

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Development and Regeneration (Introduced by Councillor Peter Malpas: Executive Member for Economic Development & Regeneration)	Executive Cabinet	7 December 2006

ASTLEY PARK PROJECT: HIGHLIGHT REPORT

PURPOSE OF REPORT`

- To update members on the current progress of the project

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- The implementation of the Astley Park Project is a substantial project that will assist the attainment of the Council's Strategic Objective to develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live and visit.

RISK ISSUES

- The issues raised and recommendations made in this report involve risk considerations in the following categories:

Strategy		Information	√
Reputation	√	Regulatory/Legal	√
Financial	√	Operational	√
People		Other	

- The Project was the subject of a successful funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Council is bound to deliver the project in accordance with the terms of a contract with the HLF, unless HLF agrees any change.

Delivery of such a complex and multi-faceted project will necessarily involve some risk. More specifically, current areas of risk relate to the lake dam, pets' corner and programme slippage. These are explained more fully in the body of the report.

BACKGROUND

- The Astley Park project is a multi-faceted regeneration/restoration project of the historic landscape and public park. The project has been awarded funding by the Heritage Lottery Fund (£2.004M).

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

6. Overall Project Status

The project is being implemented through a number of separate contracts.

Lake/woodland ponds: Desilting works are now complete for both lake and woodland ponds. Silt grading and restoration works are now planned for March to May 2007, as programmed. Monitoring of the dam has confirmed there is no movement. Resurfacing of the route across the dam has now commenced and is programmed to take around 4 weeks. Diversions are signposted

Coach House, Farmhouse, Walled Garden – Planning permission and listed building consent are in place for the work building work contracts and the demolition works are complete. A stone chamber has been discovered in the garden, which warrants further investigation. As CCTV investigation failed to provide any useful imaging, the void is now to be investigated by Derbyshire Caving Club. This is a contingency item.

The expected issue date for tender documentation for the main building works is 14 November 2006. There has been some slippage in issue to tender but the overall programme (ie completion by May 2008) is unaffected at present, although an update is being sought as to the potential effect of bats on the programme. Slippage has been caused partly by obtaining agreement of details such as ironmongery and security.

Tenders for the main landscape contract are currently being appraised and the tender report is expected in the next couple of weeks. Slippage in issue to tender, due to agreement of details such as lighting, seats and wall to rear of hall, will not affect the overall programme (ie completion by May 2008).

Play area and pets corner – Due to the volume of concern raised by the public and others about the location, safety and security of the proposed play facilities and pets' corner, it was agreed that these proposals should be revisited. The revised plan provides for easier access and enhanced natural surveillance, without compromising the historic landscape. The cost of this additional work (£16,808) lies outside the terms of the HLF contract and must therefore be met by the Council.

The alternative location for the play area and pets corner has now been agreed in principle with the associate monitor and a formal request for the changes and reasons for the change are to be submitted to HLF for approval. However, this request and detailed design work are on hold pending a decision as to whether the pets' corner should remain part of the project or not. At the request of the Council Leader and Chief Executive further public consultation is to be undertaken to determine whether the public would like to see pets' corner remain or be omitted from the project. If the outcome is in favour of the facility being withdrawn, a decision will be required on whether a formal request concerning the omission of this facility from the project is to be submitted to the HLF for approval. In preliminary discussions, HLF monitors have advised that a proposal to omit the facility from the project is unlikely to be supported. However, in the unlikely event that HLF approved such a change in outcomes, HLF would reduce the level of grant funding available to the project. The reduction would relate not only to the budgeted figure for pets' corner but would include a reduction in any item that HLF considered was related to that item such as footpath works and woodland management.

Pavilion – Following a decision regarding future use of the football pitches, this element of the scheme has now been revised down to basic refurbishment. Kiosk redesign will also be required, to fit with the new design for pets corner and play area and is likely to incur additional costs to the Council. Both these items will form a separate contract or be issued as a variation to the main building contract.

7. Schedule Status

Some elements of the project have slipped and others have been brought forward with no effect to the overall forecast completion date of March/April 2008. This is well within the contract period for the HLF grant, the expiry date being 31/12/08.

Main Landscape Contract

Some slippage in issue to tender but overall programme i.e completion by May 2008 unaffected. Slippage due to agreement of details such as lighting, seats and wall to rear of hall. 6 landscape contractors have been asked to tender.

Main building contract Some slippage in issue to tender but overall programme i.e completion by May 2008 unaffected at present although update on bat issue being sought. Slippage due partly to agreement of details such as ironmongery and security . Tenders scheduled to go out in November.

8. Products Completed

Tree felling and woodland management : to reinstate the character of the historic landscape and address neglect and safety considerations.

Desilting of the lake and woodland pond: main body of contract to restore historic water features and enhance the environment and ecology of the park is complete. Spreading of silt and seeding & installation of silt trap to be completed in Spring 2007.

Demolition – demolition of outbuildings/workshops and green houses and clearance of walled garden is now complete.

9. Current Issues

The **building works** programme is slightly behind schedule and may be subject to further impact relating to the need to avoid work to upper floor in Coach House during bat breeding season.

The interruption of **electrical supplies** to Astley Hall and the Coach House during the demolition work required emergency call out of United Utilities and Ecclestone Electrics, with cost implications that are being pursued with the contractor.

Pets' corner: some level of concern regarding the principle of retaining this facility persists. Uncertainty and delay has both cost and programme implications. Any change in the proposal would be subject to HLF approval and, if that change involved omitting the replacement facility, rather than simply altering its proposed relocation, advice from the HLF suggests that it would run a high risk of rejection. If, despite this informal advice, the HLF was to agree the omission of a pets' corner, such agreement would be accompanied by a reduction in HLF funding. Importantly, this reduction would not only relate a proportion of the £155,762.88 budget for play facilities and pets' corner itself but would also depress funding for other elements of the project that were deemed by the HLF to be connected to the pets' corner (eg footpath improvements, landscaping)..

Changes to the plans made by the Council will be subject to additional funding by the Council to cover survey work, architects, detail design, planning application, contract documentation and drawings (ie work already carried out). In addition, to this the Council will need to meet the cost of carrying out further consultation with regard to pets corner and further detailed design costs.

10. Risks

Lake dam: - A crack in the road surface across the dam, which resulted from the dewatering process is being repaired. The road has to be closed during the work, with the risk of creating bad publicity for the project, and inconveniencing the public who use the road as a thoroughfare to school and work. Warning signs and information about diversions is in place.

Pets' corner: If the Council decides not to replace the pets corner, breach of contract issues would arise, which could result in all or part of the grant funding being clawed back. The cost for additional work and consultation will fall to the Council.

Management & maintenance plan. It is a condition of the HLF grant that a 10 year maintenance and management plan be agreed within the first year of the project. Preliminary discussions about the future operation, maintenance and management of the park are now underway but it should be noted that a failure to resolve these matters would create serious risks for the project.

11. Forward Plan

Main landscape contract – tender returned 10/11/06. Tender evaluation and report required. Programmed start on site December.

Building contract – tenders to be issued mid November, return, evaluation and report expected Jan, start on site Jan/Feb.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS

12. The Council is committed to a budgetary contribution over the life of the project and to a proportion of the capitalised additional maintenance provision (that formed part of the approved funding bid) thereafter.

Woodland and tree clearance contract was below budget.

The demolition contract was above budget.

The lake contract was below budget, so additional work carried out as part of the contract during the desilting of the lake can largely be absorbed by the available budget for the lake works. The balance will be met from the contingency budget, subject to HLF approval.

The clay lining of the woodland pond was found to be intact, resulting in an approx saving of £18,000.

Spent this period	Spent to date	Balance
166 338	367 134	2 064 452

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

13. There are no Human Resources implications with this report.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

14. At present the costs remain on budget.

RECOMMENDATION

15. That the Executive Cabinet accepts the information contained in this monitoring highlight report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

16. The report has been prepared to update Cabinet with regard to the implementation of the project.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

17. None as the report is provided for information only.

JANE E MEEK
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

There are no background papers to this report.

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