

**REPORT OF THE GROUP MANAGER, COUNTRY PARKS AND GREEN  
ESTATE SERVICES****SHERWOOD FOREST VISITOR CENTRE****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report provides an update to the Committee on the progress of the Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre project.

**Information and Advice**

2. At its meeting on 14 September 2011, Cabinet:
  - i) approved the process to secure a developer and operator to design, build, finance and operate a new Visitor Centre at Sherwood Forest
  - ii) approved expenditure on the estimated costs associated with this exercise
  - iii) noted that a final report to recommend the appointment of an operator and confirm the arrangements to be put in place for the longer term development of the visitor attraction and the National Nature Reserve will be submitted to Council in 2012.
3. The Council's ambition for a new visitor centre at Sherwood Forest is to promote and enhance the national and international reputation of Sherwood Forest, the legend of Robin Hood and the broader history and heritage of Nottinghamshire. **Appendix 1** sets out the vision and business objectives of the County Council.
4. Arising from this, the Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre project was established to manage an EU Works Concession Procurement, the legal process by which an operating partner could be procured. This was considered to be the best process to be followed as it gives a high degree of flexibility and interpretation to potential developers, where they would be in a strong position to set out their own designs and plans as to how they would wish to help deliver the Council's objectives.
5. The Works Concession has been carried out in two stages. Stage 1 was advertised through the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) in October 2011 and 22 organisations expressed an interest in this scheme. At the

closure of Stage 1 (December 2011), three outline bids were submitted and this was reduced to two as one was non-compliant.

6. In January 2012, Stage 2 of the procurement process commenced. Details of the Council's requirements and the methodology to be used were discussed in depth with both bidders as part of a dialogue process which continued until the end of May 2012, by which point both bidders were asked to submit their best and final offers.

7. On 1 June 2012 it is pleasing to report that two bids were received and these are now being evaluated according to the agreed set of criteria.

8. The bids will be evaluated in line with agreed evaluation criteria that were set out in Stage 1 of the procurement process. The five broad categories being evaluated are: The Attraction; Finance; Community and Economic Benefits; Environmental Impact and how the solution fits with Nottinghamshire County Council's strategic plan.

9. An Officer Evaluation Panel will be assessing each bid and will make a recommendation to the Policy Committee meeting on 12 September 2012 regarding the potential nomination of a preferred bidder.

10. Thereafter, the timescale for developing the final scheme designs, carrying out community consultations prior to obtaining planning approval (from Newark and Sherwood District Council) and then completing the necessary on site constructions before opening will lie with the developer. No timescales for this phase of the Project have yet been finalised, as these will be dependent upon the nature of the successful bid.

### **Other Options Considered**

11. In 2008, the Council attempted the development of a new visitor centre at Sherwood through a major national lottery bid which ultimately was unsuccessful. The Council subsequently considered different design options to be funded from within its capital programme, but given the budget pressures experienced in the past two years, these options were found to be unsustainable.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

12. The recommendation is to advise the Committee of progress with the procurement process for a new operator for the Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are

material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Implications for Service Users**

14. The delivery of the Council's vision for the visitor centre would improve customer numbers and the customer experience significantly, through the establishment of a range of new and enhanced facilities.

### **Financial Implications**

15. A budget of up to £100,000 for specialist external legal advice and procurement costs to advise the Council was approved by Cabinet. This has been funded by the Council's Transformation Programme budget and from within the Culture and Community budget.
16. A key element of this proposal is that the operator will provide the majority of the capital costs, while the County Council will make a contribution from the capital programme towards the remediation of the existing NNR site and also infrastructure costs on the new site. At this stage, it is not possible to confirm the amount of capital funds required.
17. The operator will also be required to provide an income stream to the County Council.

### **Equalities Implications**

18. The delivery of the Council's vision for the Centre will improve current levels of access for those with disabilities. In addition, should the Council procure an operator for the Centre, the resultant operating agreement would require the partner to comply with all current equal opportunities related statute.

### **Human Resources Implications**

19. In the event of the Council developing contractual arrangements with an operator, the Council would comply with statute and its Human Resources policy framework in respect of the staff currently employed at the Centre.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Committee notes:

- 1) the progress made on the procurement for an operating partner for a new visitor centre at Sherwood Forest.
- 2) that fuller details of the proposals of the preferred bidder will be brought to the Committee at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Patrick Candler**

## **Group Manager, Country Parks and Green Estate Services**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Patrick Candler  
Group Manager, Country Parks and Green Estate Services  
T: 01623 821329  
E: [patrick.candler@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:patrick.candler@nottsc.gov.uk)

### **Constitutional Comments (KK 11/06/12)**

20. The proposals in this report are within the remit of this Committee.

### **Financial Comments (NDR 11/06/12)**

21. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 15 to 17 of the report.

### **Background Papers**

Report to Cabinet on 14 September 2011

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

C0017

## APPENDIX 1

### VISION FOR A NEW SHERWOOD FOREST VISITOR CENTRE

1. The vision for a new visitor centre/attraction is:

*To create a new visitor attraction which promotes and enhances the national and international reputation of Sherwood Forest, the legend of Robin Hood and the broader history and heritage of Nottinghamshire.*

2. Business Objectives:

- Create a new, exciting, innovative, all weather, all year round visitor and tourist attraction
- Increase visitor numbers
- Have a minimum life span of 25 years
- Have a landscape plan that is compatible with any building design
- Permit free access to the National Nature Reserve (NNR) through a safe road crossing
- Manage visitor impact on the habitat of the NNR
- Provide visitor information on the NNR, Sherwood Forest and Nottinghamshire
- Provide educational and learning facilities
- Provide car parking facilities and/or park and ride operation
- Ensure the site infrastructure can support increased visitor numbers
- Ensure that environmental and sustainable good practice is followed during the design, development and operation of the centre
- Secure the involvement of partner agencies and organisations
- Provision of facilities for NNR ranger and site management personnel and their equipment including communication facilities
- Reinvest a proportion of income to support NNR management.
- Reduce the level of capital commitment required from the County Council