

REPORT OF HEAD OF PARK DELIVERY

SUBJECT:

UPDATE ON PLANS FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SITE AT CILRHEDYN,

Members will recall that at the Authority Meeting in February 2016 it was agreed to continue to work with a partnership of Coed Cymru and Tir Coed to find a new way to use the centre and to reduce the costs of operation for the Authority. This proposal was supported by an initial business plan. The partnership has made progress in developing plans and in obtaining grants to support the development of their work and have supplied a brief interim report. This is attached for members' consideration.

The Centre continues at present to act as a valuable base for the North Warden and Ranger teams supporting the management of woodlands, sites and paths in the north of the park. It continues to supply the majority of the timber furniture used for the management of NPA sites and paths and provides limited external sales, being operated with a much reduced staff integrated with the North Warden Team.

Recommendation

That Members consider the report and welcome the progress made in obtaining funding to help fund the appointment of a Pembrokeshire-based Coed Cymru Officer and that NPA staff continue to work with the partnership to develop a workable plan for the future.

Background Documents

- Future Use of The National Park Site at Cilrhedyn, Llanychaer; Report of Director of Delivery and Discovery National Park Authority February 2016
- Future Use Of The National Park Site At Cilrhedyn, Llanychaer; Report of Director of Delivery and Discovery National Park Authority November 2015.
- Update Report on the Cilrhedyn Woodland Centre Operational Review Committee 15/10/2014
- Cilrhedyn Woodland Centre Verbal Update - Minutes of the meeting of the Operational Review Committee 22/04/2015
- Presentation by Coed Cymru & Tir Coed - Minutes of the meeting of the Operational Review Committee 01/07/2015

(For further information, please contact Charles Mathieson Head of Park Delivery)
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Coed Cymru and Tir Coed

Update on progress with proposals for Cilrhedyn Timber Centre, July 2016

Much progress has been made during 2016 towards the development of a viable business model for the future of the Centre. The following actions have been undertaken:

- We have considered a number of possibilities for social enterprise models and have investigated options for business incubation supported by Tir Coed/Coed Cymru with links to wider initiatives. A number of factors at Cilrhedyn make the site particularly suitable for this but there are also challenges, not least location and transport.
- We have successfully secured funding from PLANED towards a feasibility report (match funded by CC and TC), which is currently being undertaken and due to be completed at the end of August. This will inform a final business plan. 14 case studies have already been produced of similar models.
- The implications of Brexit could significantly affect a business model. Funding routes under RDP that we had pursued to support the project are on hold, although LEADER funding does appear safe until 2018. We may need to be realistic in what is now achievable. There could also be significant opportunities post Brexit, particularly an impetus to develop new income streams and prosperity in rural areas, which is central to this project. The Environment Act and Wellbeing Future Generations Act are also opportunities against which we are well aligned.
- CC has been successful in its bid to Sustainable Management Scheme with funding to host a Coed Cymru officer in Pembrokeshire to support woodlands in West Wales, based in Cilrhedyn. We therefore will have one of the key links in place between the Centre and the wider landholders. TC has secured 83% funding towards its pilot (due to start January 2017) and is awaiting the outcome of 3 other funding bids. 45% of the full project funding has been secured (due to start July 2017) and the large Big Lottery funding bid will be submitted on the 15th October with an outcome expected early April 17.
- CC will lead consultation with 38 local timber businesses to develop wider inclusion and buy-in to Cilrhedyn
- Attendance at the Pembrokeshire Show planned for 17th August on the Planed stand (no space was available on PCNPA) for further consultation with rural businesses

- TC have consulted over 40 Pembrokeshire organisations about training and engagement provision via phone interviews, response has shown overwhelming support for the project and a gap in provision that this would fill. 10 letters of support have been collated to date with more pending.

The consultation to date has highlighted:

- There is very little provision of this kind in the county, particularly in the North
 - More outdoor activities would really benefit service users of an array of organisations
 - National Park training showed great results
 - There is very little in the way of woodland training
 - There is a need for better progression routes into work in the area
 - Practical training is scarce & valuable to a huge percentage who struggle with a formal learning system
 - People can see the positive impact of engagement with natural environment first hand
 - Engaging with the locality and community is important to groups and individuals in the area
- 15 organisations attended a stakeholder event in Fishguard to find out about the Tir Coed provision and take part in a discussion regarding the best way of engaging with their service users/clients. Further one to one meetings are planned to develop partnership opportunities highlighted at this event.
 - 60 members of the public were consulted during street surveys seeking opinions on local economic opportunities, with particular focus on local woodlands.
 - 82% of respondents felt there was a serious lack of work opportunities in the area, with 70% claiming training opportunities were scarce for young and under-skilled people. Whilst 0% had the chance to take part in any woodland training in the past, 100% of under 20's would have liked to engage in such activities. 98% of respondents wanted to see more opportunities for skill based training in their local woodlands for young people, unemployed people and under-skilled people, and 90% wanted to see the same for paying customers.
 - We have also continued discussions with the managing company of the former RNAD site at Trecwn and Welsh Government's Business & Regional Development department to explore wider business opportunities that the project may link into. Coed Cymru has assisted in the preparation of a Woodland Management grant scheme at Trecwn which will bring some timber to the local market in late 2016.