

Halesowen Area Committee – 2nd July 2008

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

THE LEASOWES RESTORATION

Purpose of Report

1. To advise the Committee on the progress of the restoration of the historic landscape at Leasowes Park

Background

2. This Committee has considered a number of reports on the status of the Leasowes Restoration, the most recent of which was on the 12th March 2008. At this meeting the Committee received an update on the proposals for the restoration of The Leasowes, including an anticipated start on site in May 2008. As a result a request from the Friends of The Leasowes, the report also included a breakdown of costs incurred to date.
3. The Committee resolved that a further report to include a detailed analysis on where the money had been spent be submitted to the next meeting, and that the matter be referred to the Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education for a detailed investigation.
4. It should be noted that since the last report to this Area Committee the final negotiations with the preferred tenderer have been completed and the full cost of the Phase 1 works can now be confirmed.
5. A breakdown of costs both incurred and anticipated to complete the Phase 1 restoration is set out below. In considering the costs a number of issues need to be borne in mind. Firstly, at the time of submitting the original bid to the HLF, a number of factors could not have been anticipated. Indicative of these are the construction and fee costs associated with the requirements of the Environment Agency relating to the high cascade, middle pool and bypass channel, and the changing waste management legislation which has forced an alternative approach to be taken to disposal of dredgings. In addition, delays associated with the above have inevitably led to increased fee, labour and materials costs. At the time of inviting tenders for the current restoration contract, officers anticipated the risk of cost increases; however, the true cost of these could only be ascertained after receipt of tenders in May 2007. Members were advised at the last Area Committee that due to design amendments offered by the preferred tenderer and the need to source

alternative materials and carry out engineering and heritage assessments on the alternative proposals, it was not been possible to award a contract in 2007 in time to complete the construction work in the watercourses within the seasonal restrictions applied by the Environment Agency. Detailed costs are shown in Appendix A.

6. The results of the tender exercise identified a shortfall of £265,000. Approval was made by decision sheet to allocate this funding from available Section 106 receipts for improvements to open space.
7. At its meeting on the 4th June 2008 the Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education resolved to undertake a detailed investigation of The Leasowes Restoration project, in the light of the concerns expressed by Halesowen Area Committee and for a report to be submitted to the September 2008 meeting of the Select Committee.
8. Members may be interested to know that the Council's Audit Services carried out an extensive audit of the Leasowes Restoration in June 2005. The objectives of the audit were to assess compliance with the following: the Council's project management processes; appointment of consultants in accordance with Standing Orders and Financial Regulations; operation of appropriate cost control and adherence to HLF grant conditions. The report made no recommendations found that

"All systems were found to be operating to a high standard, and a good level of control appears to be operating on the project"
9. In addition, the HLF apply a high level of scrutiny to all projects under their grant programmes. A dedicated HLF Project Monitor is assigned to this project, whose role is to ensure that, via frequent reports submitted by the Council, visits and meetings, that the terms and conditions of the grant are being met, and that any variations are dealt with properly. In addition the Project Monitor reviews in detail all claims for grant submitted by the Council to the HLF to prior to recommending that grant be paid
10. Since the last report to this Committee the contract has been awarded for the remaining elements of the Phase 1 restoration (Beechwater Dam; the High Cascade, footpaths, bridges, and smaller cascades in Virgil's Grove, Lower Pool, and improvements to the main entrance to the park). The contract has been awarded to Alun Griffiths Contractors, who achieved the best price:quality tender score. This contractor has significant experience of carrying out civil engineering and landscape works on environmentally sensitive sites where archaeological and heritage matters have to be considered.
11. Work started on site on the 12th May and the contractor has provided a construction programme which is summarised as below:

- Late May – September; excavation for and construction of the High Cascade and pool in Virgil's Grove
 - July – September; reconstruction of Beechwater Dam and Cascade
 - July – December; restoration of Lower Pool, cascades, footpaths, footbridges and smaller cascades in Virgil's Grove
 - January 2009; improvements to the Mucklow Hill entrance (new kerbs, fencing, bollards, paving and speed humps) and removal of site office and compound
12. A verbal update will be given at the meeting on work which has taken place since the date of preparing this report
13. All residents in and adjacent to the park and members of the Friends of The Leasowes were sent a letter prior to the start of the work explaining the programme and the likely impacts on park during the construction period. 2 information panels have been posted in the Park, one adjacent to the Wardens' base and one at the Kent Road entrance, and in addition information panels are on display at Halesowen Golf Club, the Stourbridge College annexe, and in the Grounds Maintenance depot. A regular update which includes current construction activity, any path closures and forthcoming events is sent out and added to these panels to ensure that information is kept up to date. In addition, information notices are being posted in the vicinity of construction work so that park users are aware of the purpose of work currently underway. A number of press releases have been issued and more are planned at key stages in the work. In addition, a series of open days are being planned so that visitors may see the work in progress in an informed and safe manner.
14. The Leasowes Operations Team meetings have recommenced with a renewed focus now that the restoration work has commenced. These meetings have in the past been used as a stakeholder group to engage those with an interest in the park, and are currently being held monthly to ensure that the impact of the construction work is minimised and that communication with park users is working effectively. The group is attended by officers from the Directorate of the Urban Environment and representatives from the Friends of The Leasowes, Halesowen Golf Club, Stourbridge College and Alun Griffiths Contractors

Finance

14. The total cost of this project is:-

	£'000	£'000
<u>Project Costs</u>		
Restoration work	828	
Structural Engineers and Other Professional Fees	469	
Project Co-ordination	226	
Other Costs (including contingency)	70	
		1,593
<u>Council Spend Used as Matchfunding</u>		
Wardens Costs (over 6 years)	295	
Maintenance Costs (over 6 years)	140	
		436
Total Costs		2,029
<u>Funded by:-</u>		
HLF Grant		1,307
Section 106 Contribution		265
Liveability		21
Council Matchfunding		436
		2,029

15. When the original bid for HLF funds was submitted, it was a requirement to identify Council matchfunding and this was largely identified from revenue spending on grounds maintenance costs and warden expenditure. The actual cost of restoration works, preparation costs and fees will be met from the approved HLF grant (which has been subject to review by HLF since it was first approved) and Section 106 funds.

Law

15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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

Equality Impact

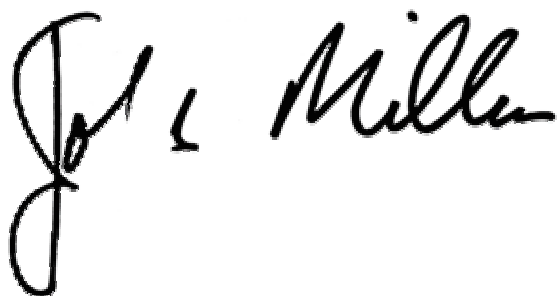
18. Access improvements in Leasowes Park are being carried out with regard to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and in accordance with best practice in improving access to open space

Recommendation

19. It is proposed that the contents of this report be noted

Background Papers

None



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APPENDIX A

Activity	Costs to date	Remaining costs to end of Phase 1 Restoration	Total anticipated costs to end of Phase 1 Restoration
Restoration costs			
Woodland Restoration	£23,700	£23,588	£47,288
Access, footpaths & signage	£29,163		£29,163
Temporary wardens base	£39,867		£39,867
Water features restoration & restoration of buildings & structures		£711,737	£711,737
Land Survey	£24,759		£24,759
Historic Landscape Consultant	£43,528	£5,000.00	£48,528
Landscape Architect	£51,901		£51,901
Project Management	£226,291		£226,291
Archaeologist	£23,576		£23,576
Planning Supervisor	£5,248	£2,000	£7,248
Structural Engineer	£299,828	£13,398	£313,227
Planning Application	£440		£440
Feasibility for visitor facilities	£7,008		£7,008
Signage and other miscellaneous fee costs			£12,331
Contingency		£50,000	£50,000
Subtotal restoration costs			£1,593,370
Council match funding			
Grounds Maintenance	£140,520		£140,520
Wardens	£295,000		£295,000
Subtotal match funding			£435,520
Total project cost			£ 2,028,890