

North Dudley Area Committee

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Sedgley Beacon, Beacon Lane, Sedgley

Purpose of Report

1. To outline to the Committee the current position with respect to the existing condition and use of Sedgley Beacon.
2. To propose a course of action which will lead to the future improvement and enhancement of Sedgley Beacon.

Background

3. At the North Dudley Area Committee meeting held on 23rd November 2005 a question was raised in the public forum by Sedgley Local History Society relating to Sedgley Beacon in respect of what arrangements are in hand by the Dudley Council to repair and improve the site. This report is intended to be an update.
4. Sedgley Beacon Tower is a Grade II listed building in Council ownership. The area of Beacon Hill upon which the tower stands is a very important piece of green open space which is of archaeological and geological significance and is well used by local people as a recreational resource. It is designated in the Revised UDP (October 2005) as a Landscape Heritage Area, it is located within Green Belt and is a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) and a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). In addition to this, the regional significance of Sedgley Beacon has recently been recognized and highlighted in the Black Country Study. It has been identified as forming an integral part of the Black Country Urban Park by being part of a strategic network of 10 Corridors and 9 Beacons which will act as key drivers for environmental led change in the Black Country. Sedgley Beacon has therefore been identified regionally as being a significant natural, built, topographical and historic asset within the Black Country.

5. Various members of the Beacon Hill Tenants and Residents Association and Sedgley Beacon Local History have voiced their concern to Dudley MBC about increasing dilapidation and ongoing vandalism of Sedgley Beacon Tower and Beacon Hill (which over the summer has been exacerbated further by the various arson attacks that have caused a considerable amount of fire damage to Beacon Hill). Accordingly, Dudley MBC with the support of Beacon Hill Tenants and Residents Association undertook the following action:
 - In 1997, 2000 and 2003 Security Fencing was replaced/repared around Sedgley Beacon Tower and a barrier was installed immediately in-front of the Tower in order to prevent access by quad bikes.
 - A gate was installed across the car park entrance to Beacon Hill in order to prevent antisocial behaviour.
 - In June 2006 the existing security fencing around Beacon Tower was repaired and a new door installed at the base of Beacon Tower in order to prevent access into the tower by local youths.
6. In addition to the above physical repairs, in 2004 a visit was made to Beacon Hill by representatives from the Heritage Lottery at the invitation of the Dudley MBC and the Beacon Hill Tenants and Residents Association. The purpose of this visit was to ascertain if the Heritage Lottery (HLF) would be prepared to provide financial assistance in the form of a Heritage Lottery grant to Beacon Tower and to the surrounding landscape. The meeting was very successful, Anne Jenkins and Chris Tomlin (of the HLF) were very enthusiastic about the ideas put forward and expressed their interest in assisting the Council and local stakeholders in developing their ideas and were keen to provide a steer on how best to apply for funding in the future.
7. In order to move the project forward an internal DMBC project team has been established and it is considered that in order to provide cohesion to the various local stakeholders/interest groups, a Friends Group should be established for Sedgley Beacon with the help and support of the DUE Local Involvement Team (LIP). The LIP team is part of the Parks Development Team within Culture and Community Services. The purpose of the Friends Group would be to create a local support group which would work in partnership with the Council in not only addressing current issues but also looking to the long term management and tourism potential of the site. It is our experience that the involvement of the community, in the form of a constituted Friends Group, is fundamental to the long-term sustainability of physical improvements in parks and green spaces.
8. Following the setting up of a Friends Group it is then considered that the Council, in partnership with the Friends Group, would work together on the production of a 'Management and Development Plan' which will not only examine the day to day management of the site (in conjunction with

other landowners) but will also put forward sustainable long term plans for the site. Production of such a document is an essential first step towards submitting an application for external grant-aid to such bodies as the Heritage Lottery Fund, should that be concluded to be the best course of action.

9. The setting up of a Friends Group and the production of a Management and Development Plan for the Sedgley Beacon is fully compatible with the aspirations of the Council Plan, furthermore it will positively impact on the following key corporate issues:-
 - *Asset Management* – Beacon Tower is a Council Owned Asset and the proposals put forward will assist with the sustainable management of this asset.
 - *Crime and Disorder* – Sedgley Beacon is a site that is currently the subject of anti-social behaviour, the proposals put forward will assist in providing a solution to mitigate against this.

Finance

10. The establishment of a Friends Group and the subsequent production of a Management and Development Plan would be accommodated within existing work programmes and budgets.

Law

11. The relevant provisions regarding listed buildings are contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
12. The Council may provide recreational facilities under section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1996 and may do anything incidental to conducive to or which would facilitate the discharge of it's functions under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

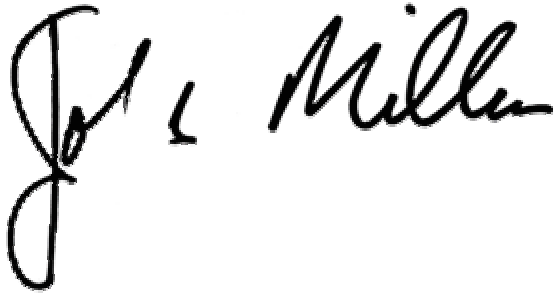
Equality Impact

13. The proposals contained in this report are in full accordance with the Councils equal opportunities policies and should not have any impact on different racial groups, disabled people, children and young people, both genders and/or other relevant groups.

Recommendation

It is recommended that North Dudley Area Committee supports:-

- The establishment of a Friends Group for Sedgley Beacon.
- The subsequent production of a Management and Development Plan to cover the future management and enhancement of Beacon Hill and Tower.



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List of Background Papers

1. Letter from the Heritage Lottery dated 8th July 2004.
2. Information Pack and Guide to Setting up of a Friends Group (May 2004) – available on-line on www.dudley.gov.uk.
3. Black Country Study, *Transforming the Environment: Black Country as Urban Park*, (May 2006).