely to quickly restore previous customer numbers should a new café be established by another organisation

Summary of amendments to recommendations

As a result of the public engagement feedback we will:

- a) Enhance accessibility:
 - Baby changing facilities in accessible toilet
 - Retaining accessible parking space
 - Provision of bike racks
- b) Explore option for providing a temporary or seasonal catering offer
- c) Provide additional visitor and volunteer support
- d) Ensure that covenants included in any transfer reflect sensitive nature of the site (Cottage and House).
- e) Consideration of transfer to a third party if:
 - A competent organisation can meet the objectives
 - The financial liability for Haven House and THNNR are removed from HCC



Final Recommendations to Executive Member for Countryside, Culture and Communities on 8th December

It is recommended that the Executive Member for Countryside, Culture and Communities:

1. Notes the level of local community interest and supports the actions identified in response to the feedback from the public engagement exercise.
2. Notes that Haven House has been listed as an Asset of Community Value which may delay any disposal by up to 6 months.
3. Agrees, during any period when Haven House cannot be sold because of any restriction imposed as a consequence of Haven House being listed as an Asset of Community Value, to consider carefully any viable and fully costed proposals for the future ownership of Haven House and the Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve that meet the objectives set out in paragraph 35 of the report, which are cost-neutral for the County Council and which transfer the statutory responsibilities to the recipient as appropriate.
4. Approves the closure of the café, shop and visitor centre located in Haven House, Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve, with effect from 23 December 2022.
5. Declares Haven House surplus to the requirements of Hampshire County Council's Countryside Service.
6. Recommends to the Executive Member for Policy and Resources and Economic Development to dispose of Haven House ensuring that the County Council achieves best public value in so doing.
7. Recommends to the Executive Member for Policy and Resources and Economic Development to retain the full value of the capital receipt from the sale of Haven House and Haven Cottage to be reinvested in Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve.