

CABINET

Lancaster John O'Gaunt Water Centre 07 December 2010

Report of Head of Community Engagement

PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To decide whether to offer Council support to develop a regionally significant centre for rowing, canoeing and kayaking at the current site of the Lancaster John O'Gaunt Rowing Club on the River Lune in Lancaster.			
Key Decision	X	Non-Key Decision	Referral from Cabinet Member
Date Included in Forward Plan	November 2010		
This report is public			

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Cabinet notes the details of the proposal, progress to date and partners involved.
- (2) Cabinet supports the concept of providing a regionally significant centre for rowing, canoeing and kayaking at the current site of the Lancaster John O'Gaunt Rowing Club on the River Lune in Lancaster.
- (3) Cabinet agrees to provide officer support from within the Community Engagement and Regeneration and Policy services as appropriate to assist the development of the water centre.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Lancaster John O'Gaunt Rowing Club, currently based on the River Lune near Skerton Weir, has asked the Council to support it development of a regionally significant centre for rowing, canoeing and kayaking. If successful, the proposed "water centre" could provide a variety of health, well-being, environmental and economic benefits in line with Council corporate priorities. In particular, the project would complement other initiatives in the area, most notably the "Connecting Communities project which has highlighted that many of Skerton's natural assets are underutilised.
- 1.2 Local architects, Mason Gillibrand, have assisted the club to draw up, in outline form, a proposal which would see a new water centre located on the club's existing site just above Skerton Weir. In addition to new rowing,

canoeing and kayaking facilities, the scheme would also include a new hydro turbine facility at the weir itself.

- 1.3 A presentation of the outline scheme has been provided to officers who have subsequently briefed the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Children and Young People and the Economy. The Council has now been asked to support the idea in principle and to provide officer support to further feasibility work to take the proposal forward. This support would be mainly from the Wellbeing arm of the Community Engagement service but would also involve some officer time from the Regeneration and Policy service.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 In summary, the water centre would include a new building consisting of a function room, outdoor viewing terrace, and flexible space for a gym/tuition/meetings and educational class use. Also provided would be changing rooms, and secure boat and equipment storage. All areas would be accessible with a platform lift included.

Sports / Physical Activity

- 2.2 The water centre would have the potential to provide a regionally significant facility for learning, coaching and competitions in many water based sports and activities including:

- i) Canoeing / Kayaking;
- ii) Rowing;
- iii) Small scale sailing;
- iv) Paddle boarding;
- v) Leisure rowing boats;
- vi) Pedalos;
- vii) 'Wild swimming'; and
- viii) Triathlon competitions.

- 2.3 In addition, the building could have flexible use facilities for many other activities such as:

- i) Arts classes;
- ii) Coffee mornings;
- iii) Toddler groups;
- iv) Dance studio / yoga / pilates classes;
- v) Meeting / special event venue; and
- vi) Educational venue for sustainability and the environment.

Partnerships and the Community

- 2.4 The proposed water centre could open up potential partnerships with a large number of local schools, colleges, universities and community groups to offer

facilities for a wide range of water based sports, as well as associated coaching and water safety training. By centralising these facilities, coaches and equipment of the very highest standard can be offered to the widest possible audience. The wider public will have the chance to learn these water based sports for themselves in a safe and stimulating environment.

Education

- 2.5 The proposed hydro turbine will be a unique, publicly accessible, educational tool for the district. The disused sluice gate building, immediately off Halton Road, can be open for educational groups to visit and study. This will increase interest in the River Lune as an integral part of the future of Lancaster.

Energy

- 2.6 The turbine will supply sufficient energy for the building with the surplus exported to the grid. The exported energy will provide an income (via the Government's 'feed in tariffs') and further discussions on this would take place with members and officers of the City Council prior to any agreement.

Precedent Schemes

- 2.7 The scheme being proposed would be one of only a handful currently available in the UK. Currently, the nearest similar facility is the Tees Barrage facility in Stockton on Tees, approx. 95 miles away. Opened in 1995, it comprises a river barrage, road bridge, foot bridge, barge lock, fish pass, white water course and rowing course. It is currently being used as a practice venue for the 2012 Olympic Games. The scheme has been so successful that a second phase is now underway. It includes 3 large Archimedes Screw hydro turbines, helping to pump the water around the courses and when not in use generating electricity to export.

3.0 Details of Consultation

- 3.1 The club have opened discussions with local residents regarding the proposed scheme and they are ongoing. Should Members determine value in proceeding with this scheme, it is envisaged that further consultation would take place with a wide range of partners and residents.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

	Option 1: Members approve officers to provide advice and support to the scheme	Option 2: Members do not approve officer support for this scheme.
Advantages	Officers could work with the various clubs, community and architects to ensure the proposal proceeds in line with corporate objectives.	Officers free to utilise time on other areas of work.
Disadvantages	The scheme proceeds	Scheme is in its infancy and

	with minimal involvement from the Council and opportunities to maximise consultation/benefits for clubs and community and energy saving implications are not provided.	efficiencies around community/club integration, tourism and energy would not be explored.
Risks	As scheme develops it requires considerable officer time – would need to be managed by regular reporting to ensure work programmes are appropriate.	Council not associated in a scheme which could positively impact on tourism, residents and clubs resulting in poor publicity.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The scheme is in its early stages and officers would have to monitor their time spent against demands from other areas on their time (should option 1 be approved). The scheme is potentially a considerable improvement on the current offer and at this stage, other than officer time, the club is not seeking financial support from the Council.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

Supports Corporate Plan priorities in respect of Energy Coast, visitor economy and working in partnership.

It further supports LDLSP Community Strategy priorities in respect of positive activities for children and young people, economic priorities (significant visitor destination with an outstanding waterfront) and environmental – achieve new development which is sustainable.

The proposal complements the LDLSP's recent decision to support a number of hydropower feasibility studies across the district.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None at the moment. Any proposal arising out of feasibility work would include a full impact assessment. If successful, the project would complement other initiatives in the area such as "Connecting Communities".

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications at this stage.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications at this stage other than the cost of officer time.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**Human Resources:**

Officer time would be needed from both the Community Engagement and Regeneration and Policy Services.

Information Services:

None at the moment

Property:

None at the moment

Open Spaces:

None at the moment

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The section 151 officer has been consulted and on the basis that the resource input is not significant and there is no expectation of any direct financial input from the Council, the s151 Officer would highlight only that the proposal is based on the Council's existing corporate priorities and there is a risk that these could well change in due course.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has nothing further to add,

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: Simon Kirby

Telephone: 01524 582831

E-mail: skirby@lancaster.gov.uk

Ref: