

Rosliston Forestry Centre Information Memorandum



**Rosliston
Forestry
Centre**

part of The National Forest



Introduction

This Information Memorandum provides supporting information regarding a joint South Derbyshire District Council (SDDC) and the Forestry Commission (FC) project to secure commercial management and development partner(s) for Rosliston Forestry Centre (RFC) through a competitive process with negotiation.

Information contained within this document may be subject to change. This information Memorandum, together with the OJEU Notice is an invitation to the market to express an interest in bidding for this project.





The Opportunity

Rosliston Forestry Centre, situated within South Derbyshire, is a 62 hectare site, jointly owned by SDDC and FC situated within the National Forest. It is a free to enter tourist attraction (with a charge for parking and some activities) It largely comprises of a visitor centre, an enterprise centre, play areas, a café, waymarked trails, ponds, Glade performance area, 6 self-catering lodge cabins and various other smaller attractions such as a sensory garden, bird hide and archery shelter as well as offering opportunities for many health, sport and educational activities.

South Derbyshire District Council and the Forestry Commission, the joint owners of Rosliston Forestry Centre, have a strong partnership, nurtured over 20 years. Similarly the site has benefitted from a stable and longstanding management agreement but this is nearing completion and provides the partnership with an opportunity to refresh their vision for the centre. The long term future of the site will be strongly influenced by the aims and goals of both organisations.



The Vision

The partners' vision for Rosliston Forestry Centre is:

“The centre should provide a warm and welcoming outdoor experience for its visitors, delivering a range of activities and space for all to enjoy.”

To help deliver and maintain this vision, we wish to enter into a contractual arrangement with new organisation(s) to manage the RFC's commercial and visitor offer. The Forestry Commission as in the previous management arrangement will continue to manage the surrounding woodland. The new partner(s) will need to demonstrate their ability to contribute to our vision effectively and sustainably, based upon a financially sound long-term operational model that is attractive and acceptable to both SDDC and FC.

The ethos of Rosliston Forestry Centre has been to provide a pleasurable outdoor experience for all visitors, with initial low cost to the customer. Bringing people to appreciate the site as a whole or to participate in the activities provided has been integral to its success. Looking into the future, establishing a sustainable business is the key element for the Vision. The social aspect of the provision will remain, but the financial aspect of the centre has to be sustainable in the long term.

Adding value to the partners' key objectives of People, Nature and Economy (Forestry Commission) and People, Place and Prosperity (South Derbyshire District Council) will be a significant driver taking the new management of the site forward. Creating a place that encourages return visits.

Rosliston Forestry Centre has a lot to offer already and it's essential that we take this opportunity to look at its future provisions and redefine activities to strengthen the offer.

Key Objectives

The Partners objectives for this project are:

To develop a modern attractive visitor offer that will:

- Operate daily throughout the year as a minimum, currently 7.30 a.m. to 5.00p.m;
- As a minimum support and accommodate current visitor numbers;
- Demonstrate that any capital investment in new/ improved facilities has a minimum lifespan of 10 years;
- Ensure continuing value for money, whilst maintaining free public access to Rosliston Forestry Centre;
- Effectively support all-ability visitor access across the site, in consultation with partners;
- Effectively support the management of visitor impact on the centre in general;
- Provide appropriate interpretation/visitor information, working with the partners;
- Show environmental good practice in respect of the operation of the facilities.

The operator will be responsible for the effective management of all the buildings within the scope of the commercial operation on offer – the visitor centre (including retail space, meeting rooms), play and activity areas both indoor and outdoor, and log cabin accommodation.

As previously stated the partners' ambition for RFC is for it to be operated by a partner (s) / option that provides financial sustainability for the site.

Management of the woodland will be retained by the Forestry Commission.



Background



RFC is a successful tourist attraction providing visitors and the local community with a wide range of outdoor experiences and activities. The original executive partners – SDDC, FC and the National Forest Company acquired the site of a former farm in 1993 and have supported its development since that time. It has been transformed from a farm to a mature community woodland. The past 20 years have seen the development of its visitor's amenities from an initial basic offer to the present range of facilities.



A wide range of features and activities are now firmly established and the Centre is well used by both regular and occasional visitors. The site is an important one within the National Forest, often referred to as 'the jewel in the crown of South Derbyshire'. It is a semi-unique site for the Forestry Commission portfolio, being a partnership with a district council and where the commercial aspects have been delivered by a third party. Both of the organisations would like it to be an exemplar site, demonstrating multi-purpose woodland management and the sustainable delivery of social, economic and environmental benefits.

The District Council continues to see the Centre as a visitor attraction and community hub that as a major leisure facility provides high quality experiences and opportunities for local people and visitors alike.

Both the District Council and the Forestry Commission continue to have high aspirations for the centre, wanting to balance community/visitor needs and with the aim of achieving a sustainable economic business.

The current management company has been managing the site along with the partnership for almost 20 years and will be leaving at the end of March 2018. Therefore a new management structure is being looked for to take on the centre management and offer commercial sustainability.



The Glade arena primarily used for weddings but also other events has already been through the Forestry Commission tender process and a preferred bidder has been selected. Therefore, this area of the Forestry Centre is not included within this opportunity. The new management provider(s) will be expected to work closely with the Glade operators to ensure smooth running of the whole site and to maximise its potential for all parties.

General information on visitor facilities at Rosliston Forestry Centre can be browsed at: www.roslistonforestrycentre.co.uk

Scope of the contract

The successful bidder will be required to meet the following objectives

- Provide a service for between 7 and 10 years
- Operate commercial and associated visitor services. It is likely that the site management could be procured in smaller lots i.e. the Visitor's Centre and the Lodge Cabins as separate entities
- The care and maintenance of all buildings, equipment and facilities included within the commercial offer
- Management and appropriate use of the buildings and facilities within the commercial offer
- Management of visitors including car parking and vehicular access
- Delivering best value for money
- Contributing to our vision and key objectives for Rosliston Forestry Centre
- Ensuring that all legislative requirements are met
- Marketing and promotion of the site
- Adherence to quality standards



Key issues

Key issues that prospective partners may wish to consider in order to develop and inform their approach to this project include:

- The preferred contract length and type of deal structure
- Capital investment proposals alone or in conjunction with SDDC and FC
- How the solution will contribute to the delivery of our vision for Rosliston Forestry Centre
- Operational proposals including a continued partnership with SDDC and FC
- How the bidder's proposal will impact on the property configuration and arrangements
- Added value proposal to improve the delivery of services and improve project deliverability and sustainability
- How proposals would help manage/minimise SDDC and FC's risk
- The transition from the current operation



Approach to Contract Award - Competitive Procedure with Negotiation

The competitive procedure with negotiation provides the opportunity for both SDDC and FC and bidders to work together to develop the most appropriate solution.

The Invitation to Tender will incorporate information and feedback obtained from this Soft Market Testing exercise.

Following receipt of Tenders, a full review of compliant bids will be carried out by a panel of assessors, which may include the Council's appointed Consultants and Partners. The top scoring Tenderers will be invited to present their offers, demonstrate the benefits they will bring and answer questions from the Assessment Panel.

Following the presentations, additional discussions or meetings may be required to ensure the final solution is the best for all parties involved.

Best and Final Offers will then be required to confirm all details of submissions.

Recommendations will be made to the appropriate committees for final approval prior to awarding the Contract

SDDC/FC are keen to develop a contractual agreement that is outcome and output driven with the onus on the use of the operating partners' own experience, expertise and preferred methods. SDDC and FC are not expecting the successful partner (s) to necessarily operate or be limited by the same mix of commercial facilities or manage them in the same way (as long as the SDDC/FC's vision and objectives for the centre are fulfilled).

We see a partnership approach as being pivotal to the success of this project. Such an approach will best support an innovative and creative approach to the future operation and management of the centre. We expect that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) could apply to the project and the current staff linked to the commercial arrangements could potentially transfer to an incoming provider. Bidders are expected to seek independent legal advice on the application of TUPE in these arrangements. Further details will be provided later in the tender process.

Stakeholder consultation will be an important aspect to achieving our overall ambitions. SDDC/FC will continue to engage with stakeholders as the procurement process progresses, and we expect bidders to engage with this process where appropriate.





The Current Offer

Rosliston Forestry Centre currently provides services and facilities for approximately 190,000 people who visit every year

It includes:

- A visitor information point
- Cycle Hire
- Storage and administrative facilities
- Car parking facilities
- Toilets
- Play facilities both indoor and outdoor
- Classroom, training room and meeting rooms
- Archery Shelter
- Bird Hide
- Waymarked Trails



Catering/Hospitality

The Hub Café is currently operated by a separate leaseholder – this may not be in scope but a café facility will remain on the site as an attraction and as with the Glade, will require cooperative working practices to ensure benefits for all parties.

Retail

Gift shop operated by the current management company – offers souvenirs, greeting cards, gifts, and ice creams

Kraftiz – a tenant providing art and craft goods and workshops

Other Tenants

Environmental Education Partnership (Council operated service)

Get Active in the Forest (Council procured service)

5 Enterprise units which are currently leased to Burton & South Derbyshire College



Accommodation

6 Lodge Cabins – Each lodge is privately situated in its own secluded corner of woodland and offers a full range of self-catering holiday facilities. All lodges are also wheelchair accessible and feature facilities designed to be accessible for all.

Residential

A **three bed bungalow** is included on the site, currently the home of the management company.

Other Buildings or areas

Boiler house

Storage compound

Visitor Number and Events

Visitor numbers at RFC are influenced by the weather and the quality of the visitor experience. Numbers have been reasonably consistent over the past few years, generally between 175,000 and 190,000 + per annum. The events / activities which have been held on the site cover a wide range and further details will be given at the meeting.





Timetable

It should be noted that all dates in the timetable below are indicative (except where a key stage has already been completed) and it is anticipated that the outcomes of the ISOS stage will shape the timetable for the remainder of the procurement process. As such SDDC & FC reserves the right to vary this timetable and will notify interested parties if it does so.

Key Stage Estimated Completion Date

Key Stage	Estimated Completion Date
Prior Information Notice Published and Briefing Paper	26 th January 2017
Soft Market Testing commences – Event to be held	2 nd March 2017
Closing date for Soft Market Testing Feedback	16 th March 2017
Invitation to Tender commences	20 th April 2017
Closing date for Tenders	1 st June 2017
Invitation to Participate with Negotiation commences	3 rd July 2017
Bidders to Present Overall Proposals to Partners	w/c 17 th July 2017
Best and final Offer	5 th August 2017
Contract Award	October 2017
Contract Start Date	1 st April 2018



The information contained in this Information Memorandum is presented in good faith and does not purport to be comprehensive or to have been independently verified. Neither SDDC or FC nor any of their advisers accept any responsibility or liability in relation to its accuracy or completeness or any other information which has been, or which is subsequently, made available to any potential bidders or any of their advisers, orally or in writing or in whatever media. Interested parties and their advisers must therefore take their own steps to verify the accuracy of any information they consider relevant. They must not, and are not entitled to, rely on any statement or representation made by SDDC/FC or any of their advisers. This Information Memorandum is intended only as a preliminary background explanation of the partners' plans for Rosliston Forestry Centre and is not intended to form the basis of any decisions on the terms upon which the partners will enter into any contractual relationship.

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Forestry Commission
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