

**REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL****LAXTON VILLAGE ESTATE - DISPOSAL BY THE CROWN ESTATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. The Crown Estate are marketing the disposal of the historic Laxton Village, Nottinghamshire, which has the last remaining open field systems operating in the UK. Approval is sought to explore options for how the historic village could be brought into an ownership which would protect this historic Nottinghamshire asset and ensure appropriate long term stewardship and management of the farms, open field system and other heritage assets in the village.

**Information**

2. Laxton Village is situated in Newark and Sherwood between the A1 and Ollerton. Laxton Village is famous for its three field farming system which survived the Enclosures Act of 1845 and is still operated today. The Laxton Estate is owned by the Crown Estate and comprises 1,900 acres of agricultural land, 10 residential properties, 17 farms, a public house, visitor centre and museum buildings. Agricultural land and associated farm houses are leased to 14 tenant farmers. There are also 4 smallholdings in the village with strips associated. The boundaries of the strips, roadways and the common land in the fields is maintained through the ancient manorial court, known as the Court Leet.
3. The Crown Estate have managed the Laxton Estate since 1981 and have indicated that they wish to consider disposing of the estate which they inherited from the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry Fisheries and Food with a Parliamentary undertaking to conserve the asset. The Crown Estate are therefore seeking expressions of interest in December 2018 with a view to inviting competitive bids into the new year.
4. In response to the disposal Nottingham Trent University have indicated that they have an interest in exploring education functions on the Estate and building upon the development of the nearby Brackenhurst Campus. Discussions between the County and Nottingham Trent and other key stakeholders, including the tenants of the Estate have revealed there is an opportunity to work in partnership to find a solution to protecting and enhancing the Laxton Estate. At this stage due diligence and valuations will have to be undertaken and options explored for the legal composition of any partnership solution. At this stage there are no budgetary implications.
5. It is proposed that an Expression of Interest is therefore submitted to the Crown Estate by NCC in partnership with Nottingham Trent University. In the event that the Crown Estate encourage the partnership to proceed with a detailed bid a further report and business case will be reported to Policy Committee for approval. Even if the County's Expression of Interest is encouraged it would be non binding and a further approval would be sought before any financial bid was submitted.

**Other Options Considered**

6. A do nothing option could result in the Laxton Estate be sold to a commercial interest solely focused on maximising financial returns with no commitment to the conservation and good stewardship of the estate. This may have a significant negative impact upon one of the County's most important heritage and historic assets.
7. In the event that the County Council did not proceed with a bid for the Laxton Estate it may in any event offer its support from existing services e.g. Tourism, Conservation and Green Estate to any prospective new owner to ensure that the Estate is well managed and promotes the tourism offer for Nottinghamshire.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

8. To express an interest to the Crown Estate that Nottinghamshire County Council, in partnership with Nottingham Trent University, are committed to ensuring that the Laxton Estate is protected and a good stewardship solution is arrived at for the future ownership of the Laxton Estate.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

9. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

10. There are no financial implications.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1) That Committee approves the submission of an Expression of Interest, jointly with Nottingham Trent University, for the potential acquisition of the Laxton Estate.

### **Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts**

#### **Leader of the County Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** David Hughes, Service Director, Investment & Growth, Tel: 0115 977 0115 9773825

### **Constitutional Comments [SSR 26/11/2018]**

11. The recommendation set out in the report falls within the scope of decisions that may be approved by Policy Committee.

### **Financial Comments [JPEG 26/11/2018]**

12. The financial implications will be determined by the content of any subsequent business case reported to Policy Committee.

**Background Papers**

None.

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

- Ollerton