

Press Release From Buckinghamshire County Council

Plans to revitalise an under-used country park, were given the go-ahead by Buckinghamshire County Council's Cabinet on Monday, March 5.

The scheme to restore and landscape the 54-acre former gravel pit and landfill site at Thorney Park, Iver, for leisure, recreation and education, will involve input from residents - but won't cost them a penny in council tax. County Council Leader Martin Tett says they'll be invited to be part of a community forum to help shape plans for the park. Ideas to be put before residents to create a self-sustaining park could include a playing field, a community park with new planting, modern facilities and wildlife study opportunities.

The scheme's success depends on using inert spoil brought in by rail to sidings next to the site from other infrastructure projects to landscape the park, subject to stringent planning regulations and full public consultation. A contractor will be appointed, given a year to consult with local communities, and if planning permission is granted, a lease will be granted to bring in inert spoil for landscaping and to create a new park, all at their expense. The operation could earn the County Council around £6 million over six years in licensing fees, some of which would be invested in maintaining park facilities.

Once completed the new park will be handed back to the County Council. Buckinghamshire, as one of two counties to lose all Government revenue support, is having to find creative ways to reduce subsidies and generate income for the benefit of the community. John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources, said: "This scheme not only enhances the landscape and creates an amenity for residents in south Buckinghamshire, it will produce enough income during the restoration period for us to provide vital services more widely to the county's residents. "The County Council could sell the park, but this is very important piece of land in a strategic location. We're conscious of our stewardship responsibility, and we don't want to lose control of important public amenity space in the face of future Heathrow expansion plans." Leader Martin Tett said: "I'm very well aware of the concerns of residents about heavy goods vehicles and for me this was a red line. I'm delighted we've been able to mitigate this by using only rail for delivery of the inert spoil."