



meeting **CABINET**

date **18 APRIL 2007**

agenda item number

## JOINT REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE & REGENERATION AND CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND PROPERTY

### **LATEST ESTIMATED COST: RUFFORD ABBEY COUNTRY PARK, NEWARK**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to note the latest estimated cost for the above project.

#### **Information and advice**

##### **Project details**

2. The project comprises four different construction/renovation projects within Rufford Abbey Country Park as detailed. These works are being part financed by a European grant.
3. Rufford MILL WORKS - The proposed works consist of the renovation of the vacant first floor of the Victorian Saw Mill building to create a wedding and conference facility, with the addition of a bar area. An unused room on the ground floor will be converted to a café.
4. The MILL project includes associated site works, services and landscaping works. At the time of drafting this report a planning application for the works has been approved. Listed Building Control have raised a number of issues which are still to be resolved and any potential changes required to achieve listed building consent may have an effect on the timing and cost of the project.
5. WESTERN GATES AND GARDEN URNS - The proposed works consist of the repair, restoration and conservation of the park's Western Gates, Screen, Bollards and 8 ornamental Garden Urns. Work will include the cleaning and repair of stonemasonry, stone sculptures and ironwork. Western Gates front the A614 and date from the Victorian era.
6. PLAY VILLAGE AND CHILDREN'S GARDEN – The proposed works consist of creating a new Children's Play Village in the arboretum area of Rufford Abbey Country Park. This new visitor facility will replicate a Saxon Village with a central hut feature and underground tunnels linking various areas of

play. The Children's Garden will be based in the Formal Garden area of the Abbey grounds and will create a fun learning experience, involving a Snail Maze, a striking contemporary sculpture and various items of play equipment and sculptures.

7. The MILL works element of the proposed scheme will be built using the framework set up with three contractors for major projects which became operational in July 2006. This procurement route was reported to Cabinet in September 2005 (resolution 2005/148). Under this framework the Resources Department technical staff will undertake detail design work and the construction will be carried out by one of the three successful contractors on a target cost basis. The Quantity Surveyor controls costs by arriving at a target cost. The cost or benefits of any variation are shared between the County Council and the provider.
8. This procurement route follows the principles established by Sir John Egan in his report "Rethinking Construction" which has been heavily endorsed by Central Government as the way forward for construction.
9. Due to the specialised nature of the Play Village and Children's Garden these works will be subject to competitive tender and undertaken independently of the other works.
10. It is anticipated that the Rufford Mill building works will start on site in May 2007 and be completed in October 2007. The Children's Garden & Play Village construction will start on site in June 2007 and complete in September 2007. The Western Gates and Urns will start on site in July 2007 and complete in November 2007.
11. The latest estimated cost of the building works is set out in the exempt appendix and the fees shown are for all professions involved in the project.
12. The professions involved in this project are:-
  - Architect
  - Landscape Architect
  - Conservation Specialist
  - Mechanical Engineer
  - Electrical Engineer
  - Quantity Surveyor
  - CDM Co-ordinator
  - Structural Engineer
  - Project Manager

#### **Anticipated cash flow**

13. The phasing of the project is anticipated to extend to the 2008/09 financial year and details are set out in the exempt appendix.
14. The budget for this project was approved by the County Council on 22 February 2007 as part of the County Council Capital Programme. Provision

exists in the Culture and Regeneration Capital Programme to support the costs identified in the exempt appendix.

### **Revenue budget implications**

15. Any additional premises cost arising from these proposals will be met from the Rufford Abbey Country Park revenue budget.

### **Statutory and Policy implications**

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material, they have been described in the text of the report. Members' attention is however drawn to the following:

### **Financial implications**

17. These are set out in the report and in the exempt appendix.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications**

18. In accordance with the County Council policy, the design of the Mill conversion and the garden projects incorporates access and facilities for people with disabilities.

### **Implications for Service Users**

19. The proposed programme of improvements at Rufford Abbey Country Park is designed to increase the range and quality of visitor facilities at this popular County Council amenity, which receives some 500,000 visits annually. The garden projects will particularly benefit families with children, whilst the Mill conversion will open up a previously unused and unseen area of the historic building for public use. The Mill facilities will provides extra undercover space to stage park events, and a venue for conferences, training events and civil wedding celebrations.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

20. The majority of the works are internal in a secure building with an existing intruder alarm. The Gardens and Western Gates will be managed from self contained secure sites.

### **Human Rights Act Implications**

21. None

### **Corporate Property Implications**

22. The renovation at Rufford Mill will add value to a Corporate asset. The Western Gates, a historic garden feature, are currently on the English Heritage 'At Risk' register. The proposed work will remove them from 'at risk' state.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

23. It is recommended that this latest estimated cost report for the building works at Rufford Country Park as set out in the report and exempt appendix be noted.

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

24. The proposed works, which are being part funded by a European grant secured by the Country Park, will increase the range and quality of visitor facilities at this County Council owned leisure attraction. Work to the Western Gates and Rufford Mill will conserve and renovate two significant historic features of the park. The creation of a new function room from an unused first floor of Rufford Saw Mill will make productive use of what was previously a redundant space, and provide an additional income stream for the park.

### **Other Options Considered**

25. The 'at risk' status of the historic Western Gates means that doing nothing is not an acceptable option. The existing Children's play area at the park is dated and inappropriately located close to the busy Abbey car park. Visitor surveys show a demand by the public for upgraded facilities. Failure to proceed with these improvements would mean the loss of £370,070 of external funding for the park.

## **COUNCILLOR STEVE CARROLL**

Cabinet Member for Culture & Regeneration

## **COUNCILLOR CHRIS BARON**

Cabinet Member for Finance and Property

### **Legal Services' Comments (PW/4.4.07)**

26. This report is for noting only.

### **Strategic Director of Resources financial comments (RK/23.3.07)**

27. The financial implications are set out in the report and the exempt appendix.

### **Background Papers Available for inspection**

Nil.

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

Rufford      Cllr Andy Freeman

Lec 15884 Rufford Country Park