

SALTOM PIT

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor George Clements, Deputy Leader - Promoting Prosperity
LEAD OFFICER: Steve Smith - Interim Head of Development Directorate
REPORT AUTHOR: Chris Lloyd - Contracts and Property Manager

Summary: This report seeks Members' views on a range of options and proposals for the future of Saltom Pit.

Recommendations:

- A That Members consider agreement to Option 3 (paragraph 3.3 of the report), should satisfactory capital funding be provided, to proceed with works to preserve the Pit remains and develop into a visitor attraction. Should members not agree to Option 3 or satisfactory funding not be available then Option 1 (paragraph 3.1 of the report) to apply.
- B That should Members agree to recommendation A, that the sum of £4,500 is set aside annually from 2009/10 for maintenance for a period of 10 years or as required (funding to be provided through the Public Building Fund Revenue budget).
- C That, should Members agree to recommendations A and B, Members agree to suspension of Contract Standing Orders to enable the appointment of the supervising consultant and works contractor to progress the project within the timescales indicated below.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members have previously approved a project: Haig Colliery Regeneration project which is a large and relatively expensive scheme creating a substantial public recreation and amenity experience.
- 1.2 The capital and revenue costs of the scheme are externally funded with a dowry provided to maintain the project for a minimum of 99 years.

- 1.3 The project extends from Whitehaven town to south of the Haig Pit Mining Museum, spanning between the existing housing and the top of the cliffs. For the purposes of clarification, below the top of the cliffs and the coastline is excluded from the project and not covered by the dowry referred to in paragraph 1.2 above.
- 1.4 At the southernmost point of this area, and on a small plateau close to the base of the cliffs, the remains of the Saltom Pit are located.
- 1.5 Both the Pit remains and the seashore are accessed by a steep pathway. This has traditionally been an important area for informal recreation by the local community and the area is routinely accessed today by members of the public despite the temporary closure of the public right of way and temporary signs warning people not to enter.
- 1.6 The Development Directorate working with our partners, The National Trust and Westlakes Renaissance, has identified the scope of the works required as follows:
- Stabilisation works to the pit buildings to conserve them and to reduce the level of hazard to the public from falling masonry. The works may include measures to prevent the public entering the winding house building;
 - Stabilisation works to the northern end of the sea wall to slow the erosion of the land surrounding the pit buildings and to reduce the hazard to the public from the collapsing sea wall gabions;
 - Access works to the site, along the line of the existing track to enable the above works to be carried out and to provide a more sustainable route for visitors to access the beach and the site of the monument. Works to the access track will be aimed at limiting Health and Safety risks and future maintenance but it is likely that the path will continue to be disrupted by movements in the slope in the future; and
 - Signage and interpretation informing visitors about the heritage of the site and warning them of the hazards that exist.
- 1.7 Detailed specifications and costs for this work have been produced by ENTEC following investigations by structural and civil engineers and site visits by contractors to investigate the feasibility of the works. The capital cost of undertaking the necessary works has been estimated at. £195,000. A grant offer of £80,000 has already been secured from West Lakes Renaissance and an application for the remainder has been made to English Heritage.

- 1.8 ENTEC have estimated the annual costs for surveys and maintenance to the access way to be around £4,500. It is also possible that the National Trust could provide routine wardening and monitoring of the area as part of their management role on the Haig Colliery site.
- 1.9 In undertaking the project, all parties must be mindful that eventually the Saltom Pit buildings will be lost and that in the worst case situation, damage from the sea in the event of an unexpected very severe storm, or from above in the event of some adverse movement (although this is expected to occur progressively), could lead to the project being abandoned in the relatively near future. For this reason, it is important that the grant approvals are satisfactory in that they do not impose any obligation on the Council to maintain the Pit building and/or impose clawback of grants for a failure to maintain. If they do then any decision to proceed will need to be revisited as a decision to proceed may be different if, by accepting the grants, the Council took on an obligation to maintain the Pit building. It is hoped that the terms of the conditions can be clarified prior to the Executive meeting.

2 ARGUMENT

- 2.1 Whilst the pit remains are not included in the main project they do represent a valuable exhibit of our local heritage and taking the opportunity of increased visitor interest the potential to also visit the remains would enhance the visitor experience.
- 2.2 An additional benefit would be the retention of a footpath down to the shore, the nearest options being the South beach (now closed) or further South at Barrowmouth Bay.
- 2.3 The Council could reduce its liability to visitors at Saltom, Haig etc., by dedicating this land as 'open access land'. This does not eliminate liability but can reduce it in certain circumstances particularly natural features. The fact that land is access land will be taken into account in determining liability. Dedication of land as access land would be through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It is recommended that this action be pursued as part of undertaking any scheme for improvements. A detailed report on this aspect will be made to the next Executive meeting where hopefully a formal resolution dedicating the land can be made. Issues being considered are the extent of the dedication (perhaps entire coastal length), the interaction of reduced liability in respect of the public footpath area, the appointment of wardens under the Act, and consultation with the Cumbria County Council, etc.

- 2.4 While the works outlined above would attract additional visitors to an area of coast that has some inherent hazards, it is likely that visitors will continue to access this area whatever preventative measures are put in place and these numbers may increase following the current enhancements works being carried out on the Haig Colliery site. In addition such preventative measures are likely to detract from the scenic qualities of the coast.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 Option 1 – Decide to do nothing or the applications for grant fail - The Council owns the land and remains which are classified as an ancient monument. The Council could allow nature to take its course. In these circumstances continued safety measures will be required, and the public right of way (including access to the beach) could be lost. Some £16,000 has been incurred this year in providing the protective and preventative fencing and signs around the Pit building and along the access-way. Maintaining signage, fencing and any other measures to prevent public access will be costly, given the inevitable vandalism and the need to monitor this. These measures will also detract from the current investment on the Haig Colliery site. Alternatively, the Council could reduce continuing safety costs by demolishing the structure. This would require the consent of the Secretary of State. Whether that would be forthcoming is not known. Even if consent was received the Council would be faced with demolition costs and if members wished for beach access to be preserved continued maintenance costs in respect of the access-way. This option should be considered as last resort. If the grant applications fail then a further report will be made to the Executive considering those options in further detail.
- 3.2 Option 2 – The Council to undertake the works itself – this is entirely feasible but the full cost would have to be met from Council reserves.
- 3.3 Option 3 - Seek to obtain grant support to undertake the works – if successful this would demonstrate the Council's will to preserve the remains and to make use of them to enhance the visitor experience. This approach would completely avoid the capital cost but bring a small annual maintenance requirement which could be argued to be a good investment to provide an improved experience for visitors. The Development Directorate working with our partner The National Trust has submitted a request to English Heritage for capital funding to match the grant offer from West Lakes Renaissance. Should the application be successful and Members wish to take up the offer the Council would be expected to provide estimated the revenue contributions of £4,500 per annum.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Option 3 is recommended as the most comprehensive opportunity to make best use of the valuable heritage of the Saltom Pit remains. This also retains the public right of way to the shore which is used by local residents and visitors.
- 4.2 Members are asked to consider agreement to Option 3 – to seek 100% capital grant.
- 4.3 Should Members support this view there would be a need to undertake the works within this financial year and to this end Members are asked to agree to suspend Contract Standing Orders to appoint the consultant dealing with the main Haig Restoration Project and a works contractor. That consultant has been commissioned by the National Trust to prepare reports into the Saltom Pit structure, is aware of the stability of the surrounding land and, in order to save costs it would seem sensible to utilise that consultant for the advertising/selection/supervision of the works contractor for this new project. Due to the need to undertake the works urgently, preferably prior to the onset of winter conditions Members are asked to delegate appointment of the consultant and selection of a contractor and acceptance of a tender to the Head of Legal Services and Interim Head of Development Directorate. Again, cost will be covered by the grants, if approved.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

- 5.1 Existing staff will be utilised to project manage the scheme. Maintenance funding of £4,500 would be required annually say for a minimum of ten years.

6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 Through current project management guidelines.

7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1 Contributes toward tourism, quality of life.

List of Appendices: None

List of Background Documents:

Application forms to English Heritage.
ERDF Application Forms
Various reports, consultant costings etc.

List of Consultees:

Interim Head of Regeneration – Steve Smith
Cllr Allan Holliday
Cllr George Clements,
Cllr Tim Knowles
Cllr Cath Giel
Planning Policy Manager – John Hughes
Legal Service manager - Clinton Boyce

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed.
This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	Not applicable
Impact on Sustainability	Improving the scope of visitor experience could raise the economic performance of the area
Impact on Rural Proofing	Not applicable
Health and Safety Implications	Not applicable
Project and Risk Management	Not applicable
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	Not applicable
Children and Young Persons Implications	Not applicable
Human Rights Act Implications	Not applicable
Monitoring Officer comments	Legal Services have been consulted and provided their comments have been taken on board in the report, the Monitoring Officer has no further comments to make
S. 151 Officer comments	

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision YES