

# **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board**

15<sup>th</sup> June 2017

### **Joint Report of the Head of Streetcare, M. Roberts and Head of Property & Regeneration, S. Brennan**

#### **Matter for Decision**

**Wards Affected:** Neath North

#### **Gnoll Park Visitors Centre Canopy and Solar Energy Scheme**

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 To seek approval to accept a single tender for the implementation of a café canopy and solar energy scheme at Gnoll Country Park Visitors' Centre.

#### **Executive Summary**

2. Over the last few years the Council has been undertaking measures at the Gnoll Country Park to reduce the level of subsidy required to run the park. Substantial progress has been made however a further reduction is required as part of the current Forward Financial Plan. As part of 'one-off' monies allocated to Streetcare under the Council's approved budget, funding has been earmarked for a solar power generation scheme at the Gnoll to reduce, as far as possible, the cost of electricity to the centre. Consequently, discussions have been held with an experienced supplier of relevant services and this report seeks to accept the resultant tender.

#### **Background**

- 3 Whilst substantial progress has been made in reducing costs at the park over the last few years, the Council's Forward Financial Plan requires a further move towards a 'break-even' financially autonomous position.
- 4 The council approved budget for 2017/18 includes 'one-off' monies for Streetcare of which £75k has been allocated for a solar photovoltaic power generation scheme at the Gnoll. The aim of the

scheme is to generate income, as far as practicable, in line with annual electricity expenditure.

- 5 In the context of a lack of previous direct experience with procuring solar generation schemes, Officers have consulted with an experienced specialist service provider that has been used by other public bodies to identify a scheme that maximises income for the available budget and which keeps the proposal within the Council's permitted development rights thereby avoiding the expense of planning permission. As a result, a scheme has been developed and an associated tender submitted by the specialist contractor.
- 6 The company consulted are GB-Sol Ltd who specialise in renewable energy works and have a track record of delivery. GB-Sol are specialist renewable design and technical innovators providing full turnkey solar solutions, they also manufacture PV systems including all sizes and shapes of special solar panels and associated structural elements. They manufacture their panel systems in Wales at Treforest Industrial Estate, with the company producing products in Wales for the last 20 years.

GB-Sol have collaborated on notable schemes with numerous public sector organisations within Wales, including:

- Solcer House (National low carbon exemplar housing project)
  - Cadwyn Housing
  - RCTCBC
  - Warm Wales
  - Cardiff University
  - Wrexham Glyndwr University – Landmark Innovation and technical centre, bespoke installation futuristic curved canopy running the full length of the building
  - Welsh Government through the Arbed scheme
  - Wales and West Housing
- 7 Consultation has been carried out with Western Power Distribution regarding a connection to the grid for a solar energy scheme. They have conducted a study and advised that a maximum of 22KW of generation could be connected to the local low voltage distribution network without the need for enhancement to their system. It would not be an economic proposition to include for 'reinforcement' of the distribution system infrastructure to facilitate a larger power generation scheme.

- 8 The proposed scheme includes an alfresco style extension to the café with a new south facing roof canopy to the pond side of the visitors' centre. The canopy will provide a much needed sheltered seating and dining extension to the café which currently has insufficient seating during busy periods thus facilitating additional café sales. It will also provide the mounting for the solar panels. The scheme, including triangular end panels to cover the surface area of the canopy, will develop 21.85kW of peak electricity.
- 9 The following table summarises technical and financial details of the proposed PV scheme:

Estimated annual electricity generation from the PV array	21,850kWh/annum
Annual generation cost	£3,853/year
Simple payback (relates to the PV installation exclusive of the canopy)	10 years

- 10 It is also envisaged this will be the first of a number of 'green technology' initiatives at Gnoll Park going forward to develop the visitors' centre and park generally as an environmental exemplar destination consequentially increasing income to the park and will also assist in the park maintaining its Green Flag status.
11. If approved, it is anticipated that work on site would start in late summer.

### **Financial Impact**

- 12 The tendered cost for the provision of the scheme is £69,956.70, which is within the earmarked 'one-off' monies allocated to Streetcare within the Council's adopted budget for 2017/18. In addition to the cost benefit of the solar PV array as above, additional revenue should be generated as a consequence of the extra covered seating capacity provided by the canopy.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 13 A Screening Assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. After completing the assessment it has been determined that this proposal does not require an Equalities Impact Assessment

## **Workforce Impact**

- 14 In the context of the ongoing financial austerity, measures which help to reduce the running costs of the park help to secure the employment of the people who work there going forward.

## **Legal Impact**

- 15 There are no legal impacts associated with this report

## **Risk Management**

- 16 There are no risk management issues associated with this report.

## **Sustainability Appraisal**

- 17 This proposal has a positive impact in relation to Sustainable Development and will move the visitors centre towards a position of self-sufficiency with respect to electricity usage, as well help reduce the operational costs of the centre and thereby helping to protect its future.
- 18 The PV installation will have multifaceted sustainable benefits which consist of:
- Improved energy performance of the visitor centre
  - Reduced carbon footprint of the Park
  - Demonstration of renewable technology to visitors of the Park
  - Assisting the Council to deliver the aims and objectives within the Future Generations Act.
  - Assisting to maintain Gnoll Park's Green Flag status.

The project will improve the Country Park's carbon performance significantly, generating onsite renewable electricity, reducing the dependency of imported electricity and assisting the Country Park to become an exemplar for environmental and sustainable awareness.

## **Consultation**

- 19 There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item

## **Recommendation(s)**

- 20 It is recommended that further to Contract Standing Orders 2.1 (5) Members approve acceptance of a single tender from GB-Sol Ltd for a 21.85KW solar generation scheme at a cost of £69,956.70.

## **Reason for Proposed Decision(s)**

- 21 The decision will enable an alfresco café extension and solar energy scheme to be implemented at the Gnoll. A single tender is proposed in this instance as a large part of the scheme is of a specialist nature of which the Council currently has limited experience. This makes it difficult to adequately specify with certainty the associated technical requirements which can be overcome by negotiating and directly contracting with an experienced solar energy contractor. The experience gained will inform the Council's procurement of future schemes.

## **Implementation of Decision**

- 22 The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

## **Appendices**

- 23 None

## **List of Background Papers**

- 24 None

## **Officer Contact**

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