



**ADULTS AND CULTURAL SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 1 JUNE 2026**

CULTURAL SERVICES

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND CULTURAL SERVICES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with an introduction to the three new service areas moving into Adults and Cultural Services from May 2026 and to seek guidance on any further information the Committee require.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. Leicestershire County Council Country Parks and Open Spaces Strategy: 2019 – 2029.
3. The County Council Cabinet received a report in July 2025 on the future of Beaumanor Hall. The Cabinet resolved that the Director of Corporate Resources be authorised to commence an engagement process with stakeholders to establish options to improve the future financial performance of the site.

Background

4. The Council have made a number of departmental changes as part of their work to strengthen cross service working across the Council and build stronger links between related services.
5. These changes include a new departmental name for 'Adults and Communities' which will now be called 'Adults and Cultural Services'. Three new service areas will join the department, these being Country Parks, Beaumanor Hall and Park and Century Theatre.
6. The new services areas have moved from Corporate Resources, where they were managed as part of Leicestershire Traded Services. These services have strong potential to enhance and extend existing cultural provision within Adults and Cultural Services.

Country Parks

7. Leicestershire County Council has a network of 18 parks and open spaces covering over 530ha.

8. The **Country Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2019 – 2029** sets out: -

Six destination parks: Beacon Hill, Bosworth Battlefield, Broombriggs Farm, Market Bosworth, Snibston Colliery and Watermead. Four of these hold the prestigious Green Flag Award status, an international mark of quality for Parks and Open Spaces.

Smaller parks, woodlands and recreational spaces: Ashby Woulds; Bagworth Heath Woods; Burrough Hill Country Park; Brampton Valley Way; Donisthorpe Woodland Park; Jubilee Woods; New Lount Nature Reserve; Oakthorpe Picnic Site; Salterford Valley Picnic Area; Sarah's Wood, Sheet Hedges Wood; Shenton Station and Cutting.

9. Three parks, Beacon Hill, Sheet Hedges and Jubilee Wood, form part of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), designated due to containing unique species or habitats of high scientific value for conservation.
10. Five parks contain Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Watermead, Moria Junction, Snibston Colliery Park, New Lount and Salterford Valley. LNRs are particularly significant for their wildlife, geology, education or enjoyment value.
11. The Country Parks Service manages and maintains Leicestershire County Council's network of country parks and open spaces. The service is non-statutory, but is strategically important to the Council's climate, biodiversity, health and community agendas.
12. The 'County Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2019 – 2029' provides the strategic framework for the service. The strategy is based around four cross-cutting priority themes and sets clear objectives for each of the six destination country parks. Together these aim to ensure our parks are at the centre of delivering positive environmental, ecological, health and social outcomes for Leicestershire's citizens and communities, as well as visitors to the county. The 'Tree Management Strategy' and 'Country Parks Byelaws 2024', are the other key supporting documents.
13. The Country Park service has a team of rangers and is supported by a significant number of skilled volunteers, who are integral to the successful operation of the service.
14. The 2025 review of Leicestershire Country Parks highlighted that usage of country parks continues to grow and there were a number of improvements to pathways and facilities across the network, as well as an extensive programme of events and engagement activities.

Beaumanor Hall and Park

15. Beaumanor Hall was built between 1842 and 1854 by architect William Railton for the Herrick family. It was requisitioned by the War Office as a secret listening station to intercept encrypted enemy signals. Purchased by the County Council in 1974 as an education and conference centre, it was originally one of three outdoor education centres, including Quorn Hall and Aberglaslyn Hall, both of which were closed in 2012. The Hall and parts of the grounds are Grade II* listed.

16. Beaumanor Hall functions as a conference and wedding venue and is used for a large amount of County Council conferencing and large-scale meetings. The Hall also hosts civic events for the Chairman, Lord Lieutenant, emergency services and armed forces.
17. The Hall currently hosts the Registration Office for the Charnwood area. This function is managed by the Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance department.
18. Beaumanor Park is an outdoor education centre, offering activities including archery, orienteering, climbing, abseiling, high ropes and watersports. These can be undertaken as residential visits, using the onsite cabins, or day visits.
19. There are also a number of curricula linked days that are offered, including Pirates, Vikings, Victorians, WW2. These use both the Park and Hall sites. Space on the park can also be hired for camping without activities or catering and this is well utilised by uniformed organisations. The Park also offers holiday clubs and birthday parties.
20. Schools are a major audience and the site welcomes c.16,000 students a year, around c.9,000 as residential stays. The programmes are accredited by the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) and the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOTC).
21. The County Council undertook a customer engagement exercise in August 2025 and the findings will inform future proposals for the site. The results of the engagement are being finalised.

Century Theatre

22. The Century Theatre is a small community theatre, located within Snibston Colliery Park, Coalville and operates as a receiving theatre. The programme consists of live music, theatre, comedy, dance and film. It is one of only 5 theatres outside the City of Leicester
23. In addition to the 206-seat auditorium, the Century Theatre benefits from a bar, foyer and a studio space. The latter can be hired out by local groups and is often used by local choirs and dance schools as a rehearsal space and is used by the Snibston Heritage Trust for educational visits. It also has strong heritage identify background, being the oldest remaining mobile theatre in the country.
24. The programme includes national tours as well as performances by local schools and community groups and the Century Theatre works collaboratively with a production company to stage the annual pantomime. The focus for the Century Theatre is to support the community to engage with the performing arts, as means of improving wellbeing and fostering social connections.
25. The Century Theatre works also with local groups, for example, the Coalville and District Veterans Association and North-West Leicestershire District Council, to stage a Festival of Remembrance. It hosts a free weekly British Sign Language course and 'Community Chat', which is a weekly coffee morning for local residents at risk of social isolation.
26. The Century Theatre has a small team of 3 part-time paid staff, supported by casual roles and a number of dedicated volunteers.

Consultation

27. N/A

Resource Implications

28. There are no additional resource implications arising from this report.

Conclusions

29. Members are asked to note this report and make any comments on the report or the new services areas.

Background papers

30. Annual Review of Country Parks 2025: Environment & Climate Change Scrutiny, 10 September 2025.
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s191475/Scrutiny%20Report%20Country%20Parks%202025.pdf>
31. Country Parks and Open Spaces Strategy: 2019 – 2029
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s152649/APPENDIX%20Country%20Parks%20and%20Open%20Spaces%20Strategy%202019-2029.pdf>
32. Future of Beaumanor Hall and Park: Cabinet 15 July 2025
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s190735/FINAL%20Beaumanor%20Cabinet%20Holding%20Paper%20v1.1.pdf>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

33. A copy of this report will be circulated to all members of the County Council.

Equality Implications

34. This report is for information only and there are no equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report

Human Rights Implications

35. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Other Relevant Impact Assessments**Environment Implications**

36. The Country Park Service continues to deliver against wider Council policies through the management of its land holdings for the benefit of wildlife and people. The service works to create, enhance and maintain biodiversity found within the varying habitats found within the Council's country parks. The Council's parks are an exemplar of how wildlife and people can coexist and are a refuge for delicate habitat types such as heathland, wetlands and woodland.

Health Implications

37. The Council's parks are a resource for residents for physical wellbeing, but also mental wellbeing, allowing visitors to connect with nature within a safe and accessible parks environment. The benefits of positive mental health through accessing greenspaces came to the forefront during the pandemic, and this trend in usage of green spaces continues.
38. The Century Theatre provides a resource for residents to engage with a variety of performing arts which are proven to improve mental wellbeing and boost social connectivity.

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