

WARDS:

Halesowen South, Halesowen North & Belle Vale

AGENDA ITEM NO 15

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE – 30th MARCH 2005

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

THE LEASOWES RESTORATION

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the progress of the historic restoration of Leasowes Park .

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This Committee has considered a number of reports on the status of the Leasowes Restoration since the 9th October 2001, the most recent of which was on the 2nd February 2005. On the latter date the Committee were advised that in December 2003 the Heritage Lottery Fund had approved details of a revised restoration which could be achieved for the original grant of £1,306,500 and the Council's match funding of £435,520, and that detailed proposals were being prepared by a design team comprising of officers and specialist advisors.

- 2.2 At the Committee referred to in paragraph 2.1, members were advised that the revised restoration proposals covered the following phases;

- All works & costs to date
- Beechwater Dam
- Virgil's Grove
- Leasowes Lane Dam & Lower Pool
- One further phase (which might include improvements to the car park, minor footpath improvements and woodland management elsewhere on the site, as well as further survey, archaeological investigations and design works which could permit elements of restoration using alternative grant sources, the Wardens' service, or

volunteers), the content of which would be determined when the final cost of the preceding 3 phases is established.

- 2.3 The location of these phases is shown on the plan in Appendix A to this report.
- 2.4 Since the last report, planning permission has been granted for the restoration of Leasowes Lane Dam and for the reuse of pool dredgings from the restoration as part of the Earls High Playing Fields project, and tender documents have been completed.
- 2.5 The Committee was advised at their meeting on the 2nd February 2005 of complicating and unforeseen factors which have arisen during the detailed design of the scheme and which had led to a revised estimated completion date October 2005. One of these factors was the need to submit applications to the Environment Agency for Impounding and Drainage Licences, and the difficulty in obtaining a firm date for approvals of these licences from this Agency. The Council has subsequently been advised that its applications are due to be determined by the 20th April 2005, after which the main contract for the Phase 1 restoration may be awarded and work commenced on site.
- 2.6 In addition to the approvals referred to in paragraph 2.5, the project design team was made aware in January this year of a C18th engraving showing more detail of the High Cascade and its surroundings in Virgil's Grove. This illustration shows more details of this feature than were previously known, and has led to a revision in the design for this part of the project.
- 2.7 As a result of the above, the completion of the phase 1 work is now scheduled to be complete by Christmas 2005 and it should be noted that, subject to the approvals referred to in paragraph 2.5, there are now no known obstacles which will prevent the invitation of tenders for the work.
- 2.8 As part of the regime of regular inspections of trees in the park, a number of trees in the park have been identified as being potentially dangerous, including those to which access to visitors will increase following the restoration of lost path links. As a result a number of trees have been proposed for removal on health & safety grounds. Given concerns raised by visitors on previous occasions following such operations, a guided visit was held on the 9th February, which was attended by approximately 30 residents. The walk was attended by officers from the restoration project team, wardens' service and the arboricultural officer. The event was a

success, with those attending understanding the reasoning behind the proposed work, and how it related to the restoration project. This work, and areas of undergrowth clearance required to allow the restoration contractor access, will be carried out before the start of the bird nesting season.

2.9 The feasibility study for a more fitting permanent centre to house the wardens and provide visitor facilities than is currently offered by the temporary building on the site has been awarded to DTZ Pida, a property consultancy with specialism in tourism and visitor facilities. This study will be complete in April 2005 and will provide a vision of what the centre should be like, budget costs, an outline business plan and funding sources.

2.10 To date the project remains within budget, and estimated costs continue to be closely monitored as the project develops.

3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 It is proposed that the contents of this report be noted and that further reports to update the Committee on the progress of the restoration be submitted in due course.

4.0 FINANCE

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5.0 LAW

5.1 Under Section 9 & 10 of the Open Spaces Act 1906 the Council is empowered to acquire and maintain land for the purposes of Public Open Space.

5.2 Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 enables the Council to provide recreation facilities within, or outside of its area, with or without a charge.

5.3 Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate or is conducive to or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1 The proposals in this report accord with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- 6.2 The proposals include restoration of path routes which have been designed to permit a high level of disabled access.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 That the proposals set out in paragraph 3.1 of this report be approved.



.....
Director of the Urban Environment - John B. Millar

Contact Officer: Rupert Dugdale ext 5538

Background documents used in the preparation of this report:-

- 1. Report to Halesowen Area Committee – The Leasowes Restoration, 9th October 2001
- 2. Report to Halesowen Area Committee - The Leasowes Restoration 3rd July 2002
- 3. Report to Halesowen Area Committee - The Leasowes Restoration 10th March 2004
- 4. Report to Halesowen Area Committee - The Leasowes Restoration 16th July 2004
- 5. Report to Halesowen Area Committee - The Leasowes Restoration 15th September 2004
- 6. Report to Halesowen Area Committee - The Leasowes Restoration 2nd February 2005

The Leasowes Restoration - Phase 1



Dudley
Metropolitan Borough Council

CROWN COPYRIGHT
DUDLEY MBC
LA 076171 31/03/031