

Report of: Recreation Development Manager

Report to: Chief Officer Parks and Countryside

Date: 25th January 2018

Subject: The development of the retail/visitor unit at Lotherton Hall Wildlife World.

Capital Scheme Number: 32910/000/000

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Harewood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

- The Lotherton Estate is principally made up of Lotherton Bird Garden, the House, on site retail, a café, estate gardens and a play area. Entry to each aspect of the estate is via a single tickets point of entry. A recent Museums and Galleries commissioned survey into a number of visitor attractions provided some excellent visitor insight for Lotherton Estate with the salient observations highlighted below;
 - 50% of visitors to the attraction are likely to have children with the majority aged between 0-11,
 - 49% are likely to visit in parties of 4 or more,
 - The average time spent on site by visitors is 3 hours,
 - 70% of people visiting the site are likely to be repeat visitors,
 - 68% of visitors to the estate are likely to visit the Bird Garden,
 - The Bird Garden and estate grounds are the most enjoyed aspect of the attraction.
- In July 2011 Executive Board considered a report that set out a programme of investment into the estate. This report highlighted that the aim moving forward was for Lotherton to become a coherent estate that is a quality visitor attraction. Therefore from 2011, the estate has been managed through a collaboration between Parks & Countryside and Museums & Galleries which is guided by a joint project board.

3. Under this joint working initiative, income to the whole estate has steadily risen from £575k in 2010/11 to £800k in 2015/16 this represents a growth in net income of 225k and increase of circa 40%. These improvements in gross income generation have in turn had a positive impact on reducing the level of net subsidy associated with the management of the holistic estate.
4. Lotherton Hall and Tropical World in Roundhay are both examples of how investment in the attraction and the expansion of the onsite offer which is supported through the adaptation of a positive approach to the management of the attraction, including the implementation of an evidence based approach to marketing, bespoke merchandising and a realignment of entry fees, the service can provide a catalyst to grow revenue exponentially in the period following development.
5. The Parks and Countryside service consider that the potential exists to build upon and replicate this success. Proposals have therefore been considered and options explored to develop the outdoor recreational offer at Lotherton Hall through the improvement of the Bird Garden. In October 2016, the Parks and Countryside service asked Executive Board to consider the principle of investing in visitor attractions, which included the proposal for Lotherton Hall. The aim is to broaden the appeal and equally the enjoyment experienced by those visiting Lotherton Hall by enhancing the scope, standard and therefore the overall visitor experience. Capital investment to the value of £1.2m would be required to provide improvements at Lotherton Hall bird garden and the potential exists for this investment to act as a catalyst to increase visitor numbers by 72,000 per annum, which represents an increase of 40% from present figures.
6. Executive Board supported the proposals and the principle of incurring capital expenditure to support plans for growth in revenue. When considered holistically with the growth in revenue these improvements will make a positive contribution to the Best Council Plan ambition of becoming a more efficient and enterprising council. In addition, these improvements therefore support the Best Council Plan 2016/17 priorities of 'Enhancing the quality of our public realm and green spaces' with increased visitor numbers 'Supporting economic growth'; an improved learning offer also contributes to the priority around 'Improving educational achievement'.

Recommendations

7. The Chief Officer Parks and Countryside is requested to;
 - i) Provide Authority to spend on capital scheme 32910 to value of £240k.
 - ii) That the Senior Projects Officer of Parks and Countryside be responsible for implementing the recommendations within this report and ensuring that the necessary capital works are implemented and completed promptly.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight recent developments at Lotherton Hall and to provide information regarding the proposal to develop the Bird Garden in order to facilitate a growth in visitor numbers. The report then seeks approval to spend to the value of £240k, to development a new retail/visitor unit which will form the main entrance and exit point to the attraction.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Lotherton Estate is principally made up of Lotherton Wildlife World (former bird garden), the House, on site retail, a café, estate gardens and a play area. Entry to each aspect of the estate is via a single tickets point of entry. A recent Museums and Galleries commissioned survey into a number of visitor attractions provided some excellent visitor insight for Lotherton Estate with the salient observations highlighted below;

- 50% of visitors to the attraction are likely to have children with the majority aged between 0-11,
- 49% are likely to visit in parties of 4 or more,
- The average time spent on site by visitors is 3 hours,
- 70% of people visiting the site are likely to be repeat visitors,
- 68% of visitors to the estate are likely to visit the Bird Garden,
- The Bird Garden and estate grounds are the most enjoyed aspect of the attraction.

- 2.2 In July 2011 Executive Board considered a report that set out a programme of investment into the estate. This report highlighted that the aim moving forward was for Lotherton to become a coherent estate that is a quality visitor attraction. Therefore from 2011, the estate has been managed through a collaboration between Parks & Countryside and Museums & Galleries which is guided by a joint project board.

- 2.3 Under this joint working initiative, income to the whole estate has steadily risen from £575k in 2010/11 to £800k in 2015/16 this represents a growth in net income of 225k and increase of circa 40%. These improvements in gross income generation have in turn had a positive impact on reducing the level of net subsidy associated with the management of the holistic estate.

- 2.4 This growth income has been in part driven by a commitment to the promotion and expansion of the onsite event programme, supported by a series of investments into both the visitor focussed elements of the estate and it also its infrastructure. Some of the improvements undertaken include;

- The development of an adventure playground
- Establishment of a new vehicular access route
- Improved visitor parking
- Improved children's play
- Improved signage and interpretation.

- 2.5 These on site improvements and the expansion of the event programme have contributed to the growth in visitor numbers, but the impact of these investments and initiatives have been significantly bolstered by the implementation of an active marketing strategy which has seen visitor number rise year on year.
- 2.6 In October 2016 Executive Board supported a proposal for continued investment within its visitor attractions in order to enhance visitor numbers further and generate revenue to improve sustainability. This included plans to develop and enhance the bird garden at Lotherton Hall by investing £1.2m into an improved visitor attraction, with the objective of increasing visitor numbers by 72,000 per annum, which represents an increase of 40% from present figures.
- 2.7 Based on an assessment of present usage data; it is considered that any improvements to the bird garden are likely to appeal directly to the attractions primary audience. Extensive consultation has been undertaken on the bird garden, specifically to gain a better understanding of what is liked, what could be improved, and how best to do so.
- 2.8 It is acknowledged that improvement and investment in on site facilities and displays is very much needed. Informed by this insight and in acknowledgment of the need for improvement, the service has developed a comprehensive proposal for the renovation of the bird garden to transform the area into a modern, engaging and exciting visitor attraction that will facilitate the presentation of a more diverse collection of animals. The objective of this development will be to firstly modernise and enhance the attraction in order to sustain visitor numbers in the long term and equally grow the audience for the estate.
- 2.9 The bird garden and its subsequent development has been broken down to a series of phases, with the attraction itself being partitioned into a number of distinct areas. This report relates specifically to the development of a retail and information point, following the successful completion of phase 1 which saw the development of a Coastal Zone and a partial enhancement of the Forests Zone. This report will focus on the development of this retail and information point.

3 Main issues

3.1 Design Proposals and Full Scheme Description.

- 3.1.1 The new retail and information point will become visitors only entrance and exit to Wildlife World, and will involve the creation of a bespoke timber unit with internal space for retail, education, and enclosure viewing.
- 3.1.2 Development work included in this phase of works has required planning permission due to the facility being entirely new build. Planning consent was received for this building in August 2017 following submission in December 2016.

3.2 Programme

- 3.4.1 Work Commence - September 2017
 Work Complete - March 2018

3.5 Procurement

- 3.5.1 The works included within the entire scheme fall within the provisions of Contract Procedures Rules (CPR) 3.1.4 in that an internal service provider (ISP) exists and has confirmed that they can carry out the works. Therefore work on the project as a whole is to be undertaken by Parks and Countryside who will act as a principal contractor, utilising the support of specialist subcontractors for specific design and construction elements that cannot be delivered by an internal service provider due to the specialist nature of the refurbishment.
- 3.5.2 Inclusive within the proposals for phase one at Lotherton Hall is the inclusion of a new retail and education unit. Given its setting both in terms of a green belt location and within an area of established woodland, it was important that the building is sensitive to its surroundings and furthermore that its establishment doesn't materially affect the viability of the woodland. These specialist design restrictions resulted in the conclusion that a circular timber structure building would be most appropriate. Consequently a modular building form was considered to be the most appropriate construction form whilst allowing for the maximum floor space possible. A budget for this element of the scheme was determined and the design developed has been within that budget from inception.
- 3.5.3 The outline design for the building emerged following an approach to 4 individual companies with portfolios demonstrating experience of similar design and build projects in line with the established brief. Submissions were assessed in relation to price and design proposal. Cabin Co emerged from that processes as having a design that would best meet the requirements of the site and the client brief.
- 3.5.4 The design of key elements in phase one including animal enclosures, path networks etc have been determined and implemented based on the initial Cabin Co design. In line with this, there was a need established to work with a suitable, experienced contractor whom can provide the required building cost-effectively and within budget, without compromising design, LCC felt that Cabin Co Ltd. therefore provided the solution of best value in terms of expediting development and meeting client requirements.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Based on customer insight research it is known that 68% of people visiting Lotherton Hall will use Wildlife World. To assist in informing the design and feasibility process at Lotherton, consultation was undertaken with customers via an online platform as well as undertaking a focussed development day to engage with staff to ascertain their ideas.
- The salient outcome from this consultation process are highlighted below;
 - 72% expressed a desire to landscape the enclosures and buildings with natural materials and colours to reflect the native environment of the birds
 - 28% of respondents felt that an indoor visitor information point would be a beneficial feature to add to the bird garden.

4.1.2 As part of this process respective ward members have been briefed on the proposals for development at each site. It is acknowledged that these attractions sit within community greenspaces and developments may have a local impact and therefore as work progresses further updates will be provided.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 Due consideration has been given to the needs of minority groups, as required under equality legislation, in the formation of the design to this point. Consideration has been given to ensuring that the attraction is developed in a manner that improves the visibility of attractions. A screening document has been prepared for this decision and due regard has been given to this within the context of the independent impact assessment that has already been carried out for the whole estate.

4.2.2 In support of the above statement, it is felt that the proposal doesn't affect how services and/or procurement activities are organised, provided, or located. The service is not seeking to change the way in which a service is delivered to the public since the requirement is simply to re-theme and remodel existing attractions. Furthermore, the changes made will have no discernible negative effects on service users, and will provide only benefits to those using the site in terms of improved service provision.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 This project complies with various Council policies and strategies relevant to improving the city and overall level of service provision. The main documents are referred to below;

4.3.2 The Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030 sets out a revised vision for the city with the specific objective for Leeds to be the best city in the UK by 2030. In establishing this vision one of the top priorities to emerge from consultation was for the city to be a cleaner greener city. Aspects of this priority can be found in all of the areas in which the vision is intended to make a difference, although specific reference can be made to the commitment within the vision for Leeds to be the best city to live with good green spaces where everyone can enjoy a good quality of life. Developing this capital project will unquestionably enhance one of the city's major park attractions to the benefit of all residents and those immediate communities who utilise these spaces as a community green space.

4.3.3 The proposals contained in this report contribute to the Best Council Plan ambition of becoming a more efficient and enterprising council. These improvements also support the Best Council Plan 2016/17 priorities of 'Enhancing the quality of our public realm and green spaces' with increased visitor numbers 'Supporting economic growth'.

4.3.4 The ambitious plans for the continued development of attractions will lead to an improved visitor experience but also increased visitor numbers and therefore the improved sustainability the estate.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The principal aim of the development proposed at Lotherton Hall is to present a coherent and comprehensive proposal for the renovation of the bird garden to transform the area into a modern, engaging and exciting visitor attraction that will facilitate the presentation of a more diverse collection of animals, as well as increasing visitor dwell time and consequent secondary spend. The objective of this development will be to firstly modernise and enhance the attraction in order to sustain visitor numbers in the long term and equally grow the audience for the estate. It is anticipated that Capital investment to the value of £1.2m would be needed to complete the full process and Executive Board agreed to the principle of incurring capital expenditure on attractions including Lotehrton Hall as a catalyst for growth in revenue.

4.4.2 The completion of phase 1 includes the development of a retail and information unit at the point of entrance/exit to the attraction. The cost of developing this feature is £240k. Funding for the improvements proposed in this element of phase 1 is to be made up from unsupported prudential borrowing to the value of £240k.

4.5 Capital Funding and Cash Flow.

Authority to Spend required for this Approval	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2016 £000's	FORECAST				
			2016/17 £000's	2017/18 £000's	2018/19 £000's	2019/20 £000's	2020 ON £000's
LAND (1)	0.0		0.0	0.0			
CONSTRUCTION (3)	240.0		0.0	240.0			
FURN & EQPT (5)	0.0		0.0	0.0			
DESIGN FEES (6)	0.0		0.0	0.0			
OTHER COSTS (6)& (7)	0.0		0.0	0.0			
TOTALS	240.0	0.0	0.0	240.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total overall Funding (As per latest Capital Programme)	TOTAL £000's	TO MARCH 2016 £000's	FORECAST				
			2016/17 £000's	2017/18 £000's	2018/19 £000's	2019/20 £000's	2020 ON £000's
LCC Unsupported Borrowing	240.0		0.0	240.0			
	0.0		0.0	0.0			
	0.0		0.0	0.0			
Total Funding	240.0	0.0	0.0	240.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Balance / Shortfall =	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

4.5.1 Revenue Effects.

4.5.1. The basis on which Executive Board supported the principle of using capital funding to support the development of Lotherton Hall, was on a spend to save basis. It is projected that by 2019/20 additional net revenue of £336.5k per annum could be generated which would be directly and indirectly attributed holistic development proposed at this site.

REVENUE EFFECTS	2016/17	2017/18 and SUBSEQUENT YEARS
	£000's	£000'S
EMPLOYEES		0.0
PREMISES COSTS		0.0
SUPPLIES & SERVICES		0.0
EXTERNAL INCOME GENERATED		336.5

4.6 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.6.1 The decisions taken within this report constitute a significant operational decision and as such the decision is not eligible for call in.

4.7 Risk Management

4.7.1 This project will be managed and delivered by a suitably chosen external provider in line with the details given in the associated waiver report. The project in its entirety will be project managed by the Parks and Countryside service with due regard given to risk management through project governance. Through this joint working, risk is further mitigated by this work being delivered in house which has consequential benefits given that any work undertaken will be done by those with specific knowledge of the site both in terms of the process of development and post implementation management and maintenance capacity.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Following the implementation of joint working initiative with Museums and Galleries, income to the whole Lotherton estate has steadily risen from £575k in 2010/11 to £800k in 2015/16 this represents a growth in net income of 225k and increase of circa 40%. In October 2016, the Parks and Countryside service asked Executive Board to consider the principle of investing in visitor attractions, which included the proposal for Lotherton Hall. The aim is to broaden the appeal and equally the enjoyment experienced by those visiting Lotherton Hall by enhancing the scope, standard and therefore the overall visitor experience. Capital investment to the value of £1.2m would be required to provide improvements at Lotherton Hall bird garden and the potential exists for this investment to act as a catalyst to increase visitor numbers by 72,000 per annum, which represents an increase of 40% from present figures

5.2 The bird garden and its subsequent development into Wildlife World has been broken down to a series of phases, with the attraction itself being partitioned into a number of distinct areas. This report relates specifically to the completion of Phase 1 which includes the establishment of a retail and information point. This report focuses specifically on the development of the retail and information point.

5.3 The new retail and information point at Lotherton Hall Wildlife World will provide a more appealing and secure entrance/exit to the attraction, and will involve the development of a new indoor space. This space will provide the opportunity for improved visitor experience through increasing information, education and viewing points. As a result, Leeds City Council hopes to increase visitor dwell time, and secondary spend on site, feeding back into the business attraction plan.

6 Recommendations

The Chief Officer Parks and Countryside is requested to;

- i) Provide Authority to spend on capital scheme 32910 to value of £240k.
- ii) That the Senior Projects Officer Parks and Countryside be responsible for implementing the recommendations within this report and ensuring that the necessary capital works are implemented and completed promptly.

7. Background documents¹

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available for download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.