

REPORT: 23.082
LAVERSTOCK AND FORD PARISH COUNCIL
SUBJECT: Land at Bishopdown Farm
Report Author: Trudi Deane, Parish Clerk
DATE: 16th June 2023

1. Report Summary

A report to councillors regarding a possible lease of land to Devenish Bradshaw Trust.

2. Background

In 2021, as part of land transferred from Wiltshire Council under service devolution, the Parish Council took ownership of title WT197888, which included the area edged in blue on the plan attached Annex One.

3. Summary

The land adjoins Castle Hill Country Park and the Hampton Trail, to the rear of St Teresas Close in Bishopdown Farm. It was originally understood that the Land Trust would take on management of this area as an addition to the country park. However, subsequent discussions revealed that the Land Trust would only accept the land with a 'substantial' sum of maintenance funding from the Parish Council. No maintenance funds had been provided by Wiltshire Council on transfer. The land is inspected by Parish Council staff but no maintenance is carried out at present.

The land is a mixture of scrub/grassland with some semi mature trees.

Devenish Bradshaw Trust have expressed an interest in taking a lease from the Parish Council on this land. Below are extracts from initial email exchanges between the Clerk and the Trust.

- We would be interested in looking into setting up an agreement along the lines of the one you have with the Land Trust with a long lease, regular updates for us on management progress, no expectation or need of funds from the PC to help manage the land.
- DBCT would be charged with fulfilling the biodiversity, access and community engagement objectives and would report to the Parish Council annually on progress through a written report and photographic evidence. We would manage the land on the basis it forms part of Castle Hill Country Park and be consistent with the Management Plan for the rest of the Country Park.
- We would likely restore to high quality chalk grassland, potentially with some hangar woodland and scrub as an extension of the existing hedgerow. I did a similar piece of restoration adjacent to Laverstock Downs for the Community Farm a few years ago and it's got more flowers per metre squared than the Down itself now.
- It would a project DBCT could usefully take on towards our charitable objectives and am happy to put a firm offer from the Parish Council to other Trustees.
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4. Recommendations

That the Parish Council agrees to pursue a lease or licence arrangement with Devenish Bradshaw Trust on the land identified. A resolution to sign such a lease would be presented at a future meeting.

ANNEX ONE

