

**Cabinet 13<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

**Report of the Director of the Urban Environment**

**The Wren's Nest and Seven Sisters Heritage Experience – Big Lottery Fund (BIG) and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) applications**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To update the Cabinet on the progress of the Black Country's Living Landmarks: the People's Millions Bid to the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) for the development of the "A Million People: The Black Country as Urban Park "
2. To seek approval to proceed with the submission of the Stage 2 "A Million People: The Black Country as Urban Park " BIG application and a complimentary application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the stabilisation of the Seven Sisters mines, interpretation and educational elements of the site and the visitor facilities at the Seven Sisters

**Background**

**The Black Country's Living Landmarks: The People's Millions application to the Big Lottery Fund (BIG)**

3. In November 2005, the Black Country Leaders and Chief Executives agreed to submit a bid to the Living Landmarks: the People's Millions Programme of BIG for the development of the "Black Country as Urban Park". The project focuses on the initial flagship developments to assist in 'kick-starting' the process of delivering the outcomes from the Environment theme of the Black Country Study.
4. The main aims of the Living Landmarks programme are to;
  - champion innovation and excellence in design of the physical environment,
  - encourage best practice in the design, construction and management of projects
  - encourage partnership working and community engagement and participation.
5. The Living Landmarks: The People's Millions Programme will support one national project with up to £50 million of funding which will be part of a televised public vote in conjunction with ITV1 in October 2007. Bidding for funding is a 2 stage process.
6. The Black Country Leaders and Chief Executives agreed on the criteria for the "flagship projects" within the Stage 1 bid. Three main sites emerged as meeting these criteria namely
  - the Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve and the Seven Sisters heritage experience
  - the canals of Wolverhampton

- Dartmouth Park in Sandwell and Walsall Arboretum -- creating the Green Bridge project

Plus an overarching project for the whole of the Black Country developed by the Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust (BBCWT) is also to be included which will focus on developing small scale community projects for environmental improvements.

7. The Wren's Nest project has subsequently been identified as the flagship project for the whole scheme.
8. The Black Country Consortium submitted the "A Million People: Black Country as Urban Park" Stage 1 bid to BIG in January 2006. The total cost of the bid submitted was £92.5m. Of which £28.4m was the Wren's Nest and Seven Sisters Project, £11m for the Wolverhampton Canals, £26.4m for the Green Bridge and £25m for the Wildlife Trust and Community Models projects. Included within the total, £800,000 was allocated for project management and co-ordination. As detailed in the original application, the total BIG grant requested was £49.3m of the available £50m. The Dudley project has requested approximately £18m of the BIG grant, Wolverhampton, £8.3m, Green Bridge £14.5m and the BBCWT and Community Models £7.5m.

9. **The Wren's Nest and Seven Sisters Heritage Experience**

Wren's Nest became the UK's first ever Urban Geological National Nature Reserve in 1956. Geologically, the site is exceptional and is regarded as one of the most notable geological locations in the British Isles because of its abundance of fossils - including the famous Dudley Bug. About 420 million years ago, tropical seas covered the area where Dudley Town Centre stands now, with coral reefs inhabited by trilobites, crinoids (sea lilies) and many other creatures. Their remains may be found today as perfectly preserved fossils in the limestone rocks at Wren's Nest - collections of which occur in Museums all over the world.

10. The site is important not only for its Geology, but also what was taken out of the ground - the Limestone that provided Abraham Darby the ingredients to smelt iron and therefore start the Industrial Revolution. The Limestone mines - in particular the Seven Sisters, the only open to air Limestone Mine remaining in the UK and potentially the world, provides a link to the areas history and tells the story of how Dudley and the Black Country became what they are today. We want to ensure that this unique resource can be shared with not only the residents of Dudley Borough and the Black Country, but the rest of the UK and the world.

11. The overarching aims of the BIG project are to
  1. Conserve and enhance the Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve, it's canal links, geology, natural history, unique mining features and infrastructure and allow safe access to them
  2. Raise awareness of the natural and cultural heritage of Wren's Nest NNR and its role in the development of the Black Country
  3. Create a visitor experience that acts as a catalyst for the regeneration of the Black Country, its visitor economy and the local area
  4. Increase local residents appreciation and use of the Wren's Nest area

12. The bid includes the following components

- stabilisation of the Seven Sisters pillars and Upper Gallery
- opening up and stabilisation of the Wren's Nest Canal Tunnel from Todd's End field (Dudley Canal Trust, Black Country Living Museum) through to

#### Step Shaft Cavern

- stabilisation of the Step Shaft Cavern and enhancement works on the existing Canal basin
- construction of a new basin, alongside the existing canal basin and new tunnel from Step Shaft Cavern up to the Seven Sisters Pillars.
- A funicular railway travelling in the new tunnel from the Step Shaft Cavern to the Seven Sisters
- an underground visitor facility at the Seven Sisters and a reception building at Todd's End Field

13. Running in parallel with the bid to BIG, Dudley is to submit an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in December 2006 which forms a discreet component of the BIG proposals and includes the stabilisation of the Seven Sisters mines, interpretation and educational elements of the site and the visitor facilities at the Seven Sisters. The HLF funded element of the overall scheme will provide the main visitor facilities and interpretation for the larger BIG scheme.
14. BIG has encouraged potential projects to work with other Lottery organisations in the development and funding of projects and as such, HLF are keen to ensure complementarity with the BIG programmes. However HLF have stated that they must ensure that projects they wish to financially support, meet their own specific aims and objectives in addition to that of the other Lottery bodies.
15. If the HLF bid was successful and the BIG application was ultimately unsuccessful, the HLF scheme could be developed as a stand alone project. However, if the HLF bid was unsuccessful, then the Dudley component of the Black Country as Urban Park as detailed in the BIG bid could not be delivered. However Smaller projects based on education and interpretation could be re-written and resubmitted to HLF at a later stage.

#### **Timescales**

16.
  - 7<sup>th</sup> August 2006 - the Black Country Consortium and partners were informed that the Black Country project, "A Million People: The Black Country as Urban Park " was one of only six projects across the UK to receive a development fund grant of up to £500,000 to develop a Stage 2 application.
  - 29<sup>th</sup> September 2006 – A "Next Stage Plan" for BIG must be submitted which identifies the key activities that need to be completed for the Black Country to successfully develop the next stage of the project and submit the Stage 2 application. The Next Stage Plan will be used as the basis of monitoring the development of the project from BIG.
  - December 2006 – Submission date for the HLF application
  - 31<sup>st</sup> May 2007 - Closing date for submission of detailed Stage 2 BIG application.
  - June 2007 – Outcome of the HLF application
  - September 2007 - BIG make final decisions on projects moving forward to the public vote
  - October 2007 - Provisional date for the ITV1 public vote.

17. **Project management**

Project Management Structures were agreed in principle by the Black Country Consortium on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2006 to oversee the Stage 2 planning and the subsequent implementation if the project is successful. The Black Country structure will include a high-level Strategic Management Group and a Joint Implementation Task Group for the co-ordination of the Stage 2 planning and subsequent implementation. A Chair for the Black Country Strategic Management Group is to be appointed.

18. Within Dudley, the Project Management Structure will comply with the Corporate Project Management Toolkit. It is proposed that it will mirror the Black Country structure. At present, the project Champions are the Assistant Directors for Economic Regeneration and Culture and Community Services, with the Project Co-ordination role being undertaken by the Tourism Development Officer within the Economic Regeneration Division.

**Finance**

19. It is proposed that the £500,000 development grant awarded by BIG for the “A Million People: The Black Country as Urban Park” will be split in the following way to enable each of the lead partners to develop their element of the Black Country BIG bid ready for the Stage 2 submission in May 2007.

Dudley, Wren's Nest and Seven Sisters	£150,000
Wolverhampton Canals	£70,000
Green Corridor/ Bridge (Walsall & Sandwell)	£140,000
BBCWT Living Landscape & Community Models	£100,000
BC wide promotion & community engagement	£40,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£500,000</b>

20. In order for the Wren's Nest and Seven Sisters Heritage Experience project to be fully developed and robustly costed to submit the Stage 2 BIG application, it is anticipated that a significant amount of site investigation, engineering and survey work needs to be undertaken. This is estimated to cost £445,000 in total. £245,000 are costs associated with Site Investigation, which must start in November 2006 to meet the BIG deadline, £100,000 for Engineering fees and Design work and an additional sum of approximately £100,000 for extending the work already undertaken for the HLF bid, architect fees and business planning.
21. Dudley's £150,000 share of the development funding would contribute to the costs associated with developing the Stage 2 bid and every effort will be made to secure an increase in this amount. However there is currently a shortfall of £295,000. Of this, a minimum of £175,000 of the site investigation costs relate to capital works and could be met from the sum earmarked in the Council's capital programme for match funding and other urgent priorities. This then leaves a shortfall of £120,000 which could be met from reserves in the Directorate of the Urban Environment.
22. The Stage 2 BIG application to be submitted in May 2007 must provide a funding plan, detailing which match funding has been secured and details of other funding that has been applied for. At the time of writing this report, the estimated total cost of the Wren's Nest and Seven Sisters Heritage experience project will be £30m. £18m is being sought from BIG, and £ 4.5m from HLF. This leaves a gap of

£7.5m yet to be sourced. Potential options currently being investigated include Advantage West Midlands (AWM), Dudley MBC, prudential borrowing, Natural England and the DTI low carbon building programme. At this point in time no match funding has been secured.

### **Law**

23. The Council may do anything which achieves the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of its area under Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000.

The Council may provide recreational facilities for its area under section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976'

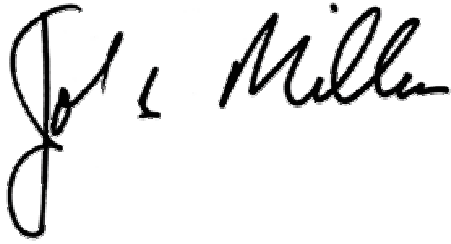
### **Equality Impact**

24. The Seven Sisters and Wren's Nest Heritage Experience proposals comply with the council's equality and diversity policy. All consultation exercises undertaken to date and to be undertaken in the future will comply with the Dudley Council Consultation toolkit with particular consideration for the views of children and young people.

### **Recommendation**

25. It is recommended that:-

- a. The Cabinet note the progress made on the development of the Seven Sisters and Wren's Nest Heritage Experience project to date.
- b. The Cabinet approve the submission of the Stage 2 "A Million People: The Black Country as Urban Park " BIG application
- c. The Cabinet approve the submission of the HLF application for the stabilisation of the Seven Sisters mines, interpretation and educational elements of the site and the visitor facilities at the Seven Sisters
- d. The Council be recommended to include £175,000 in the capital programme to cover the site investigation works.
- e. The Cabinet support the ongoing work of the Council to secure match funding to support the BIG and HLF applications.
- f. The Director of the Urban Environment be authorised to submit applications to Advantage West Midlands and any other potential match funding bodies and accept any grant funding arising
- g. The Cabinet agree to the establishment of a Strategic Management Group within Dudley MBC, to be chaired by an appropriate Cabinet member for the Development phase of the project and its subsequent implementation.
- h. The Director of the Urban Environment, in consultation with the Director of Finance, be authorised to enter into contracts with the necessary specialist Contractors and Consultants In order to meet the timescales outlined in the report.
- i. The Director of Law and Property in consultation with the Director of the Urban Environment be authorised to enter into any related legal agreements to effect the delivery of the project.



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**List of Background Papers**

BIG Stage 1 bid "A Million People: The Black Country as Urban Park "