



Report of the Acting Director of City Development

Executive Board

Date: 27 July 2011

Subject: Design and Cost Report : Lotherton Estate Improvements
Capital Scheme No. 15377

Electoral Wards Affected:

Harewood

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines proposals to make site improvements at Lotherton Estate that improve visitor facilities and increase income through revised charging policies, to ultimately reduce the net cost of the estate, whilst providing funding for improvements.

Lotherton Estate including the Hall has a net cost of £534,000 and by implementing proposals in this report including changing to a per person or per family entry charge (which permits admission to all facilities) income is projected to increase alongside improvements to the visitor experience.

As new capital funding is extremely limited a detailed prudential borrowing case has been developed, and discussed with Corporate Financial Management, to enable investment in the estate and to improve income.

This Design and Cost report seeks an injection to the capital programme and authority to spend of £ 160,000, for phase 1 of the proposed works at the Lotherton Estate. This will be fully funded by prudential borrowing to be supported by projected increased income raised from changes to the current charging policy for the estate.

The report seeks approval to the charges to be introduced from a provisional date of 1st October 2011, to replace the current car parking charge and the entrance fee to the Hall.

1.0 Purpose of this Report

Executive Board is requested to ;

- approve an injection of £160,000 in to the capital programme for various improvement works at Lotherton. This will be funded by prudential borrowing from additional income raised from changes to the current charging policy.
- approve the authority to incur expenditure of £160,000 on improvements.
- approve the charges for entry to all facilities on the Estate, as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The Lotherton Hall Estate was gifted to Leeds City Council by the Gascoigne family in 1968. Currently 58% of visitors are regular visitors, 55% of whom visit weekly.
- 2.2 However, visitor surveys have shown that a high proportion of visitors come from outside of the Leeds jurisdiction (30% from within Leeds, 49% from the rest of Yorkshire). Many visitors originate from York, Wakefield and South Yorkshire due to the estates close proximity to major transport links and its position on the periphery of Leeds.
- 2.3 Car parking is charged at £3.70, there is an admission charge of £3.30 for the house and the bird garden is free. Currently there are high numbers of visitors that do not pay for parking and only a limited number of visitors find the Hall. These are issues we will address as part of the proposals contained in this report.
- 2.4 Annually some 40,000 cars pay to park with a further 1,500 holding parking season tickets, however over 150,000 cars are counted into the estate highlighting the income currently lost through unmonitored car parking. Assuming occupancy of 2.5 per vehicle this suggests average annual estate visitors at around 400,000.
- 2.5 The range of facilities on offer are comparable to other country house estates providing an average dwell time of around 3 hours and are already attractive to families (who form 67% of visitors). Organised groups make up only 8% of visitors indicating that there is plenty of opportunity for growth in this area.
- 2.6 Overall the impression is of a municipal park which happens to contain a historic house and a bird garden; rather than our aim which is for Lotherton to be a coherent estate that is also a quality visitor attraction.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 Lotherton Estate and Hall has a net cost of £ 534,000 and currently experiences a limited number of visitors to the house (circa 20,000 per annum of 400,000 estate visitors) which, other than car parking, is the single part of the estate to charge. Through changing to a per person entry charge at Lotherton (to include admission to all facilities) income is projected to increase alongside improvements to the visitor experience. Please see Appendix 1 for the proposed charging structure.
- 3.2 It is proposed that the charges will be implemented in 2011, with a provisional date of 1st October. Fee alterations in this respect would still provide great value for money for visitors when compared with similar estates in the region. Prices have been set to incorporate substantial discounts for LeedsCard and LeedsCard Extra as well as provide excellent value for family packages and season tickets for frequent users.

3.3 Increased income will also help to support improvements that are currently required at Lotherton, making these changes would greatly improve the visitor experience and encourage visitor numbers to increase as a whole.

3.4 Issues at Lotherton currently include:

- Pedestrian safety issues in relation to the location of the current exit route which cuts across all pedestrian movement to access the facilities, eg., courtyard, bird garden and Hall. Traffic channels through this main pedestrian area creating a potential accident risk especially at peak times
- Car parking is not effectively managed, and there are currently high levels of non-payment for parking
- Drainage issues that cause large parts of the car parking areas to flood with sewage
- The parking and vehicle routes within the estate limit access
- A large section of the estate is not accessible by the public
- Currently the visitor's experience of Lotherton is fragmented with separate charges and no clear visitor orientation or routes
- Unused or under utilised resources such as the Edwardian gardens, the fields surrounding the estate and the carriage collection. If made available these would be of interest to the public
- Low presence of disabled and priority parking
- Few events to attract visitors and little marketing
- Limited customer service
- Confusing and limited opening hours and dates
- Gardens including the iconic Edwardian garden in need of refurbishment
- Consumer desire for additional / improved picnic and play areas
- Poor and outdated signage and interpretation
- Access issues within Lotherton and potential for learning opportunities within the site

4.0 Design Proposals / Scheme Description

4.1 Phase 1 of improvements at Lotherton include:

- relocating the exit route in line with the current entrance road (this would be widened to allow for two way traffic flow) to remove the safety risk of cars exiting the site near the playground. The existing exit road will be closed creating a safer pedestrian environment. Proposals have been developed with Highways
- a new pay point which will provide information and orientation to visitors. This will improve customer service and ensure that the current high levels of non-payment for parking cease
- a new safer parking location, with prime views of the house and maintained gardens, this will also enable easier access to the majority of the estate and Hall
- creating an 'accessible parking area' that provides priority parking for visitors
- opening the house on Mondays, in January and February and stream lining opening hours
- restoring the exceptional Edwardian gardens including the chapel garden, the Japanese rockery and the walled gardens
- creating routes for the visitor through themed walks
- creating more picnic and play areas and enhance those already in place
- new play equipment and woodland adventure play for teenagers
- doubling the amount of the estate that is currently accessible to the public

- display of the impressive collection of coaches and horse drawn carriages
- vastly improved signage and interpretation
- eradicating current drainage and sewage issues
- a new events programme that will run throughout the year. Through marketing this will reach out to new areas of the community as well as encouraging existing visitors to visit more frequently

Please see Appendix 2 for more details.

4.2 Consultation

4.2.1 The Executive Member for Leisure has been briefed on the proposals to undertake a programme of improvements to the visitor experience at Lotherton Estate, and for these to be tied in with the introduction of entry charges to the estate.

4.2.2 Consultation took place with local members on 1st June, planned improvements were presented along with the proposed pricing structure.

4.2.3 Public consultation events have been publicised for 23rd June and 28th June in the form of drop in sessions where staff will be available to answer questions and take comments, and beyond these events consultation will be ongoing until 26 July 2011. It is proposed that any changes to the Phase 1 improvement as a result of the consultation be delegated to the Acting Director of City Development, with concurrence of the Executive Board Member (Leisure)

4.2.4 In addition to these meetings:

- Display boards will be produced to present proposals and the planned improvements. The objective will be to promote discussion and generate further ideas for improving the visitor experience
- Information on proposals will be available around Lotherton and in other venues such as libraries and One Stop Centres. A leaflet explaining the key points will also be available.
- Comment cards will be available in the café, shop and house for visitors to express their views on proposals.
- Information is also available on the Lotherton Estate web pages and through Talking Point.
- Local Parish Councils and interested organisations will be invited to take part in informal discussions. The proposals can be explained and staff will be able to outline the proposals if further information or engagement is desired.
- Current season ticket holders will be contacted and new proposals explained.

4.3 Programme

4.3.1 The proposed works would be carried out in 2011/12, with the majority completed for 1st October 2011 when it is proposed that the new pricing structure will become effective.

4.3.2 Additionally, through a phased approach, there are proposals to further develop the visitor experience at Lotherton Estate in the future. These future proposals would be the subject of an appropriate business case being developed to fund further borrowing. These include the potential for:

- Creation of a new shop in the stables courtyard
- Glazing of courtyard to provide year round usage

- Enable the courtyard houses to come back into public use as period room settings
- Continue to restore the Edwardian gardens, ongoing low cost restoration will refresh the attraction and provide a marketing opportunity
- Potential new learning suite for a single education offer
- Further development of the stable courtyard, through conversion of the first floor area to provide conference and banqueting facilities
- Weddings and Civil Ceremonies, seek to market test the potential for lease of land for a semi-permanent marquee. This would realise fees and improve the wedding ceremony take up at the hall

5.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

5.1 Compliance with Council Policies

5.1.1 Council's Business Plan. In particular health and safety, environmental matters, equal opportunities issues and customer care are all relevant to this project.

5.2 Community Safety

5.2.1 Changes to the current onsite road layout will make significant improvements to community safety. Additionally security will be significantly improved through recently installed equipment and additional security cameras. This will enable the visitor experience to be more safe and secure.

5.2.2 Proposals also include improvements to accessibility in the house, the installation of a changing places toilet, disabled parking and provision of 'parking for all'.

5.3 Equality Impact Assessment

5.3.1 As part of the consultation process, officers have commenced the assessment and a full Equality Impact Assessment will be completed before the Executive Board meeting.

6.0 Legal and Resource Implications

6.1 Scheme Design Estimate

6.1.1 This DCR seeks the injection of £160,000 for Phase 1 of the proposed improvement works at Lotherton.

6.1.2 Proposed expenditure

Contribution to drainage works	£ 20,000
New access road	£ 80,000
Meet and greet facilities	£ 20,000
Landscaping and gardens	£ 11,000
Signage and orientation	£ 10,000
Play equipment and picnic facilities	£ 9,000
Courtyard infrastructure	£ 10,000
	£160,000

6.1.3 Additional funding for the drainage works will be supported by Corporate Property Management and City Development budgets.

6.3 Revenue Effects

- 6.3.1 As a result of the improvements and the need to introduce new income collection arrangements, it is anticipated that there will be some additional revenue costs. These costs were included in the detailed prudential borrowing case and will be funded by the additional income generated from the revised charges for the estate.
- 6.3.2 The additional revenue costs are expected to be £98,000 and include additional staffing for the collection of admissions and for opening the Lotherton Hall on Mondays, enhanced marketing / events spend and arrangements for the collection of season tickets. A budget has been identified within the department to cover part year costs in 2011/12.
- 6.3.3 The additional cost of the prudential borrowing will also be covered by the additional income generated.
- 6.3.4 The following table illustrates the alterations which will be necessary to the department's revenue budget:

	£000's	£000'S
EMPLOYEES	23.0	62.0
PREMISES COSTS	0.0	3.0
SUPPLIES & SERVICES	19.0	33.0
BORROWING CHARGES		28.0
EXTERNAL INCOME GENERATED		150.0

- 6.3.5 The alterations illustrated in this table will be incorporated into the department's Revenue Budget by means of additional income.

6.4 Risk Assessments

- 6.4.1 The detailed prudential borrowing business case was developed after considerable research and in conjunction with advice and input from a consultant who has previously worked with the National Trust.
- 6.4.2 Market research has been conducted and the prices proposed provide great value for money for visitors when compared with similar estates in the region. Prices have been set to be reasonable, especially for families and frequent visitors.
- 6.4.3 Setting prices at a realistic level will help keep visitor numbers buoyant and help increase income that can be invested in making essential improvements at Lotherton, which will in turn benefit the visitor.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 Improvements at Lotherton will greatly increase the visitor experience; proposals are to make site improvements, improve visitor facilities, and create an additional source of income.

7.2 Through changing to a per person entry charge, including admission to all facilities, income is projected to increase alongside improvements to the visitor experience.

8.0 Recommendations

Executive Board is requested to;

- approve an injection of £160,000 in to the capital programme for improvements at Lotherton. This will be funded by prudential borrowing from additional income raised from changes to the current charges for Lotherton.
- approve the authority to incur expenditure of £160,000 on improvements to Lotherton.
- approve the charges for entry to all facilities on the Estate.
- approve that following conclusion of the consultation any change to the Phase 1 improvements be delegated to the Acting Director of City Development with concurrence of the Executive Board Member (Leisure).

Background Papers

- (i) Appendix 1 – Proposed prices
- (ii) Appendix 2 – Map of improvements