
REPORT TO:	Housing and Community Services Committee	AGENDA ITEM:	1 0
DATE OF MEETING:	28 August 2003	CATEGORY:	DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	Director of Community Services	OPEN:	
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Stuart Batchelor (5820)	DOC:	c:\myfiles\pmw\commserv\communityservicescommittee\reports\21-02-02\rosliston forestry centresb.doc
SUBJECT:	Rosliston Forestry Centre	REF:	SB/LPB
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE:	CS07

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 Members accept the Strategic Vision Report recommended by the Executive as the way forward for the development of the Centre.
- 1.2 Members support the Executives bid for EMDA funding towards log cabin visitor accommodation on the site.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To provide members with the opportunity to comment on the Strategic Vision report which has been produced for, and agreed by the Rosliston Forestry Centre Executive. The report also updates members on the progress regarding the management contract for the centre and the plans to submit an application to the Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership for EMDA funding towards log cabin accommodation.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 In 1998 the Leisure Services Committee authorised the establishment of the Rosliston Forestry Centre Executive to consider the options available for the future management of the Forestry Centre site. The Executive consisted of the Chair of the Leisure Services Committee, now vice Chair of Housing and Community Services Committee, the Regional Manager of the Forestry Commission and the Chief Executive of The National Forest Company.
- 3.2 The Executive considered the options available for the future of the site and concluded that seeking a private sector partner to operate the facility and bring investment on to the site would be the most appropriate option. Expressions of interest were sought and from a shortlist of five companies/individuals Aurora Country Developments Ltd were asked to submit a formal business plan.
- 3.3 At the Leisure Services Committee of 24 June 1999 Aurora Country Developments Ltd were awarded a 2-year contract to manage Rosliston Forestry Centre. The basis of the contract was to develop the visitor base of the Centre and develop its long-term sustainability. The committee report detailing this arrangement is attached as Annexe No.1. This Contract was later extended by to allow the current negotiations

to be completed. Last year the Committee agreed that the negotiations be completed and delegated authority to the Chair of the Committee and Chief Executive to authorise a contract recommended by the Executive.

- 3.4 The Executive has now agreed a financial settlement with Aurora Country Developments and will now prepare a contract and specification for signing.

STRATEGIC VISION

- 3.5 As part of the contract negotiations Aurora presented their business plan for the Centre which was received with approval by the Executive. However it was clear that if the Centre was to continue its development and meet the aspirations of each of the partners a shared vision and plan was required that included Aurora's proposals and those of the Forestry Commission, National Forest Company and the District Council.
- 3.6 This planning process has been enabled by Rolls Royce who have seconded a manager, Paul Watts, to the National Forest Company to undertake a number of projects. The Rosliston Forestry Centre Strategic Vision being the main project selected by Paul and the National Forest Company.
- 3.7 Considerable work and consultation between the partners has been undertaken and a Strategic Vision Report has been produced which the Executive has agreed is the first stage in producing a Development and Business Plan for the Centre. The Report is attached as Annexe. No.1 and provides a comprehensive review of the Partners aims and values for the site and a list of strategic priorities and specific site activities. These are summarised as follows:

KEY THEMES

Sustainable development
Leisure and recreation

Environmental improvement
Rural economy

KEY VALUES

Quality
Partnership

Integration
Public support

KEY ISSUES

- The character of RFC should reflect and blend with The National Forest and its objectives and, in particular, be sympathetic with the Mease Lowland of which it is part. This relationship should be apparent in the physical features of the site, in the demonstrations afforded by the site, in the displays, education and opportunities available on site and in the connectivity with landscape and trails nearby.
- The site should be a setting for community activities, providing interaction via leisure and recreation opportunities for a wide range of cultures, abilities and via a range of other special interest group activities. There should be sufficient and unique amenities and features to attract a large number of visitors, at all times of the year and in all weathers, to spend several hours on site (it may be necessary to provide shelter and suitable clothing to achieve this). The site should be zoned, each with visible purpose and management and each supported by high quality, forestry style signage. All-ability opportunity should be a key feature of the design process used for site features. There should be "something new or renewed every year" to attract return visits.

- A marketing strategy is needed that reflects partner aims and promotes, both locally and nationally, enjoyment of and attractions at the site. RFC should feature along-side similar sites in National Forest and Forest Enterprise literature, brochures and websites.
- The initial vehicular approach to the car park should visually reflect the values and themes of the site and should capture the imagination and interest of visitors. Car parking charges should be varied with highest charges for occasional tourists spending a long time on-site but charge concessions for regular visitors, those already contributing resources to the site or those needing a short stay only.
- Buildings should be of high quality, should have high timber content in their construction and internal and external appearance and their style should complement the forest environment. Heat and power should be based on wood-fuel, where possible. Buildings should be used effectively, maximising visitor numbers and revenue. On-site maintenance equipment should be invisible to visitors except when in use.
- A highly integrated and diverse outdoors environment, including developing and mature woodland, varied wildlife and multiple conservation interests, should dominate the site and should provide visitors with appropriate experiences and vistas. Advantage should be taken of the visual attributes over the valley on which the site is situated.
- Environmental education, health and well-being should feature strongly on site to ensure that the nearby urban population can learn about, as well as experience, benefits of the rural environment.
- Special interest groups should be encouraged to use appropriate settings within the site for their activities (and be charged accordingly). Commercial/retail activities should relate strongly to the partner themes identified above.
- Accommodation would encourage extended stays in the area enabling visitors to enjoy other attractions nearby and further afield within The National Forest. The feasibility of providing timber cabins on-site should be demonstrated and an appropriate operational/financial model developed.

3.8 The above issues provide the partners involved in the development and operation of the Centre with a foundation from which to develop a programme of development and business plan which secure the sustainability of the Centre. This sustainability covering the Centre's ability to attract visitors and revenue.

LOG CABIN ACCOMMODATION

- 3.9 It has been the intention of the Executive to develop log cabin visitor accommodation on the site for a number of years and work into the feasibility of this has already been undertaken. Although it was expected that the accommodation would not be provided until 2004 the opportunity has arisen for an application to the Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership for funding for this current year.
- 3.10 Consequently the partners are considering the feasibility of providing at least one cabin by February 2004. If the timescale allows an application will be made. The cabin would be designed to accommodate school and disabled groups and provide up to 10 berths. These groups would use the Centre for its ancillary facilities/services such as Environmental Education, all ability trails and Walking The Way To Health activities.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no new financial implications arising directly from this report. £25,000 has already been provided in the Councils Capital Programme as a contribution towards the log cabins.
- 4.2 The provision of log cabin accommodation would provide a significant revenue source to the Centre and would be taken into consideration in the management contract for the Centre.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 This proposal would contribute to the Council's objective of supporting the development of the National Forest as Rosliston Forestry Centre is the Forests principle Environmental Education centre and an important element in the tourism infrastructure for the area.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 The development of Rosliston Forestry Centre over the past four years has seen not only the provision of commercial activities but also the establishment of community based activities such as playscheme provision, play areas, sensory garden and volunteer opportunities. The Strategic Vision seeks to provide a framework for that continued work.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The development of Rosliston Forestry Centre over the last four years has been a great success and the Executive, through the support of Rolls Royce, see the development of a strategic vision and business plan as key to this continued success.
- 7.2 The provision of visitor accommodation is a key strategic issue and if a bid for resources was successful and a cabin provided it would mean a significant revenue boost to the Centre.

8.0 Background Papers

- 8.1 File EE 2