

| Report of | Meeting | Date |
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| Director of Public Protection, Streetscene and Community (Introduced by the Executive Member for Resources) | Executive Cabinet | 25 June 2015 |

CUERDEN VALLEY COUNTRY PARK VISITORS CENTRE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To consider providing £65,000 financial support to Cuerden Valley Country Park towards their new visitor centre.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- Executive Cabinet agree to provide a grant of £65,000 to Cuerden Valley Country Park towards their visitor centre.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- The report recommends a grant of £65,000 to Cuerden Valley Country Park to deliver a visitor centre. The centre will help with their viability and safeguard the park's future. The scheme addresses an action in the Play, Open Space and Playing Pitch Strategy.

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| Confidential report Please bold as appropriate | Yes | No |
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| Key Decision? Please bold as appropriate | Yes | No |
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REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

- To support Cuerden Valley Country Park deliver a visitor centre, support their sustainability and safeguard the park.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- Not to provide any financial support. This would put added financial pressure on the Trust; something we are looking to alleviate.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

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| Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all | ✓ | A strong local economy | |
| Clean, safe and healthy communities | ✓ | An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area | |

BACKGROUND

7. Cuerden Valley Park is a 650acre country park that is owned and managed by Cuerden Valley Park Trust (CVPT), a Registered Charity, with the objective of “providing for the education and recreation for the public”. It is funded by the income from an endowment and fundraising by the Trust and its “Friends” group of supporters. The Trust’s office is currently housed within The Barn, the Lancashire Wildlife Trust’s headquarters building, which also provides limited facilities for visitors to the Park. The constraints imposed by the shared use of the Barn severely restrict the Trust’s ability to either manage efficiently or provide an effective service to the public.
8. The Trustees believe that a country park of the size and nature of Cuerden Valley merits the provision of a dedicated Visitor Centre and that such a facility, under the full control of the Trust, would:
 - Enable Trust staff to operate more efficiently and effectively
 - Provide improved facilities for visitors to the Park
 - Enable the Trust to properly manage its public image
 - Enable a more extensive environmental education programme
 - Provide a focal point for volunteer recruitment and involvement
 - Attract more visitors and encourage repeat visits
 - Provide improved fundraising opportunities
9. From recent experience of operating a limited Tea Shop facility within the existing Barn on a Sunday it is envisaged that incorporating a café within a Visitor Centre would enhance the visitor experience for the public and provide a positive cash flow to the Trust.
10. The Business Plan shows that a new centre would lead to savings of £5,600 pa in running costs over our current rental fee and £44,000 surplus from activities within the Centre and Café that will go towards the running costs of the Park.
11. The proposed visitor centre will be 236 sq metres in area and essentially single storey. It will accommodate:
 - Trust office
 - Reception/information area
 - Classroom/function room
 - Public toilets
 - Café
 - Display facilities
12. It is intended that the building will be an environmentally friendly and sustainable building in keeping with the Park’s ethos, surroundings and environmental objectives. The building construction proposed involves eco-friendly methods and materials, consisting mainly of straw bales with a shingle roof, utilising timber from the park as part of the construction and with foundations incorporating recycled materials.
13. Community involvement in the construction process will be encouraged. The Trust will look to work with current park volunteers and visiting volunteers with appropriate skills or undergoing training. Because of the valuable experience to be gained in using the eco-friendly materials and innovative building techniques, it is intended that training opportunities will be offered throughout the project.
14. The Trust are looking to register the Visitor Centre for the Living Building Challenge and become the first building in the UK to achieve this status. The Living Building Challenge is an international sustainable building certification system that promotes the most advanced measurement of sustainability in the built environment.

15. Although the site lies within the Greenbelt the Trust gained planning permission under the exemption for essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation in November 2014. A number of conditions were imposed on the Trust including agreeing exterior colour schemes and materials with the council and widening Berkeley Drive in places.
16. The building will cost £415,932; made up as follows:

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| Preliminaries & fees | £23,112 |
| Construction costs (materials) | £198,712 |
| Fitting Out | £22,656 |
| Training (Straw Works) | £14,000 |
| Other site costs | £83,250 |
| Marketing Costs (see below) | £9,060 |
| Contingency | £10,890 |
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| Total (Net of vat) | £361,680 |
| Non Recoverable VAT (75% assumed) | £54,252 |
| Total | £415,932 |

17. This will be funded via:

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| Greenbank Trust | Contract signed | £50,000 |
| Lancs Environmental Trust | Contract signed | £30,000 |
| Veolia Trust | Contract signed | £100,000 |
| Bernard Sunley | Offer received | £30,000 |
| Awards for All | Application made | £7,500 |
| Chorley Borough Council | Application made | £65,000 |
| South Ribble Borough Council | Awaiting reply | £20,000 |
| Public Donations | Received (20 th May) | £10,700 |
| Cuerden Valley Park Trust | | £102,732 |
| Total | | £415,932 |

Members will note that a smaller amount has been requested of South Ribble Borough Council. The different amounts reflect the area of the park in each borough.

18. The Friends of Cuerden Valley Park have also donated £18,538 to provide the 10% contributions to the landfill tax operators in order to release their funds.
19. If the outstanding applications are not approved then CVPT will provide the funding to finish the project from its endowment. This will however reduce future income received from the endowment that goes towards park management.
20. It is well documented that the Trust's environment is reducing and, if other sources of income are not delivered, there is a risk that the Trust would be forced to dissolve and close the Park. This is recognised in the Council's Play, Open Space and Playing Pitch Strategy and there is an action to work with the Trust to address their sustainability. This funding will make a significant contribution.
21. The Executive Member for Communities, Cllr Bev Murray, has been consulted and is in agreement with the recommendation.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

22. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

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| Finance | ✓ | Customer Services | |
| Human Resources | | Equality and Diversity | |
| Legal | ✓ | Integrated Impact Assessment required? | |
| No significant implications in this area | | Policy and Communications | |

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

23. Member approved £170,000 of capital funding to support external projects that progressed the Play, Open Space and Playing Pitch Strategy. The £65,000 will come from this budget.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

24. Nothing to add to the report.

JAMIE CARSON
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROTECTION, STREETSCENE & COMMUNITY