

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE

CRESWELL HERITAGE TRUST – PARTNERSHIP AWARD FOR 2013/14

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval for continued partnership funding of £50,000 to the Creswell Heritage Trust in support of the operation and running costs of the on-site museum and education centre at Creswell Crags and outreach programme for 2013/14.

Information and Advice

2. The Creswell Heritage Trust is the body responsible for the operational management of facilities at Creswell Crags. The Crags sit on the border of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and are recognised as one of Britain's most important cultural, archaeological and scientific sites. The Crags represent the most northerly place on earth to be visited by humans during the ice age, providing a unique opportunity to share an incredible story of life, both then and now. In 2003, international archaeologists discovered Britain's only rock art in Church Hole Cave in Nottinghamshire which is part of the spectacular gorge setting. In June 2009, the site opened its new museum, funded largely by the Heritage Lottery Fund, East Midlands Development Agency and the European Union.
3. There is a long history of support to the Heritage Trust which is matched by Derbyshire County Council. Both Councils have jointly funded the operational costs of the facilities since the formation of the Trust in 1991 and are joint guarantors on the lease with the landowner, Welbeck Estates. In addition, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire County Councils provide the Trust with officer support especially in legal services, HR, and conservation as well as during the development of the new centre and previous capital projects. As well as the "on site" programme and visitor experience, the Trust provides a range of outreach programmes to schools and community groups across the County.
4. Though the Heritage Trust has had a successful year to date, there have been challenges to both visitor numbers and income generation. The Trust has staged a number of events which have helped to promote better its work, but with poor weather and difficult economic circumstances, these have not been as well attended as anticipated.
5. A fuller report on the performance of the Trust is scheduled to be presented to the Culture Committee in May.

6. During 2012/13, the Trust has been included on the new UK Tentative List of future World Heritage nominations to UNESCO (United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture). There is a challenging process of technical evaluation to be undertaken before a nomination can be confirmed by Government. If successful, this would be the first World Heritage Site in Nottinghamshire.
7. The Trust agreed to undertake the technical evaluation in order that it can be considered for nomination and plans are presently being developed to achieve this objective, though this will not be realised for some considerable time.

Other Options Considered

8. The option of not continuing to fund the Trust has been considered. However, this has not been taken further in view of both Local Authorities acting as lease guarantors and in the event of the Trust ceasing operation, responsibility for managing Creswell Craggs would rest with the Councils. Also reducing the level of support would be likely to have a very damaging impact on the Trust's ability to manage the site. The ambition to seek World Heritage status may have additional revenue implications which will need to be examined in the future.

Reasons for Recommendation

9. The partnership contribution is part of the core funding of the project, without which it would not operate. The continuation of County Council financial assistance to the Creswell Heritage Trust is subject to a similar contribution from Derbyshire County Council.

Statutory and Policy Implications

10. 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

11. Creswell Craggs is an important part of the wider culture and heritage of Nottinghamshire and the County Council partnership funding helps ensure that it can continue to operate for the benefit of its visitors. In particular, the Trust organises a broad educational programme, in which schools are invited to participate.

Financial Implications

12. The projected year end budget outturn for the Trust is a deficit of £23,000, which reflects a reduction in visitor income, a fact that is mirrored across outdoor visitor attractions up and down the country. There is a risk that without additional resources, the Creswell Heritage Trust would not be able to operate and manage the site to the standard expected of a potential World Heritage Site.

13. To help mitigate this risk, it is proposed to make an award of £50,000 to the Creswell Heritage Trust for 2013/14, which is an increase from the previous grant of £38,000. One reason for this increase is that the level of award has not changed for at least six years, though the Trust's costs have risen during this period largely in response to it now having to manage a larger attraction. The funding is contained within the base budget for the Country Parks service for 2013/14.
14. Assuming Derbyshire County Council make a similar increase on the basis of matched funding, then the projected deficit can be resolved.

Equalities Implications

15. The new visitor centre has full disabled access.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

16. Creswell Crags has a significant implication for our environmental history, heritage and culture where the partnership funding makes a critical contribution.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Culture Committee:

- 1) confirms partnership funding of £50,000 to Creswell Heritage Trust to support its operating costs for the financial year 2013/14, subject to a similar level of award being made by Derbyshire County Council.
- 2) receives a full annual report and accounts for the financial year 2012/13 at its meeting in May 2013.

Derek Higton
Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Patrick Candler
Group Manager, Country Parks and Green Estate
T: 01623 821329
E: Patrick.candler@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (NAB 17/01/13)

17. Culture Committee has authority to approve the recommendations set out in this report by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (KLA 17/01/13)

18. The financial implications are contained in paragraphs 12 to 14 of the report.

Background Papers

Operating accounts for the Creswell Craggs Heritage Trust.
Creswell Craggs Heritage Trust Business Plan and current marketing information
Creswell Craggs Annual Report 2011/12

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.

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