



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

Wednesday 2nd June 2021

**Joint report of Simon Brennan Head of Property & Regeneration and
Andrew Thomas Director of Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning**

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All

Cefn Coed Museum Update

Purpose of the Report

1. To update members on the proposed scheme of works at the Cefn Coed museum site.
2. To provide members with an update on the emerging Health & Safety issues on site.
3. To provide information on the Cefn Coed Working Group that will be set up to help shape future plans for the site.

Executive Summary

4. The report provides an update for members in respect of the Valleys Regional Park proposal for Cefn Coed and the reasons why it could not be delivered. It further details the current Health and Safety works that would need to be undertaken prior to the facility re-opening. Finally, it sets out the structure to re-visit the original proposed scheme in light of the site investigation work that has been undertaken

Background

5. The Council leases from Welsh Government 1.6 acres or thereabouts of land and buildings comprising the Grade II Listed Cefn Coed

Colliery Museum as approximately shown hatched black on the attached copy plan (Appendix 1) for a term of 99 years from July 1978 at a nominal annual rent of £10.00 for use as an industrial museum and exhibition centre held under operational control of Education Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate.

6. As noted above, the Council's lease expires in 2077. Under the terms of the lease, the Council is responsible for all repair and maintenance issues. Previous legal advice advised that, should it elect to do so, the Council could serve 12 months' notice to vacate the site but may be required to undertake works to the buildings and the leased site prior to handing the site back to Welsh Government as freeholders. This would inevitably be a negotiated position as Welsh Government are seeking to transfer the remainder of the site to the Council rather than take our leasehold interest back.
7. As Members may be aware, Welsh Government is currently in the process of restoring the 'Headgear' on their adjacent land at a cost of circa £1.8m.
8. Discussions on the future of the museum have been ongoing for many years. It opens at Easter and then from May to early September each year and receives between 6 – 10,000 visitors a year (prior to the Pandemic). The current operating deficit is circa £60,000 per annum.
9. In May 2019, the Council made a bid for funding to the Welsh Government, as part of the initiative 'Valleys Regional Park Discovery Gateway Capital Grant'. The chosen project was centred on the existing Cefn Coed Colliery Museum site in the Dulais Valley. The objective being to create an iconic attraction which was tailored to delivering against the aspirations for Gateway Sites.
10. The bid submitted was successful, and a grant offer for £1,800,000 from the Welsh Government, was received in August 2019 towards a total project cost of £2,600,400 to fulfil the above objective. As part of the grant offer, the Council would be required to commit £800,400 in match-funding, which was identified within the Regeneration Capital Programme.

The Proposed Works

11. The project sought to deliver an aspirational attraction by immersing visitors in a modern and innovative interpretive experience, which tells the human story against the backdrop of the dramatic valleys landscape and historic winding gear structures. The initial proposals included a purpose built visitor centre and a café offering locally sourced produce. Alongside this, there would be a retail element displaying local arts and crafts. The following elements were to be provided through the project:
 - Landscaping including entry road, car parking, signage from car park to visitor centre and complex
 - Construction of a new purpose built visitor centre and associated facilities including café and general fit out
 - Reconfigure the existing visitor centre on the site into staff and volunteer welfare facilities
 - Heritage interpretation investment and Discovery zone in visitor centre based on an agreed interpretation plan
 - Semi covered outdoor play area
 - Lighting of chimney and headstocks
12. Construction work was due to commence in autumn 2020 following the completion of a due diligence process, design work and statutory processes.
13. The preliminary due diligence and site investigation work were undertaken and additional consultations made. These included consultations with:
 - NPT Planning
 - NPT Highways
 - Ecology
 - CADW
14. As a result it became necessary to revisit the proposal of a new, stand-alone visitor centre, for the following reasons:
 - i. Concern over the cost of the delivery of a purpose built visitor centre within the existing budget for the project.
 - ii. It became clear that there is a need to invest in the existing historic buildings on the site and an opportunity to utilise these buildings to incorporate the visitor centre and associated facilities.
 - iii. Issues with the vision splay to access the proposed new parking area.
 - iv. After preliminary discussions with CADW, they were not supportive of a new timber structure on the site of this nature.

- v. The risks associated with acquiring the whole of the site from Welsh Government and the additional liabilities that the Council would be responsible for. The site for the new visitor centre lies outside the existing lease area for the Council.

Revised proposals

15. In view of the above, it was proposed that the new visitor centre facility be incorporated into the historic engine house on the site as this would accommodate all the facilities of the new build option but would also result in a fully restored historic building offering a unique and authentic context for the new interpretation facilities.
16. This option would also fulfil the overall aim of the project to create an iconic Discovery Gateway site and a central base to explore the western valleys and other nearby valley attractions and activities. All other elements of the project would remain the same as the original approval for Cefn Coed.

Revised Project Delivery Plan

17. The Project Delivery Plan therefore needed to be revised to take account of the revised scheme.
18. As noted above, the Cefn Coed colliery facility is owned by the Welsh Government but with part of the site currently leased to the council. To deliver the scheme, it became clear that Welsh Government wanted to transfer the ownership of the entire site. Obviously, with a complex site like Cefn Coed, comprehensive due diligence was therefore required, to provide greater detail on the responsibilities and potential liabilities that the Council would then be taking on. Not to do so, would clearly place the Council at risk.
19. A wide range of surveys were therefore commissioned to determine what was possible. The surveys included: -
 - i. Structural Survey
 - ii. Architects Report
 - iii. Condition Survey
 - iv. Mechanical & Electrical Survey
 - v. Asbestos Report (further intrusive survey required before any work can commence)
 - vi. Order of Cost Report

20. The commissioning work was hampered by Covid, with staff working from home, being unable to visit site, and for some, being diverted on to other work, for example, the design and delivery of the field hospital at Llandarcy. The surveys were commissioned and were undertaken as soon as the external consultants were allowed to go to site. The draft final surveys have only recently been received.
21. Around September last year, it became apparent that it would not be possible to get all the survey work undertaken and the project designed, procured and delivered by the end of March 2021. Discussions took place with WG to negotiate an extension on the March 2021 deadline but WG were not able to agree to this proposal. As it was estimated that, at least, an additional 12 to 18 months would be required to deliver the revised scheme, it was agreed with WG that they would pay for the surveys that had been commissioned. This would enable the Council to develop proposals for a deliverable scheme when a similar round of funding next becomes available. A provisional sum of £200k was made available by WG for the survey work. The remaining money could not therefore be drawn down.

Emerging Health and Safety Concerns

22. As noted above a range of survey work was undertaken and is currently being assessed. The initial findings from the survey work are;
 - i. The chimney stack has fresh spalling from height. This is a Health & Safety risk, and will require a crash deck tunnel to protect the public or will need to be fully repaired.
 - ii. The underground tunnel outside the class room fire escape door is dangerously unsafe. This section of tunnel needs to be closed off.
 - iii. The longer brick arch tunnel has rotten mock timber props that need removing before the brick arch can be inspected to deem this section of tunnel safe.
 - iv. The boiler house (large asbestos clad shed) has broken asbestos sheeting and the steel columns along the south elevation are all badly corroded at their base with significant loss of section that need repairing. The consultants do not recommend opening this building to the public.
 - v. The pump house with the broken steel truss is not open to the public as it is unsafe.

- vi. The external slab over the tapering basement immediately in front of the engine house has already been temporarily fenced off but the slab that allows access to the main doors has not. The structural survey report recommends that all this slab is closed off due to its condition. Therefore the front access to the engine house doors is out of bounds. It is difficult to prop the slab up as the basement is a confined space with significant levels of asbestos. An engineering solution will need to be agreed but in the interim it is recommended that it be closed off.
 - vii. The steel columns along the south elevation of the electrical house within the split brickwork are all badly corroded and have been recommended for repair. The consultant has suggested this building is also out of bounds to the public given the substantial loss of section to the columns, which is identified in his report.
23. The above issues present a real danger to users of the site and would need to be addressed prior to the site re-opening. In view of the complexity of the site and the need to deal with the various ecology issues and obtain Listed Building consent, these works will not be completed in time to open during the 2021 summer season. A programme and provisional costs are currently being developed by the external consultants that undertook the survey work and will be made available as soon as they are received. Initial indications are that the necessary works will be in excess of £1m.
24. It should be noted, however, that the costs and timings included in this programme will be based on the information available at this stage. As works progress there is a significant risk that further issues will be identified which may increase both the costs and the length of time to deliver the work.

The Future Proposals for the site

24. The initial analysis of the survey work indicates that the various buildings on site and the external areas will require significant investment to take the facility forwards as a Visitor Attraction. The total cost will depend on the scope of the works but will be in excess of the previous grant application and match funding. Early indications are that this could be in excess of £8m. The survey work, as detailed above, that has now been undertaken will inform the discussions on future proposals.

It is intended that the Cefn Coed group be re-established and refocused to provide input in to the future proposals for the site. The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning will chair the group comprising representatives from within the Council and external partner stakeholder organisations to provide a clear way forward for the future of the site.

Financial Impacts

25. As the original scheme is not able to progress the Council cannot draw down the proposed Grant. The match-funding element has been reallocated in accordance with standard procedure and was reported in the Council budget setting process.

Integrated Impact Assessment

26. 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.

The proposal will not have any adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics.

Valleys Communities Impacts

27. As the original Valleys Regional Park Scheme was not deliverable, the report sets out the framework for re-visiting the original proposals to establish a clear way forward for the future operation of the site given its' cultural and historic importance.
28. The facility attracts between 6-10,000 visitors per annum and its closure will therefore potentially have a negative effect on the local economy

Workforce Impacts

29. There is one full time member of staff employed at Cefn Coed museum, who will continue to carryout maintenance checks on site and liaise with the Welsh Government contractors working on restoring the headframes.

Legal Impacts

30. No impacts.

Risk Management Impacts

31. None.

Consultation

32. Consultation on the current issues in respect of Cefn Coed has taken place with the local member.

33. There is no requirement for external consultation at this stage. Consultation with external stakeholders will take place to shape future proposals.

Recommendations

34. It is recommended that Members note;

- i. The current position in respect of the Valleys Regional Park grant bid for Cefn Coed.
- ii. That the museum will need to remain closed until the Health and Safety issues have been satisfactorily resolved.
- iii. That a group of internal and external stakeholders be established under the chairmanship of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning to set out a clear way forward for the future of the site.

Appendices

35. Site plan and the IIA.

List of Background Papers

36. None.

Officer Contact

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