

Approval to procure a contractor to improve the interpretation, signage and visitor experience at Home Farm, Temple Newsam

Date: May 2022

Report of: Parks Technical Officer

Report to: Chief Officer Parks and Countryside

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- In October 2016 Executive Board gave approval to develop plans for an indoor play barn with integrated café along with a new entrance, incorporating a retail facility, utilising the old cow byre set in the core of the historic buildings at Home Farm, Temple Newsam. These plans also included making improvements to Home Farm to help develop and improve the visitor and educational experience for a wider range of visitors.
- In September 2020 Executive Board gave approval to implement the above plans. Authority to spend on the scheme (capital scheme 33387) was granted in December 2021.
- This report seeks the approval of the proposed procurement strategy for the engagement of a contractor to develop an interpretation strategy and to improve the interpretation and signage at Home Farm, Temple Newsam.
- The proposal will contribute to the following Best Council Plan priorities:
 - Inclusive Growth through using the civic enterprise model to generate income to fund the new visitor facilities and provide a return on investment.
 - Health and wellbeing by supporting healthy, physically active lifestyles.
 - Safe, strong communities by improving this community resource for local people and visitors from further afield.
 - Growing the cultural sector through restoring, promoting and sharing the heritage of the site, and ensuring that it can be more widely experienced.
 - Child Friendly Leeds through improving health and wellbeing and an enhanced learning environment.

Recommendations

- a) In accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules 3.1.7 and 9, high value procurements, this report requests the Chief Officer Parks and Countryside to approve the procurement strategy to carry out a competitive procurement through YorTender to appoint a contractor to develop an interpretation strategy and improve the interpretation and signage at Home Farm, Temple Newsam.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 Temple Newsam is large, public country estate on the edge of Leeds that is famous for its historic (Tudor-Jacobean) House. The park attracts around 2 million visitors a year who enjoy a variety of things to see and do including playgrounds, walking and cycling routes, lakes, gardens, woodlands, sports facilities, a café, a shop and Home Farm.
- 2 Home Farm is a working rare breeds farm that has been welcoming the public since 1979. As well as animals, it has many historic features including the listed 'Great Barn' which was built in 1694 and a dovecote constructed in the 18th century which had room for 2,400 birds. An inventory taken in 1869 gives a clear picture of a busy farmyard with a dairy, slaughterhouse, poultry yard and blacksmith's workshop. The yards were also home to the saw-mill and joiner's shop and, more unusually, a working brew-house. Most of the original buildings are still open to visitors today and, as well as animals, they contain historic farm machinery and equipment to give the visitor an idea of what it would have been like in the past.
- 3 There is currently a mix of signage and interpretation at Home Farm. There are also some interactive activities that serve an educational purpose.
- 4 A new approach to interpretation has recently been agreed for the Estate as a whole (including Temple Newsam House museum). We would like the farm interpretation to be consistent with it.

The 3 themes of the interpretation are:

1. **Tales:** stories that are directly related to Temple Newsam – e.g. around the people who lived and worked on the farm (we have some oral histories and transcripts of previous residents) and /or the animals (including rare breeds) on the farm.
2. **Treasures:** covers objects and rare breed farm animals – so in relation to the farm this might refer to some of the farm machinery and buildings and rare farm animal species.
3. **Through Time:** would relate to the evolution of the farm and its buildings over time e.g. the farm started as only one building – the Great Barn. Also, this theme is about placing the farm in context in time e.g. when steam engine arrived.

In addition to the above there is a cross-cutting theme that we want to build on in the future: **'Health & Plenty'** (words taken from the inscription around the roof of the House)

Develop a cross-estate narrative based on food stories focussing on sustainable food production including nutrition for well-being and tackling food poverty.

At the farm this would link in with: rare breeds, sustainable farming and local produce (milking demonstrations, egg collection etc).

- 5 These improvements to the interpretation and signage at Home Farm will improve the overall visitor experience at the farm and enable us to achieve more visitors, who come to the attraction more often. This will help us to achieve our income targets and ensure it is financially sustainable long term.
- 6 These works will also improve the educational experience for visitors to the farm. Our aim is to enable visitors to learn more about the amazing history of the farm, it's people, buildings and the animals.
- 7 We are therefore seeking a company to review what interpretation we currently have, make proposals for a refreshed offer, based on the approach described above and deliver the agreed interpretation. We would like this to be done through the production of an interpretation strategy (in consultation with the team on site) setting out a plan for how the farm will engage and educate visitors going forward.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 8 By undertaking these works this project will present an opportunity to conserve, reinvigorate and animate the farm and it's heritage buildings. This will improve visitor experience all year round and develop a financially sustainable future for the attraction. This in turn will continue to conserve rare breeds of animals and develop the educational experience for a wider range of visitors.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 9 A consultation survey has been conducted asking visitors for their views on how the farm attraction might develop. Further details of this survey can be found in our original Executive Board report.
- 10 The Friends of Temple Newsam Park have been regularly briefed about proposals to develop Home Farm. In particular there is an understanding that this project presents an opportunity to conserve and reinvigorate the farm and buildings and to generate funds to assist with the long-term sustainability of the park.
- 11 Historic England have been consulted with regards to the conservation of buildings and the appropriate use of historic buildings for commercial purposes to generate income to ensure their future survival.
- 12 The Council's Procurement & Commercial Services team are supportive of the proposals contained in the report

What are the resource implications?

- 13 The scheme is funded via unsupported borrowing detailed in our original Executive Board report. As part of this funding we have allocated £500k for general improvements to Home Farm. These works will be funded from this allocation and we anticipate the project to cost in the region of £200k.
- 14 The procurement will be carried out in an open and transparent manner in line with Contract Procedure Rules by ensuring competition is sought to identify best value. The procurement route proposed for this project is a below threshold competitive procurement exercise utilising contractors registered on YorTender.
- 15 The evaluation approach to be implemented is the Quality & Price separated methodology, this means contractors will be required to meet a minimum threshold on the quality submission. Following this assessment those who pass the set threshold will be evaluated on a price only basis.

What are the legal implications?

- 16 The original Executive Board report approved in September 2020 was a key decision and subject to call-in. This report can be accessed by referring to agenda item 38 on the following link: [Council and democracy \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/council-and-democracy).
- 17 This decision is as a direct consequence of the Executive Board decision and is a significant operational decision.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 18 A risk of procurement challenge is always present when undertaking a competitive procurement exercise. To mitigate this risk, procurement and commercial services have been involved to ensure a fair, transparent and compliant procurement process is undertaken.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

- 19 The proposal will make a contribution to the following Best Council Plan priorities:
 - Health and wellbeing by supporting healthy, physically active lifestyles.
 - Inclusive Growth through using the civic enterprise model to generate income to fund the new visitor facilities and provide a return on investment.
 - Safe, strong communities by providing a new, inclusive community resource for local people and visitors from further afield.
 - Growing the cultural sector through restoring, promoting and sharing the heritage of the site, and ensuring that it can be more widely experienced.
 - Child Friendly Leeds through improving health and wellbeing, an enhanced learning environment and a place for children to play.
 - The scheme would help achieve the Key Performance Indicator of allowing more people to enjoy greater access to green spaces.

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

20 We feel this is the only viable option available to us to ensure that we can procure the goods/services we require. This decision has been supported by the Council's Procurement & Commercial Services team.

b) How will success be measured?

21 The contract will be managed by the Parks and Countryside service throughout all stages of the procurement. As part of this role, contractor performance will be monitored and managed in line with the contract terms.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

22 It is anticipated that the works will commence from October 2022 onwards.

Appendices

23 None.

Background papers

22 Executive Board report – September 2020:

<https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=102&MId=9976&Ver=4>