



# **NORTHAM TOWN COUNCIL BURROUGH FARM BUSINESS PLAN**

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## **OUR VISION**

Northam Town Council has agreed that, to move forward as a responsible organisation, it needs to acquire, gain control of and provide various land, building and facilities within the Town Council area. With this in mind, it has prepared a list of assets and facilities that it wishes to gain control of for the benefit of the whole Community. These assets cover a wide range of items from Car Parks to Open Space and Leisure Facilities which, when under the Council's management, will provide a stable infrastructure for the foreseeable future, in line with current Local and Parish plans.

Furthermore, Northam Town Council believes that the most effective and productive results for Local Residents are achieved when authorities work together and hopes to achieve its aims by working in partnership with the District Council. Northam Town Council fully supports the Strategic Aims and Objectives of Torridge District Council and would promote these objectives in the following ways:-

### **Improving Quality of Life for All**

Burrough Farm provides the last open space available to the local residents of Northam. This area would provide Northam Town Council to provide a magnificent opportunity for providing amenities which can be enjoyed by practically every sector of the community. The provision of a football ground appeals to youngsters, those who wish to maintain a healthy lifestyle through sport, and supporters of the club. The provision of allotments would satisfy the growing demand for allotments – Northam Town Council has a waiting list of over 60 people wanting an allotment – and would also meet with legal obligations governing their supply. The provision of a woodland area and encouragement of nurturing an area dedicated to flora would provide a wonderful opportunity for children to become involved with, and be more aware of, the natural world within which we reside. The special provision of a playground area would encourage children to be able to enjoy the outdoors and the sheer fun of play, whilst parents would know that their children were able to play in an area that was safe and well maintained. Finally, the retention of the area as an "Open Space" would enable people to enjoy walking and meeting with their neighbours, thus helping to build on the important social framework of the Community. In all, the area would improve the quality of life by providing an area for Recreational Play, Healthier Lifestyles and a place of beauty for the Village and all parts would be made accessible for the Disabled.

### **Supporting Economic Sustainable Growth**

The investment in Burrough Farm will not initially be seen in a direct financial return, but will be repaid by the inherent benefits that it brings to the Village in the way of providing a diversity of facilities which will involve the local residents more directly with the area and thus promote a sense of well being. The careful selection of suitable trees and flora will add to the visual appeal of the area, which will then increase the number of people who will want to visit. The greater the number of people involved with the benefits of Burrough Farm, the greater the support will become and the greater the amount of incoming funds generated by people.

### **Safeguarding the Environment**

Burrough Farm has long been considered as an area that had been freely given to the people of Northam as an open space. By introducing the various plans that Northam Town Council have for the area, it would ensure that Burrough Farm was not only protected from being developed, but also it would encourage more people than ever to enjoy the gift that they had been given. The specific introduction of a woodland and nature area, using the skills of special organisations such as Men of Trees - with whom councillors have already had discussions - would mean that the area would be purposefully enhanced to safeguard the Environment. It would also ensure that the advantages of such a site would flourish for the benefit of the Community and restore and maintain an area that once was the habitat of newts and frogs, which was destroyed by the recent nearby development. The area which would be left open for walking would encourage people to enjoy the views out towards the Torridge and appreciate the beauty of the area.

### **The Aim to be an Excellent Council**

The acquisition of Burrough Farm by Northam Town Council from Torridge District Council would not only fulfil the aspirations of Local Residents, preserve the area for the requirements of the Village, engender a closer working relationship between the Council and the Community, but would also generate a very positive appreciation of both Torridge District Council and Northam Town Council.

Northam Town Council also supports the ideas promoted in the white paper regarding 'Communities in Control', which encourages including 'the improvement of life and well being of the Community' and 'empowering the Community and supporting its aspirations'.

All of these points have been referred to in association with the Objectives, as listed above.

## **BACKGROUND**

The area of land referred to as Burrough Field, within Northam Ward, originally consisted of two separate areas of land identified in the 1832 Tithe Map as Windmill Field and East Windmill Field. In the early 1960s, the land was purchased by Northam Urban District Council for the purposes of providing a recreation area for local residents. In the 1970s, this land was transferred to Torridge District Council when there was a change in local government.

Discussions had been initiated between the councils some three/four years ago and in the Finance Committee Meeting of Northam Town Council Meeting at Windmill Lane, it was proposed that there should be discussions regarding the transfer of certain assets from Torridge District Council to Northam Town Council. The motion was agreed by the council and one of the assets referred to was Burrough Field.

**A Plan of Burrough Field and the proposal is inset below for information.**



## **PROPOSAL**

Inspired by the commitment of Local Residents and the Public in general- and supported by the previous discussions with Torridge District Council for the transfer of this asset to Northam Town Council - Northam Town Council wishes to confirm its desire to acquire the land for the benefit of the district of Northam, to be held in perpetuity as an area of Open Space.

## **FUNDING**

The funding of this proposal is fully in line with the structured plan of Northam Town Council to safeguard and improve facilities for Local Residents. Funds have already been set aside within the precept to support this intention, but the Finance Sub-Committee is also committed to sourcing funding for future enhancements from external agencies. Both the TDC Local Plan and the NTC Parish Plan state the importance of the improvement and provision of community facilities so this proposal fulfils a significant part of these plans. Informal discussions have already been held between the two Councils to consider a reasonable figure, deemed fair to both Councils.

## **MANAGEMENT**

Following the purchase of the Bridge Hall, a Management Committee has been specifically formed which comprises a mixture of Councillors and later community stakeholders, the combination of which will offer the best possible mix of skills and appropriate knowledge. This Committee will be used to manage other assets which come under the authority of Northam Town Council, ensuring effective enhancement and optimum employment of the facilities within the area. It is anticipated that, upon reaching a successful conclusion, a project such as this will fall under the remit of this Committee.

The Committee currently comprises 4 members of Northam Town Council who hold the following responsibilities:-

Finance and Building Regs.

Insurance and Licenses

Marketing

Day to Day Management

The Chairmanship of this Committee operates on a rotating system. Other members will be co-opted onto the Committee for specific projects if deemed necessary. Once established, the membership will be expanded to include lay members.

As the responsibilities of Northam Town Council increase it is anticipated in the long term that the current staffing level of the Council will be reviewed. An Anticipated Income and Expenditure Sheet is attached Fig. 1

### **RISKS**

The Business Plan Sub-Committee considers that there are only two basic possible risks, i.e. funding and Health and Safety. With regard to the former, it will be the responsibility of the Finance Committee to source the best possible option for funding and they have already evidenced their ability in this matter with regard to the purchase of the Bridge Hall in Northam. It has been confirmed by the Finance Committee that allowances have been made for such projects. The second possible risk is that consideration is not paid to ensuring sound insurance to cover the use of the area by the general public. Any new asset to come under the Northam Town Council umbrella will automatically be added to the Council's current insurance policy. Any enhancement undertaken will be done exercising full professional consultation and Regular Risk Assessments will be carried out and insured accordingly.

### **BENEFITS**

The main benefit is of that to the Community, whereby the land would be under the ownership and management of a body committed to protecting the land from being built upon. The area represents the only recreational space in the village and is already regarded by locals as a "Village Green", the importance of which was identified by the opposition expressed by Residents regarding the possibility of siting a Tennis Centre on the field. Supporting the preservation of the area as a recreational space would fall in line with Devon County Council's Strategic Policy whereby it states that 'for most Residents the environment is what makes Devon a great place to live' and that there is 'a duty to preserve the environment by considering the environmental implications of all our policies.'

Northam Town Council has discussed various ideas for ways in which the area could offer more to the whole Community as a whole, viz:-Football Ground

Northam Town Council has always been supportive of the Football Club and enjoys a good relationship with them. Informal discussions have already been held with some of their Committee and they are very keen for the ownership of the field to come under the authority of the Council. There would be a feeling of closer co-operation and confidence such a move would secure the ground. The Club would continue to cut the grass on the Pitch, mark out the lines etc. and have already agreed that if this field comes under the control of NTC they would maintain the whole field they currently use.

The provision of Allotments:-

NTC has a waiting list of some 60 people who would like to have an Allotment and has well exceeded the level whereby the Council are legally bound to provide land to enable allotments to be provided. The Council foresees that the demand for Allotments is likely to increase, given the rise in food prices, the interest created by the media with more television time and Press coverage being given to growing your own vegetables etc., and the general concern in the use of chemicals. With the Council's interest in youth, and their wish to learn about gardening, one plot may be allocated to the Northam Youth Group and would also ensure some are accessible for the Disabled. Maintenance costs for the Council would be low because the area would be maintained by the people using the Allotments. Funds generated by the provision of Allotments and any income from the Football Club would be used for care of the area and facilities.

Conservation Area:-

There would be sufficient space at Burrough Field to set aside an area that could be dedicated to developing a Copse. Northam Town Council has already begun approaching organisations such as Men of Trees and is certain that there are various green-minded groups that would, not only contribute financially to the establishment of such an area, but would also be enthusiastic about providing information as to the best type of species to plant, the type of wildlife that could be expected to inhabit such an area, the best way of maintaining and encouraging the organic growth of plants etc. Such an area would meet with Torridge District Councils aim for safeguarding wild life corridors. The development and care of a conservation area could attract interest from a variety of clubs and societies, in particular local schools could be involved with care of certain parts, the development of a pond, and recording creatures that inhabit the area such as newts and frogs and dragonflies etc., which used to breed in this area, and whose habitats have been destroyed following the building of nearby Housing developments.

The preservation of Burrough Field as a recreational space would also provide an open area for children, to allow them somewhere they could go and play and for adults, who would like to enjoy a pleasant green area where the terrain was fairly level.

The Councillors of Northam Town Council also see ownership of this space as an excellent opportunity to hold Community activities to encourage the "Community Spirit" and a sense of belonging to the Northam way of life.

### **STATUS QUO**

To do nothing, and leave the future of the area undecided, would fuel the concerns of the general public that more vital green land would be designated for intrusive development, which would have a negative effect on the character and identity of the village.

Any costs would remain the responsibility of the District Council and the potential of the area would probably remain unrealised. By transferring the site to Northam Town Council it would bring the land into local ownership and would generate more involvement from the local community.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposal, as mentioned above, meets with three principal conclusions from the Quirk Review of community management and ownership of assets (Launched 15.05.07) viz.-

1. Asset transfer should take place where it can realise social or Community benefits, without risking wider public interest concerns
2. The benefits of Community ownership of assets can outweigh the risks involved, in appropriate circumstances,
3. Risks can be minimised and managed by drawing on the experience of others.

Northam Town Council is of the opinion that it more than amply meets the conclusions above and addresses each conclusion within this plan. More importantly, Northam Town Council knows that the acquisition of this site, to be managed and maintained by the Council, would be welcomed by the Community as a whole

**APPENDIX 1.**

**BURROUGH FIELD**

<b><u>EXPENDITURE (YEAR 1)</u></b>	<b><u>£</u></b>
Allotment Set Up Cost	2000
Grass Cutting (Field)	400
Grass Cutting(Football Field)	500
Tree Planting Paths etc.	1000
Total Expenditure	<u>3900</u>
<b><u>INCOME (YEAR 1)</u></b>	
Allotment Rent	1000
Football Club Rent	500
Total Income	<u>1500</u>
Net Expenditure (Year 1)	<u>2400</u>

**Note** :- 1. Site Purchase Costs allowed for in 2008-2009 Precept  
2. Purchase of the Site, and providing Allotments, begins to meet the NTC's requirement to provide Allotments to its Residents. There are currently 61 people desiring to rent. It may also prevent the need to seek Land, for same elsewhere which NTC may need TDC to Compulsorily Purchase on their behalf.

**EXPENDITURE (YEAR 2)**

	<u>£</u>
Grass Cutting (Field)	400
Grass Cutting(Football Field)	500
General Maintenance	200
Total Expenditure	<u>1100</u>

**INCOME (YEAR 2)**

Allotment Rent	1000
Football Club Rent	500
Total Income	<u>1500</u>
Net Income (year 2))	<u>400</u>

**NOTE**:- Proposals for Play Area to be initiated in Year 2 following application for Grants or Match Funding Schemes.