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# Shaping the Future Cannock Chase - Land Management

## Phase 1: Summary of event outputs

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## About the engagement

Cannock Chase Country Park is an important area for nature, people, landscape and history. It includes nationally and internationally important landscapes, wildlife areas and historical features. Staffordshire County Council is legally responsible for managing the Country Park to protect these interests, whilst ensuring people can enjoy the fresh air and exercise provided by the site.

A review of habitat management is now underway for the Country Park and an area of land around and including Bevin's birches (formerly part of Rugeley Quarry) which is now in RSPB management.

The management review is being undertaken by a core group of 45 stakeholders from a cross section of interests and organisations. That includes environment, recreation, business, heritage and community. They are sharing knowledge, exploring options and building agreement through a dialogue process designed and independently facilitated (by Dialogue Matters).

The process involves three events: the first and last are workshops for the full group of 45 invited stakeholders. Between the two full workshops there is a smaller balanced working group comprising volunteers from the full group.

The stakeholders involved in this process are being supported in their deliberations by technical experts (Footprint Ecology) who have been commissioned to identify and assess management approaches and options.

It is vital that the core group and working group are well informed about the views of local people, visitors and other stakeholders. These are being gathered via drop in meetings and an online engagement website.

### About the workshop

The first deliberative workshop took place on October 4<sup>th</sup> 2016 in Hednesford. We invited 45 stakeholders who were identified to ensure that this group was a fair and equitable balance across the sectors and interests.

The workshop helped people to share ideas and views, explore trends and changes, deliberate and negotiate over options, look for mutually acceptable solutions and start to work out what each can commit towards implementation. The outputs of that workshop are summarised in this report.

The number of people invited was 45 and the number who attended was 35.

### About the drop in event

The first drop-in event was held at the John O Leary Classroom in Cannock Chase on October 16<sup>th</sup> 2016. It was promoted via press releases, posters, and emails. In total 26 people attended and contributed their views about the Chase: what they value, what their concerns are and their opinions on the possible management solutions. The outputs of this event are also summarised in this report.

### About the on-line survey

The online survey ran from 11<sup>th</sup> October to 7<sup>th</sup> November 2016. The outputs of that can be seen in the report on the website with a few graphs provided in this summary for information.

A total of 118 people actively engaged with the website, and 55 people gave their views via the survey.

The website has received 516 visits to date - but this figure will have been bolstered because the site was picked as their engagement "website of the month" by

Engagement HQ, (the company that prepared the website for this project and now manages it) and so will have been visited by people curious to see how it was set up and used.

## About this report

### Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to enable stakeholders who took part in the deliberative workshop to communicate the outcomes of the first round of the Cannock Chase community engagement with their community, organisation or interest. It draws out key points made in the workshop and drop-in meeting and includes some graphs from the on-line engagement.

### What it is based on

We have endeavoured to select out key points in a fair way. We do not rely on our own impressions as workshop facilitators to do this. Instead we first process everything said in the events and cluster similar points from within a conversation together. These reports are available on the website and can be looked at to see the details of each conversation.

Given the wealth of comment and ideas shared in the events we are unable to summarise it all in a few short pages. Instead we have aimed to pick out the main points from each conversation.

We know that all humans see and notice things that match up with their own interests and way of seeing things (psychologists call this confirmation bias). So it may be that as you look at this summary it does not include things that stood out for you during the workshop.

**Please be assured that the basis for further discussion is the full workshop report not this summary.**

# 1 The vision

**It is 2030 and you are having a day out around Cannock Chase Country Park and Bevin's Birches and you are delighted with what you see. Why – what do you see?**

From the workshop people have a vision of a tranquil landscape with people enjoying themselves. There is a wide variety of recreational activities taking place and these co-exist peacefully.

People are working together to ensure that the landscape and wildlife thrive over the long term. Valued species and habitats are flourishing.

Traffic calming has been successful and antisocial behaviour has been managed.

At the drop-in event the long term vision people communicated was of a Chase that has plenty of heather, little bracken and many mature trees. It is a place of thriving wildlife with free access and without too many cycle paths.

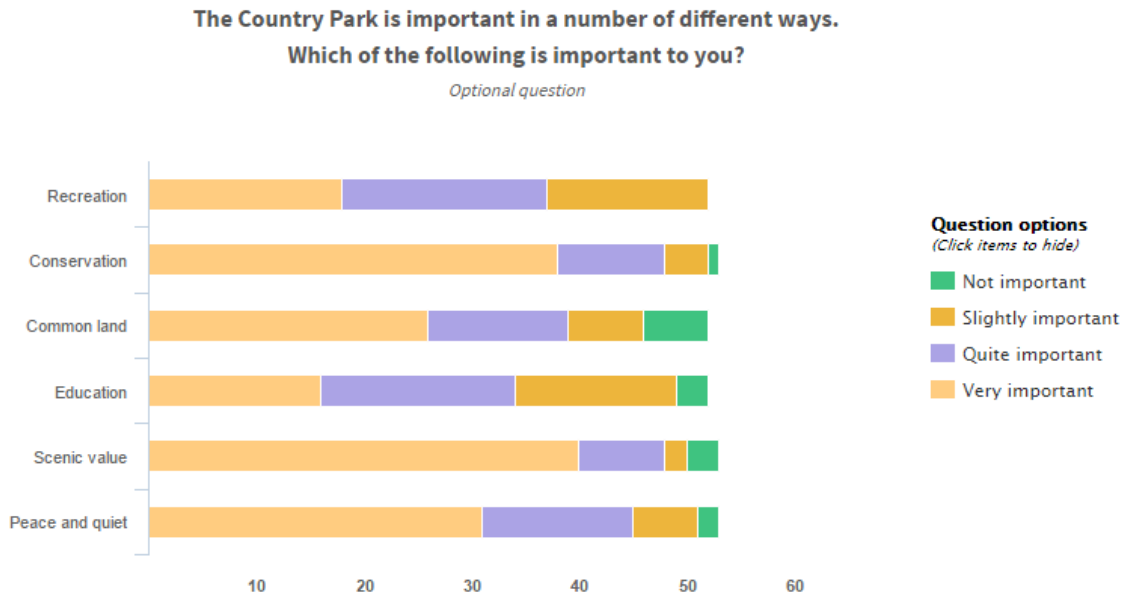
# 2 About Cannock Chase:

## What do you value now and why?

Participants in the workshop value the open heathland with its spectacular views and open spaces that give a sense of wilderness. They also value the diverse habitats for flora and fauna, especially for butterflies.

In the drop-in, many people said that they value all of the Chase for its variety, the historic and military features were also identified as precious.

The online survey revealed the following results:



## What do you see and do that you would like future generations to be able to see or do?

Participants in the workshop felt that they want to pass on a sense of valuing the Chase – an ownership and a responsibility for the habitats and wildlife, enabling future generations to enjoy the diversity of uses as much as they do now.

In the drop in, people said that they wanted to pass on a place for recreation and for wildlife.

### **What does the land here provide that locals and visitors benefit from?**

Economically: Participants at the workshop feel that there is benefit from the economic opportunities that the Chase provides – both events and hospitality and in landscape focused business.

Socially: People value the opportunities that the Chase gives for a sense of tranquillity and wellbeing and they noted the health benefits of that peace and quiet. The positive impact this gives on children and young people was mentioned, a feeling of being connected to nature.

Environmentally: the wildlife and landscape, The Chase as a place of peace in a rapidly changing world, is valued by the workshop participants.

In the drop-in, people noted that they valued the Chase for recreation, conservation, wildlife and a sense of tranquillity with walking and running/ orienteering cited as very popular recreation activities.

## **3 Trends and changes**

Many participants of the workshop recorded an increase in visitor numbers and recreational use of the Chase. There was also a feeling that there has been an increase in antisocial recreational use. Changing habitats were also noted, including from invasive species and disease.

In the drop-in people identified an increase in cycling and cycling tracks. They said that they valued the Chase for recreation, conservation, wildlife and a sense of tranquillity.

### **What is the current management and what is the reason for it?**

Participants identified varied heathland management techniques, including mechanical cutting and spraying – being carried out in order to meet favourable conditions targets and preserve the ecological value of the Chase.

### **What are the constraints on management choices?**

The constraints were identified as funding, public perception containing a lack of understanding resulting in resistance to change. There were also ecological constraints around bird breeding and animal / plant health.

### **What would happen if there was no management?**

People forecast that without management 'nature would take over' – with increased woodland leading to a loss of the heathland. This would lead to a loss of SSSI and SAC status. Participants also feel that without management the impact from public use would become damaging.

### **What do you want to know to help you in these discussions?**

Participants would welcome financial information – about funding generally and detailed information about each management option. They would also like ecological information, both about SSSI favourable status and about invasive species.

## 4 What is working well ...

### ...for nature, heritage and people and what more needs to happen?

#### What is already being done that is going in the right direction?

Workshop participants feel that there is a lot of positive work already being done by people getting involved and working constructively together. This includes volunteers and people who use the Chase for a range of activities. There is good work that is being done to create great recreation opportunities and looking after present habitats and species.

#### How could that be strengthened and enhanced?

The areas where more work is needed is increasing the collaboration and ability to work together for the future of Cannock Chase across interests and groups. There is a need for enhanced communication with the public to build understanding including about habitat management, condition of paths and car parking. In relation to management there is a need to communicate about why and how this happens and why some areas are temporarily not accessible. This should also include information about safety and legal constraints.

#### What else needs to happen?

People feel that there needs to be a co-ordinated and informed land management strategy which is clearly communicated to the wider public. Events needs to be managed and there was a suggestion of signposts to aid visitor management.

#### From your discussion what do you most want to feedback to the other groups?

The headlines from people's discussion were the need for integrated management and improved communication between different users of the Chase. Maintaining and improving public access, infrastructure and the need for education were also highlighted.

## 5 Habitat Management options

### 5.1 Mechanical – cutting/baling heather, cutting/bruising bracken, clearing, selective felling & thinning scrub and trees

#### What do you like about this idea?

People at the workshop like the fact that mechanical methods of management are fast and clean. It can involve the community and no fencing is needed.

In the drop-in some saw mechanical cutting as an effective way of removing bracken.

#### What are the challenges of this idea?

The challenges were identified at the workshop as the potential spread of disease and issues around the vehicles that can cause damage. Also public perception – there can be an adverse public reaction due to lack of understanding.

In the drop-in, people showed their concern for the negative effect that machinery could have on the landscape and on wildlife.

**What kind of areas could it work best?**

Workshop participants recognise that this method works best in areas that are uniform – and is not effective on areas where the land is sloping or wet or forested.

**What do you want to know from the specialists to support more in depth discussion about these options at the next workshop?**

People at the workshop wanted to know more about the costs of this option and the effect on wildlife. They would like to see case studies of where these methods have been used before and ideas on what happens to the cut materials.

**5.2 Controlled burning – mature heather****What do you like about this idea?**

Participants at the workshop like this idea because it is good for the heather, there is no waste to deal with and it is cost effective. People also recognised that there are benefits to wildlife.

In the drop-in people noted that this is a good traditional method but that it needs careful management.

**What are the challenges of this idea?**

The challenges that people identified included fire risk and the risk of pollution. It is perceived as an option that is difficult to carry out and also difficult to communicate successfully to the public.

**What kind of areas could it work best?**

People identified that this method works best away from roads, residential areas and honeypots – in areas of older heather.

**What do you want to know from the specialists to support more in depth discussion about these options at the next workshop?**

Information on the risks and the impact on wildlife is needed – and also an idea of how effective this method is.

**5.3 Chemical – cut stump and spot treatment, tractor and boom spraying, aerial spraying****What do you like about this idea?**

At the workshop this method was seen as being effective for large areas of bracken and people feel that it can be targeted and selective – and that it works.

In the drop-in, some people noted that in small areas it can be useful.

**What are the challenges of this idea?**

The challenges that were identified at the workshop include the cost, the risks and public perception about chemicals. There is also concern about the impact on other species and on water related habitats.

In the drop-in there were concerns raised about the impact of chemicals on animals, insects and bees.

**What kind of areas could it work best?**

People see this is a good option for areas where access is difficult – and on large targeted areas of bracken.



### **What do you want to know from the specialists to support more in depth discussion about these options at the next workshop?**

Participants would like to see the pros and cons of this method and a risk assessment. They would like more information on the effects on other plants, animals and habitats.

## **5.4 Grazing – type of livestock (sheep, goats, cattle and ponies)**

### **What do you like about this idea?**

Participants at the workshop like the fact that this is a natural approach to management which has a long history and is sustainable. They feel that this can create a better structured habitat.

In the drop-in there was support for sheep and goats and also pigs and wild boar.

### **What are the challenges of this idea?**

The challenges include the issues of infrastructure, including boundary control and secure fencing. The interaction of the public and grazing is seen as a challenge – how would different uses interact with the livestock and how to manage public expectations? Also there are challenges around finding the right stock and ensuring the health and wellbeing of the animals.

### **What kind of areas could it work best?**

People feel that this method needs to be targeted to where it is of most benefit and in particular locations.

### **What do you want to know from the specialists to support more in depth discussion about these options at the next workshop?**

People would like more information on the effects of grazing on the habitat and wildlife. Also they would like details on the stock and on methods of funding.

## **5.5 Grazing – managing stock and access (fencing/invisible fencing, shepherding, cattle grids, etc.)**

### **What do you like about this idea?**

People feel that this is a traditional and sustainable approach that can protect sensitive sites, especially with its potential for targeted grazing. Some people feel that grazing stock creates an exciting and special landscape.

### **What are the challenges of this idea?**

Participants at the workshop are concerned about potential damage to other features. There are also concerns about the costs and legal considerations.

In the drop-in there were concerns raised about the restrictions to access from fencing.

### **What kind of areas could it work best?**

Participants feel that grazing needs to be sited away from the main honeypots on the Chase.

### **What do you want to know from the specialists to support more in depth discussion about these options at the next workshop?**

People would like to see case examples of where grazing has been trialled in order to learn from others' experience. They would also like to see a cost benefit analysis.

## 5.6 Which management solutions do you most support and why?

### Explanation about the table below:

Professional facilitators looking for where there is consensus do not expect everyone to agree about everything to the same extent. We use the word consensus when everyone has had the chance to grapple with the pros and cons of an idea, and then everyone's level of support is from the middle category or to the right. There may still be some details to work on to refine and improve the proposals - but consensus is strong enough for it to be worked up in more detail.

This table shows the results from the workshop in relation to the 5 management topics.

Tick one of these for each idea      Level of consensus to show your level of support

	I actively object	I am opposed	I could live with it	I support this	I actively/strongly support this	
Mechanical – cutting/baling heather, cutting/bruising bracken, clearing, selective felling & thinning scrub and trees			5	16	10	Consensus reached for this proposal
Controlled burning – mature heather	1	3	14	8	5	Strong support
Chemical – cut stump and spot treatment, tractor and boom spraying, aerial spraying	1	3	12	11	5	Strong support
Grazing – type of livestock (sheep, goats, cattle and ponies)			4	14	13	Consensus reached for this proposal
Managing stock and access (fencing/invisible fencing, shepherding, cattle grids, etc.).	1	1	4	15	11	Very strong support

### Mechanical

26 people are in support of this option, of which 10 people actively support it. There is no opposition and 5 people could live with it. The reasons for people's support include that it is quick, clean and effective.

### Controlled burning – mature heather

13 people registered their support of this option (with 5 in strong support) – 14 people could live with it and 4 are opposed to controlled burning (1 person who actively objects). The reasons for people's support include that it is an effective way of managing older heather and results in more natural shaped areas that are good for wildlife. People's concerns included the possibility of it encouraging other fires and the potential to harm wildlife.

### Chemical

16 people support chemical treatment, with 5 in active support. 12 could live with it and 4 people are in opposition (1 who actively opposes it). The support is based on the fact that it is a cheap solution that is effective over a wide area. There is concern about the impact of chemicals, especially in the water courses and that it is only a temporary solution.

### Grazing

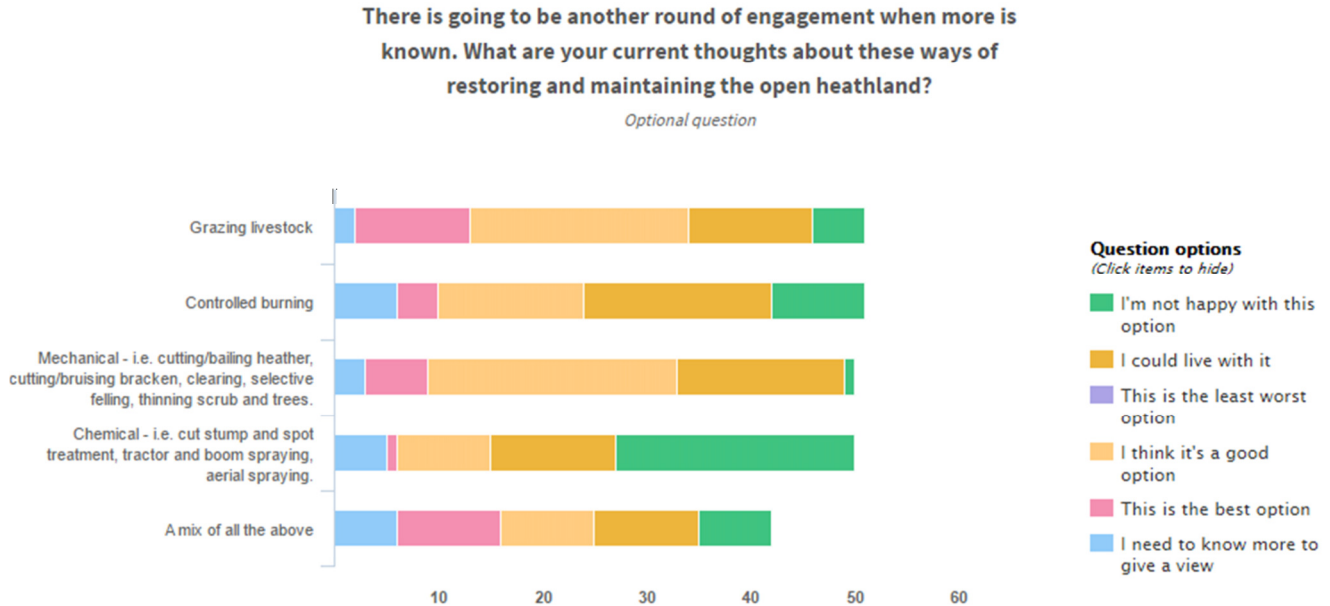
27 people are in support of grazing (13 who actively support this option) and 4 people could live with it, nobody registered their opposition. The support centres around the fact that is a known, natural and ecological solution, but that it needs to be carefully managed.

### Managing stock and access (fencing/invisible fencing, shepherding, cattle grids, etc.).

26 people support this (with 11 people actively in support), 4 could live with it and 2 are in opposition. There is support for cattle grids for large scale grazing – grids that could also be a tool for traffic calming. Smaller targeted fenced areas are also mentioned, possibly with invisible fencing. The main concerns included restrictions in access and the visual impact of fencing.

## 5.7 The online survey

Results from the online survey revealed the following results but please note that people who responded on this did not all have the opportunity of hearing the pros and cons identified by different interests.



## 6 Collaborative action

### What could you contribute?

The offers received from participants included utilising their knowledge of habitats, land management and of the historic environment. There were offers of support for monitoring, and for data collection and for volunteering. People have contributions they could make around visitor management as well as providing venues. Contacts and networks were offered, as well as funding and partnership ideas.

### Do you have any new ideas for collaboration around management of these areas?

Suggestions were the setting up of a working group and a Chase-wide information system.

### What would you like to know from the wider community to help you in your discussions?

Participants would like to know people's opinions on the management strategies and also information on groups and networks.

### What would you like to discuss (if possible) at the next workshop?

People would like to discuss potential communication tools and interdisciplinary approaches.

## 7 Next steps

As can be seen from the table in section 5.6, all management solutions have sufficient support to refine and work up in more detail for further consideration by the public and stakeholders.

This will happen through the following process:

1. The working group will meet in late November to discuss the possible management solutions in more detail, for example to suggest ideas for where and when they could take place
2. Technical experts, Footprint Ecology, will then take these suggestions and work up the feasibility of these suggestions
3. Early in 2017 there will then be another round of wider engagement (another drop-in meeting and online engagement) to find out what people think
4. The findings of both the technical experts and the wider engagement will be sent to the Stakeholder Group.
5. The final stage is a workshop for the Stakeholder Group so they can finalise their recommendations to the site managers