

REPORT OF THE GROUP MANAGER, COUNTRY PARKS

ESTABLISHMENT OF A FIXED TERM HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER POST AT BESTWOOD COUNTRY PARK, WITH HERITAGE LOTTERY FUNDING

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to establish a fixed term (2 year) full time post of Heritage Development Officer, attached to Bestwood Winding Engine House, within Bestwood Country Park, to be funded by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Information and Advice

2. Bestwood Winding Engine House and Dynamo House are the last remaining parts of former Bestwood Colliery. The Engine House and its Victorian engine are County Council owned, and constitute a Scheduled Ancient Monument of national significance for industrial archaeology.
3. The buildings were completely renovated and opened to the public with the assistance of a £1.2m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and opened to the public in 2010. They are currently shown to the public on a limited opening hours basis by a small but dedicated group of community volunteers, who also maintain and run the 1876 Winding Engine.
4. The Heritage Lottery Auditor and Case Officer recently received the final report on the project from the Country Parks Service. Whilst much has been achieved since the building was opened in 2010 (including a national quality award for Visitor Welcome), Heritage Lottery wish to see increased outputs, including increased public opening hours and higher visitor numbers, but also greater community engagement with the project and production of a set of site specific learning resources.
5. To assist us to deliver these outputs, they have offered to release up to £65,000 over a two year period to create a post of Heritage Development Officer, tasked to:
 - i. Recruit more volunteers with a long term aim of increasing community capacity to open the building to the public
 - ii. Train more volunteers to carry out essential maintenance of the historic engine.
 - iii. Enable increased opening hours
 - iv. Develop a programme of community engagement including more public events at Dynamo House

- v. Develop a set of learning resources for groups, families and self led school parties.
- 6. As part of its contribution to this scheme, rather than commit to a 10% match funding normally required in order to release HLF funding, the Country Parks would host the post within its structure and cover the costs of any redundancy payable after the two year fixed term ends. Severance costs will vary according to the age and length of service of the appointee, and may not be apply at all. It is estimated that the probable cost will be around £2,000, which is less than the match funding which would normally be expected for a project of this type.
- 7. Heritage Lottery are very specific in their aims. They require the post to focus on the history and heritage of the site and if they are unsatisfied with outputs produced by funded projects, by the terms of our agreement with them, they reserve the right to request repayment of grant.

Other Options Considered

- 8. The existing community volunteer group have already been approached as to whether they could recruit more volunteers, increase capacity and increase their availability to open the building more days per week. They are a small group and do not feel this is possible. They already commit an impressive amount of time to maintaining and running the Winding Engine, and it would seem unreasonable to pressure them to do more. Their main focus is and always has been the mechanical preservation of the winding engine.
- 9. Some increased outputs could be generated by use of the Community Liaison Officer working within the Country Parks Service. However, as this officer works over four large parks, (and increasingly the 90 green space sites managed by the Authority), it is unrealistic to expect enough hours to be available to make a real impact. The Community Liaison Officer within the Country Parks service would also not have the specialist skill set required, specifically in history and industrial archaeology.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

- 10. This is an excellent opportunity to develop a scheme that was part of the original application but for various reasons could not be then implemented. The terms of the grant agreement with Heritage Lottery encourage us to work in partnership to achieve agreed outputs. Co-operation in this is likely to positively influence any future HLF funding applications by the Authority. Increased community engagement, learning and conservation are desirable aims which the two partner organisations share.
- 11. The Country Parks Service has the line management and teams in place to effectively support and supervise a new dedicated post, but not to fully fund it.
- 12. The offer of up to £65,000 external funding is dependent on Committee approval for the post to be created.

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 new post will enhance the experience of Bestwood Country Park users and (it is hoped) will attract new users to the park. A main aim is for the post to foster greater community engagement and learning opportunities.

Financial Implications

15. The post will be funded by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (subject to their final approval). Office accommodation is available at the County Council owned Dynamo House within Bestwood Country Park, and must be located there in order to facilitate community engagement.
16. The HLF grant will include a budget for events, volunteer training, the learning resources to be produced, and other essential items to enable the officer to deliver the required outputs.
17. The County Council Country Parks Service will line manage the post, and cover office sundries and other minor day to day expenses.
18. The post has yet to be submitted to the Job Evaluation Team to be graded. Based on similar types of post it is likely to be Grade 5.

Equalities Implications

19. As public bodies, The Heritage Lottery Fund and Nottinghamshire County Council both follow Equal Opportunity policies.

Human Resources Implications

20. Though the majority of salary and employer's on-costs are covered by the Heritage Lottery grant, the possible redundancy costs at the end of the two year fixed term post would need to be covered (should any arise) from the Departmental redundancy budget.
21. The post will be subject to the County Council's standing policies on redeployment. The fact that the Job Description will require some specialist skills in heritage and history means that it may not provide a match to County Council at risk staff in the redeployment pool and will thus need to go to external advertisement. The Heritage Lottery grant applied for thus includes an amount for advertising and recruitment.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That:

- 1) the creation of a two year post to be hosted by the County Parks and Green Estate Service and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, be approved
- 2) the Children, Families and Cultural Service Department will fund any redundancy payable after the two year fixed term ends, as part of its match funding contribution towards the grant, be noted.

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Constitutional Comments (KK 18/09/12)

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

Financial Comments (NDR 18/09/12)

23. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 15 to 18 of the report.

Background Papers

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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