

Request for a Decision under Delegated Powers

Officer Requesting Decision

Principal Ecological Officer

Officer Making the Decision

Head of Planning and Growth

Recommendation

1. That the Council writes to Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust: to acknowledge the presence of a region-wide mink cull in Leicestershire for the purpose of water vole conservation, and to confirm that in principle, should the cull seek to expand into Charnwood, the Council will grant consent for culling to take place on Council owned land.

Reason

Mink predation is known to be a significant cause of the dramatic decline in water vole populations in recent decades and mink control is widely understood by conservationist to be essential to water vole recovery.

Authority for Decision

There is a general authority for Heads of Service to Officers with delegated authority are able to take such action as may in his or her opinion be necessary or appropriate in connection with: (i) all operational management matters for those functions and service areas for which he or she has responsibility. (vi) anything which facilitates, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of the functions, tasks, or responsibilities listed in (i) to (v) above.

Policy Context

The Council has a duty under the Environment Act 2021 to consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. The Council is also a Supporting Authority to the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The approach and measures set out in the LNRS indicate that mink control has the potential to contribute significantly to strategy goals.

Decision and Date



22 November 2024

Head of Planning and Regeneration

Background

The Council has been approached by Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT) with a request for the Council's formal agreement with a proposed mink control policy for Leicestershire. The Trust are seeking wider support for the initiative and wish to understand whether any subsequent request for access to Council land for the purpose of carrying out the cull is likely to be granted.

The Council has several landholdings adjacent to main rivers across the Borough and so potentially owns a number of sites where mink control could be carried out effectively.

Cabinet Members were briefed on the project on 31 October 2024. The Cabinet Lead Member for Climate Action and net Zero has been consulted on the confirmation and no adverse comments have been received.

Financial Implications

None

Risk Management

Risk identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
Conflict with community members concerned about animal cruelty	Unlikely (2)	Minor (1)	2	The cull has a detailed protocol which has already been successfully used across parts of East Anglia and is supported by conservation organisations including Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust

Key Decision

No

Background Papers

Proposed response to LRWT

Biodiversity Working Group Report 'Mink Control on Charnwood Borough Council Land' dated 15th October 2024

American Mink Control Policy for Water Vole Recovery

The Thames to Lincoln Project Summary for Rutland

Water Life Recovery East Best Practice Full Guidance