

MILLOM NATURE RESERVE FOOTPATH PROJECT – ACCOUNTABLE BODY REQUEST

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Cath Giel
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WHAT BENEFITS WILL THESE PROPOSALS BRING TO COPELAND RESIDENTS

Millom Nature Reserve/Former Ironworks is the only designated Local Nature Reserve in the Borough. The proposed footpath improvements will provide a new, level circuit within the site which will allow better access for all including disabled people. There are also interpretation and habitat improvements as part of the project which will benefit both wildlife and people – local residents and visitors to the area. The project is led by the local Friends Group in partnership with the Council's open spaces team.

WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE EXECUTIVE?

The Friends Group are bidding to Community Spaces, a national lottery grant initiative, managed by Groundwork UK to deliver improvements to the Millom Ironworks nature reserve. The Council's Open Spaces team are a key partner in the project, the Council owns some of the land and the Friends Group are asking for the Council to take on the Accountable Body role for the project funding if successful.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive are asked:

- a) to approve the request from The Friends Group for Copeland Borough Council to take on the accountable body role for the Changing Spaces grant for the Millom Nature Reserve Footpath project;
- b) to waive any accountable body fee as a contribution in kind to the project;
- c) to note the £900 in kind contribution from the Council through staff time from the open spaces team; and
- d) to grant permission for the land to be improved through this project as part landowner of the site.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The project has successfully moved to stage 2 application to the Community Spaces Lottery Funding managed by Groundwork UK. The

application has received support from both Copeland and Cumbria County Councils as the landowners to develop the project to this application. The application was made in March 2010.

- 1.2 The Friends Group have been very active in volunteer activity in the Millom Ironworks area. As part of the Stage 1 work the Friends Group have voluntarily undertaken wildlife surveys in the reserve and park. This has informed the stage 2 application for funding. Planning permission is in place.
- 1.3 The project arose from the 2006 Management Plan for the site developed with local stakeholders. A full consultation on priorities from this plan led by The Friends Group in 2008/9 scoped this footpath project application.
- 1.4 Natural England has been involved in the development of the project plans. They have issued SSSI consent for the works.

2. ARGUMENT

- 2.1 The project has been developed with full involvement of the local community and key stakeholders to ensure the bid has in kind and additional funding from delivery partners. It focuses on the Ironworks local nature reserve as an important site for both wildlife and people. The project will deliver £43,026 capital works and £7,250 revenue activity. The grant application relates to £45,926 of this with the difference coming from other contributions to the project including proposed in-kind contributions from the Council as regards project management and acting as Accountable Body as set out in the table below at 5.2.
- 2.2 The project has three key elements:
 - Access Improvements – creating a circular footpath route with vehicle access controls.
 - Habitat Improvements – general improvements and specific work to ensure easy access for the toads between breeding and feeding areas.
 - Interpretation – a seasonal interpretation board linked to the local Folk Museum and industrial heritage.
- 2.3 The project is due to start on site in October 2010, complete at the end of the November 2010 with a launch planned for 10 December 2010.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 The bidding group does not have the capacity to act as the accountable body and are looking to the Council experienced in this role and as part landowner of the asset being improved to take on this role.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Executive are recommended to approve taking on the accountable body role for this project in line with our strong partnership working and part landowner status.
- 4.2 The project will improve the nature reserve in line with community priorities.

5. WHAT ARE THE LEGAL, FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS?

- 5.1 The group have applied for a Changing Spaces Grant of £45,926. Volunteers will be involved in delivering complementary improvements including relining the pond.
- 5.2 The project finances are as follows:

<i>Spend Elements</i>	<i>Budget £</i>	<i>Revenue/Capital</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Circular footpath route	31,426	Capital	Changing Spaces
Vehicle barriers	2,600	Capital	Changing Spaces
New scrape for toads and habitat improvements	3,000	Capital	Amphibian and Reptile Trust (1,000) Changing Spaces (2,000)
Seasonal Interpretation Board	5,000	Capital	Changing Spaces
Contingency	1,000	Capital	Changing Spaces
Lead Professional	600	Revenue	Changing Spaces
Project Management	1,000	Revenue	Changing Spaces
Contract Project management	900	In Kind	Copeland Borough Council
Footpath design and specification	2,000	Revenue	Cumbria CC
Researching and preparing text etc for panel	1,200	Revenue	Changing Spaces
Launch event	1,000	Revenue	Changing Spaces
Overall Project Management (Friends Gp)	1,000	Revenue	Changing Spaces

Asset insurance premium (Friends Gp)	100	Revenue	Changing Spaces
Accountable Body fee 1% -	450	In Kind	Copeland B C -

- 5.3 The grant has standard conditions and will be paid in arrears against regular claiming. The Council will have a commitment for a 5 year asset monitoring period of the improvements and will not be entitled to dispose of the asset for that period. The Council declared the land as a nature reserve in June 2002 under the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949. Whilst that declaration is not irrevocable there is unlikely to be any intention to dispose of the land within the five year period so this requirement should not cause a problem.
- 5.4 The grant conditions are substantial and in effect the Council will be acting as guarantor for the satisfactory completion of the project works and could be obliged to repay any grant drawn down if the works are not completed. Members are advised to consider the project as a Council project and put in place satisfactory monitoring arrangements to ensure that the project is delivered. Once delivered the risk of repayment reduces sharply

6. HOW WILL THE PROPOSALS BE PROJECT MANAGED AND HOW ARE THE RISKS GOING TO BE MANAGED?

- 6.1 The site is managed by the Millom Ironworks Management Group. A member of this Group from The Friends Group will be project managing the wider project and grant claims.
- 6.2 An officer from the Council's Open Spaces section will be project managing the contract works as an in kind contribution as a key partner in the project.

7. WHAT MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OR OUTPUTS WILL ARISE FROM THIS REPORT?

- 7.1 The project will deliver:
- Nature and wildlife area improvements;
 - An increase in the appreciation and understanding about the value of public space and general environmental issues;
 - An increase in the protection and enhancement of local landscapes and biodiversity;
 - Improvements in health as a result of increased physical exercise and more accessible spaces that stimulate mental well being;

New and improved links between communities, organisations and local authorities;
18 volunteers engaged in the project;
At least 500 local people to benefit.

List of Appendices: None

List of Background Documents:

Changing Places Bid and associated papers