



NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet Board

11 November 2020

Report of the Head of Property & Regeneration - S.Brennan

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: Cymmer

Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre - Valleys Regional Park Gateway Project

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Members' approval to accept (subject to receipt of the formal offer letter) funding amounting to £250,000 from the Welsh Government's Valleys Regional Park initiative to deliver the Afan Forest Park Gateway Project.

2. To seek approval to carry out urgent procurement exercises to deliver the project and utilise the available funding by June 2021.

Executive Summary

3. Member approval is sought to accept an offer of funding of £250,000 and procure and deliver the Afan Forest Park Valleys Regional Park Gateway Project by June 2021.

4. The purpose of the project is to diversify the overall offer at Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre, supporting its growth as a hub for the Valley, and wider Valleys Regional Park, whilst encouraging additional visits by family groups.

5. The project will include:
 - Refurbishment of on-site public toilet and shower facilities
 - Creation of an accessible children's play area
 - Improved car parking capacity and installation of 2/3 motor home hook up points
 - Improved visitor information within the visitor centre.
6. This report outlines the proposed procurement methods which will enable project delivery by June 2021 for approval by Members.

Background

7. In October 2020, officers were invited to submit an application to Welsh Government's Valleys Regional Park initiative with a view to establishing Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre as a Valleys Gateway Site.
8. An application was submitted and approval granted (subject to offer letter) to deliver the following enhancements. Please also refer to *Appendix 2: Project Site Plan*.

9. **Refurbishment of Toilet and Shower Facilities**

The existing toilet and shower facilities located in the visitor centre car park are tired and outdated. These facilities support outdoor recreation, offering a place to clean off after a muddy bike ride or visit and support overnight stays at the informal on-site campsite. The refurbishment of the toilet and shower facilities would enhance the overall quality of the visitor experience and offer opportunities to run these more efficiently (both in terms of cost and energy consumption).

10. **Children's Play Area**

There is currently no onsite play provision to support visits to the centre and its surrounding landscape by family visitors.

Afan Forest Park Stakeholders have, for some time, requested the installation of play equipment at the Visitor Centre in order to increase dwell time and visitor spending within the centre itself whilst supporting the diversification of visitor markets to include more family visitors. It is therefore proposed that an accessible natural play area is installed opposite at the entrance to the visitor centre within sight of the café facility.

11. Improved car parking capacity

The car park currently offers approximately 45 car parking spaces (including disabled spaces) we would proposed to increase capacity to offer an additional 8-10 spaces.

The car park is very busy in peak periods and increasing formal car parking spaces within currently unused land to the rear of the car park would allow us to increase capacity.

12. Motor Home Hook Up Points

The provision of 2-3 electric hook up points for motorhomes within the car park itself will allow us to expand the overnight accommodation provision onsite, expanding the existing overnight camping provision and taking advantage of recent trends in increases on motorhome ownership as a result of Covid-19.

13. Low Key Lighting

There is currently no lighting provision within the car park which makes it harder to extend dwell times during the autumn and winter months. The provision of low key lighting would also open up the visitor centre as a more viable venue for evening use.

14. Improved Visitor Information

NPTCBC and Natural Resources Wales undertook a joint project two years ago to harmonise existing on-site orientation signage directing visitors to the various mountain biking, walking and cycling trails which lead from the centre. Whilst this project has had a positive impact on the overall sense of welcome and made it easier for visitors to get to where they want to be, there is currently no provision within the centre itself offering information on the range of trails or its surrounding landscape.

It is anticipated that providing a digital map of the mountain biking, cycling and walking trails within the centre alongside details of trail diversions and closures will encourage more visitors into the centre itself whilst also increasing dwell time.

This information will also assist in replacing the face to face information provision which has been lost since NPTCBC staff no longer man the centre. Alongside this, interpretation relating to the wider Valleys Regional Park area and other Gateway Sites will encourage visitors to explore the wider area by taking part in outdoor recreation.

Project Funding

15. NPTCBC is due to receive an offer of funding from Welsh Government's Valleys Regional Park initiative amounting to £250,000.
16. NPTCBC match funding against this project amounts to £60,000. This funding is already approved and allocated within the Capital Programme for the purpose of enhancing family friendly infrastructure within Afan Forest Park.

Procurement

17. The following procurement exercises are proposed to deliver this project:
 - 17.1 Sourcing of suitable contractors to carry out the renovations to the toilet and shower building in addition to car park improvements via Lot 1b of the South West Wales Regional Contractors Framework 2020.
 - 17.2 Sourcing of a suitable contractor to deliver a digital information point in compliance with NPTCBC Contract Procedure Rules.
 - 17.3 Sourcing of a suitable contractor to deliver the playground element in compliance with NPTCBC Contract Procedure Rules.
18. In reference to point 17.3 above where the contract value is between £25,000 and £75,000, the Council is able to make a direct award provided best value is obtained. Here a suitable Neath Port Talbot based contractor (The Natural Play Company) has been identified and costs for this element of the project are anticipated to amount to between £60,000 and £65,000.
19. The conditions of the grant offer require that all the funding is to be spent by June 2021, as such there is not enough time available to prepare contract documents, seek tenders and complete contracts for the playground works. Discussions have been undertaken previously with the proposed supplier through the construction of the

the Adventure Golf facility at Aberavon Seafront, officers are therefore confident in the proposed supplier's work practices and procedures and that the Council will receive an excellent value for money proposal which meets the quality standards we expect in terms of the equipment and workmanship to be provided.

Financial Impacts

20 The Council is due to receive an offer of funding amounting to £250,000 against the total project cost of £310,000. NPTCBC's match funding of £60,000 is already allocated and approved within the Council's Capital Programme.

Integrated Impact Assessment

21 A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required.

Valleys Communities Impacts

22 There is a positive impact on the communities of the Afan Valley as this investment will encourage more visitors, and visitor spending, to these areas.

Workforce Impacts

23 None.

Legal Impacts

24 None

Risk Management Impacts

25 None.

Consultation

26 There is no requirement for external consultation on this matter however the diversification of Afan Forest Park to attract more family

visitors; and the installation of a children's play area, is a matter of regular discussion within the Afan Forest Park Destination Management Stakeholder Group who are keen to see facilities enhanced for this purpose.

Recommendations

- 27 That Members note the purpose of the project and approve all elements for delivery.
- 28 That Members delegate authority to the Head of Property and Regeneration to sign the Welsh Government grant offer once received (subject to its terms).
- 29 That Members agree the proposed procurement methods to deliver the scheme to time and budget, in particular in relation to the proposed methodology to appoint a suitable playground manufacturer.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

- 30 The proposed recommendations will allow the enhancement of facilities within Afan Forest Park Visitor Centre to attract a more diverse range of visitors. The procurement methodology proposed will facilitate the delivery of the project to time and budget.

Implementation of Decision

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

Appendices

- 32 Appendix 1 - First Stage Integrated Impact Assessment.
- 33 Appendix 2 – Project Site Plan

List of Background Papers

Officer Contact

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