

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Brian Collins, Deputy Leader

DECISION NUMBER:

26/00021

Executive Decision – key**26/00021 – Biodiversity net gain Pilot scheme at Preston Hill**

Decision:

As Deputy Leader, I agree to:

1. Approve the Biodiversity net gain (BNG) pilot scheme at the Preston Hill site and an arrangement with Commercial Services Group (CSG) to implement the decision in relation to the site as set out by the blue hatched area in appendix C; and
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to take necessary actions, including but not limited to, negotiating, entering into and finalising the terms of relevant leases, contract arrangements or other legal agreements, as required, to implement the decision. as necessary.

Reasons for decision:

Following a change in property arrangements some of the fields at Preston Hill, located off Eynsford Road in Dartford, are now vacant. There is no KCC operational requirement for the site and therefore a number of options have been considered to maximise the value of the site and to minimise revenue costs/ risk which fall to the County Council.

Following assessment, it has been identified that the most appropriate use of the site is the generation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) units to create an income stream.

Of the BNG delivery options considered, Option 6 – leasing to an outsourced specialist delivery partner (Commercial Services Group) is identified as the preferred approach, having achieved the highest score against the Critical Success Factors (CSF). This option provides the most appropriate balance between income generation and risk.

Delivering this option is likely to require the Council to enter into leases or other contractual arrangements with third parties that may exceed 20 years in duration, and which may also bring income in excess of the £1m Director delegated authority limit, therefore requiring a key decision.

Financial implications:

Developing Biodiversity net gain (BNG) units at the Preston Hill site provides an opportunity for KCC to generate income. While habitat creation will require upfront expenditure, the recommended option will minimise any upfront or ongoing costs as

all operational costs, including habitat creation and ongoing management, will be met by the third-party provider.

KCC will receive an income share derived from the successful sale of BNG units, with an agreed percentage paid to the Council upon each sale.

Legal implications:

For any lease, sale or contract for a BNG unit and the contractual / land arrangement with the Commercial Services Group, external legal advisors will be appointed in consultation with KCC legal services.

Equalities implications:

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken and identified no direct equalities implications arising from the decision.

Data Protection implications:

A Data Protection Implication Assessment (DPIA) screener has been performed and has confirmed that there are no DPIA implications and that a further DPIA assessment is not required in respect of this decision.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:


The proposed decision was considered by the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on 6 May 2026, where the proposed decision was ENDORSED.

The views of the Local Member have been sought and will be reported to the Cabinet Committee and the Cabinet Member taking the decision. To date no views or comments have been received.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

- Do nothing – KCC to retain site as vacant.
- Alternative KCC use – KCC to explore whether there is any alternative KCC use for site.
- Lease site – KCC to not explore BNG opportunities and lease site, likely grazing licence.
- Sell site - KCC to not explore BNG opportunities and dispose of site.
- BNG unit generation – KCC to commence with pilot scheme on Preston Hill as a BNG site - **recommended option**.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:


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Signed

8th June 2026
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Date