



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Hardingstone Bike Park – Contractor Procurement
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	24 th March 2021
Key Decision:	Yes
Within Policy:	Yes
Policy Document:	No
Directorates:	Economy & Assets
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Cllr Tim Hadland, Regeneration & Enterprise
Ward(s)	Delapre

1. Purpose

1.1 For Cabinet to note the opportunity for the Council to seek funds through the Places to Ride Programme and, subject to the application for funding being successful, to delegate authority to the Acting Director of Economy and Assets to appoint a contractor following a compliant procurement process for the works required to construct a new bike park adjacent to the Delapre Golf Course as specified in the report.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Cabinet supports the Hardingstone 9 Bike Park project including the acceptance of the Places To Ride application, subject to the conditions set out in 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 in the report.
- 2.2 Cabinet delegates authority to the Acting Director of Economy and Assets, in consultation with the Borough Secretary, Chief Finance Officer and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise to appoint and enter into a Contract

with the successful contractor for the construction works to convert of a disused nine hole golf course into a mountain bike centre and general outdoor facility following completion of the tender process. West Northamptonshire Cabinet will receive further reports to their Executive should these be required.

- 2.3 Cabinet notes the land annexed to this report is currently leased to Delapre Golf Club and that negotiations to release the area of the land are ongoing and subject to contract and approval by West Northamptonshire Council. The appointment of the Contractor will not complete before the land is brought back into Council control.
- 2.4 Cabinet approves a legal budget of up to a maximum of £25,000 if deemed necessary by the Acting Director of Economy and Assets in consultation with and the approval of the Borough Secretary to procure external legal expertise in construction in connection with the works proposed herein to the Bike Park.
- 2.5 Cabinet notes that West Northamptonshire Council will progress with the work set out within this report from 1st April 2021, having been consulted on the reports contents.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 There is a clear need for further health and wellbeing facilities within Northampton as outlined in strategic documents such as the Northamptonshire Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy 2016-2020 and the Northampton Local Plan 2.
- 3.1.2 The Northamptonshire Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy 2016-2020 sets out a range of measures to reduce health inequalities such as creating spaces, facilities and infrastructure to enable people to make healthier choices, as well as objectives to ensure people have access to leisure spaces, green and natural spaces and recreational facilities and community assets that promote health and wellbeing and improve cycling as part of an integrated infrastructure.
- 3.1.3 Northampton's Local Plan 2 sets out key priorities to address health disparity and create healthy and inclusive communities through spaces facilities and infrastructure that enable people to make healthier choices. The creation of the bike park would support the following points as captured in the local plan:
 - Physical activity – creating environments that encourage and support people to be active, through active travel, play, informal and formal leisure and sporting activities.
 - Social interaction – providing facilities and spaces that can be used for formal and informal social interaction and community activity.
 - Green infrastructure – effective incorporation of multi-functional green infrastructure, providing benefits such as access, play and recreation, attractive environments and wildlife habitat, flooding, climate and air quality management, relaxation and enhanced mental wellbeing.

- 3.1.4 A dedicated mountain biking facility is an excellent way to meet these needs and also addresses the issue of the lack of purpose built, free facilities, for either road or off-road cycling disciplines. A designated area for the growing number of off-road riders is required in the area with British Cycling having the Oxfordshire/Northamptonshire area identified as a strategic priority for cycling facility development and where the proposed facility would help meet this need.
- 3.1.5 The current closest similar facilities are the mountain bike centres provided by Forestry Agencies such as the Forest of Dean (Gloucester), Coed-y-Brenin (North Wales), and Cannock Chase (West Mids.), which provide excellent free to ride facilities and Northamptonshire riders are frequent visitors. However, the nearest of these is almost 2 hours away by car.
- 3.1.6 Closer to home, some managed facilities are available at Chicksands Bike Park and Woburn Trails, but tend to be for more advanced riders. The one thing all of these facilities have in common is the need for motorised transport to get there which makes it difficult for younger riders to access.
- 3.1.7 The proposed facility will mean Northampton can become a regional Destination Cycling Facility centre, offering inclusive mountain biking for all ages and abilities; offering a start for those with an initial interest, and inspiration to those looking to progress their skills to the highest level.

Hardingstone Bike Park Project and Places to Ride Programme

- 3.1.8 British Cycling and Sport England have the aim of developing a national network of new cycling facilities which meets local demand, making use of a £15 million investment programme from the Department for Culture Media and Sport, called Places to Ride.
- 3.1.9 The funding is available to any organisation that is developing cycling activity in their community and can be used for anything from equipment packages to activate your local space, through to a brand-new cycling facility.
- 3.1.10 The Council, working closely with its funding partner Northamptonshire Sport, a partnership of local and national organisations working together to provide opportunities for people to participate in sport, and a volunteer team, to develop an initial Stage 1 application. This project proposal is for a former nine-hole golf course (Hardingstone Course) in Northampton which is currently overgrown and returning to nature, turned into a mountain bike centre and general outdoor facility.
- 3.1.11 The project will deliver a designated off-road cycling area enabling all ages and all levels to learn, progress and hone their skills. The land has the ideal topography to be converted into off road cycling trials. Providing the area as a free-to-all facility will open mountain biking to a wider audience. The site is located less than 2km from Northampton town centre giving good accessibility and would be located adjoining existing sport/leisure uses building on the facilities in the vicinity. Given the location the

site would also benefit from traffic free cycle routes connecting the site with public transport hubs as well as major housing areas.

3.1.12 The intention would be to retain all the natural features and use the open areas of the “fairways” to construct nine ascending and descending mountain bike runs of varying difficulty from beginner level to expert, complemented by a learn to ride area. This would enable the facility to offer opportunities for individuals to progress from learning how to ride a bike to mastering challenging technical features.

3.1.13 Footpaths and nature trails would be included in the design to make use of the more natural areas. There are areas of green infrastructure outside the facility that already accommodate cross country style riding.

3.1.14 The existing golf complex already has facilities such as toilets, café, and shop facilities. These facilities would be incorporated into the project by installing bike racking in the area near the cafe to allow the users of the bike park to use these facilities.

3.1.15 The Stage 1 Places to Ride application was submitted in November 2020, with it being announced later that month that the proposal was successful in being invited to submit a stage 2 application.

3.1.16 The deadline for the second stage application was 15th January 2021, with this submission having been made, the outcome is currently being awaited.

Procurement of a principal contractor

3.1.17 The bike park tracks have been designed and costed up to a ‘Macro’ level using professional trail building company which has formed the basis of the bid submission. The next stage of more detailed designs and specification are being completed using a specialist Bike Park contractor ahead of the Tender pack being prepared for the works.

3.1.18 It is expected that a tender pack including the design work will be tendered in April 2021 with contractor appointment scheduled to take place on June 2021 (subject to approval).

3.1.19 It is proposed that an open tender process will be used to procure the works with a cap being set on the value of the works procured in line with the monies that are available at the time and limit the risk to the council. The level of the cap will be clarified when the funding announcement as part of the Places to Ride application is made and other external funding sources are exhausted.

3.1.20 If there are variations required that increase costs during the construction phases the Council will use Value Engineering of the works to control costs.

- 3.1.21 The contract terms and Terms and Conditions will be developed in consultation with the Procurement team and the Council's Legal Services team.

Operation of the Bike Park

- 3.1.22 The Council will be the lead applicant for the funding with the Council being the freeholder of the site and Northamptonshire Sport, being the operator of the proposed facility, will be responsible for the running of the facility, subject to a lease being agreed following funding approval and negotiations.

- 3.1.23 It is proposed that the designated operator of the completed facility will be Northamptonshire Sport CIO. Northamptonshire Sport, being the named operator in the funding application, it will manage finances and coordinate use of the facility with community groups. Negotiations over a lease with Northamptonshire Sport from the Council is currently underway, a lease of 25 years will be required as this is a minimum lease term for the funding agreement - this will be considered by West Northamptonshire Council.

Programme

- 3.1.24 The programme plan milestones for build and deliver are as follows:

- Application mid Jan 2021.
- Award notification end Mar 2021.
- Planning process complete end May 2021
- Procurement process complete end June 2021
- Commence build July 2021
- Completion January 2022 (Allowing 2 months contingency prior to fund closure March 2022)

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 Full funding terms have not yet been issued and these will be considered in detail and agreed through either delegations within the constitution of West Northamptonshire Council or brought back to the West Northamptonshire Council's Executive for a decision, where appropriate.
- 3.2.2 The site is currently leased to Delapre Golf Centre with a surrender of the land required for the bike park currently in the process of being negotiated.
- 3.2.3 A lease will be required with Northamptonshire Sport, as the proposed operator of the facility, this is currently being negotiated with a decision on this to be taken by West Northamptonshire Council.
- 3.2.4 Unofficial trails have been created in local woods and are well used by local mountain bike riders, and this does create obvious conflicts between the riders, landowners and other amenity users. A designated area for the

growing number of off-road riders will prevent this conflict and meet this clear need.

3.2.5 If the Places to Ride funding is not sufficient to complete all project outputs, then value engineering will need to take place potentially impacting on the agreed outputs with the funder, British Cycling.

3.2.6 Key risks and mitigation –

- The funding received is not sufficient to complete the project – further detailed design work is being undertaken to give a greater level of certainty on cost prior to the tender process. The designs can be value engineered if required.
- The project does not achieve practical completion by January 2022 and Financial Completion by March 2022 – The programme to design, tender and implement is clearly established from the onset of the project with clearly defined milestones and some scope for slippage within the programme.

3.3 Choices (Options)

3.3.1 Cabinet can choose not to agree to the recommendations of this report and not proceed with the works. This will mean the Places to Ride grant offer will not be achieved and the site will continue to be underutilised.

3.3.2 Cabinet can choose to accept the recommendations as presented. This option is recommended in order to develop a new bike park at the site creating a much-needed new leisure facility serving the needs of the community.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 The recommendations of this report are within policy and have no policy implications.

4.2 Resources and Risk

4.2.1 The land which is shown on the attached annex is leased to Delapre Golf Club on a long lease. There have been discussions and an in-principle decision agreed with the Golf Club to release the land subject to the negotiations of a new lease.

4.2.2 The discussions to release the land back into Council ownership have been in conjunction with the proposed strategy for the site and a decision will be taken by West Northamptonshire Council through the appropriate decision making channel once the assets team have received further information on the due diligence of the transaction.

- 4.2.3 The Council has committed match funding to the project of £250,000 which is made up of a combination of S106 receipts and capital match funding which was approved by Cabinet in December 2020.
- 4.2.4 There are a number of financial risks associated with the project as outlined in section 3.2 above. In particular, the potential for unexpected issues as the work progresses, resulting in increased costs which could exceed the value of the contingencies available. However, the budget is the key factor for the project and further mitigations can be made through design engineering and ensuring value for money throughout.
- 4.2.5 Time constraints around the grant funding are also a risk to delivering the project on time and within budget. The Council will ensure appropriate mitigations are in place to minimise this risk.
- 4.2.6 The project proposes the development of a bike park with an estimated cost of £500,000, with a funding bid of £250,000 made to the Places to Ride scheme. The Council will need to fund the other 50% of funds. This funding is made up of £150,000 from S106 with £15,000 from existing budgets and £15,000 to be raised through fund raising and the remaining £70k agreed through borrowing.

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1 The procurement for the works to the facility and award of contract must be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and any grant funding conditions from British Cycling. The Council should seek a fixed price to ensure no value engineering occurs after award of contract. A full cost analysis of the proposed works will need to be undertaken prior to acceptance of any external funding to ensure its viability.
- 4.3.2 Subject to Cabinet's approval of the project, the management and operation of the facility will be further considered to ensure that a suitably experienced organisation is in place to operate the facility and that the ongoing maintenance of the facility is appropriately addressed together with adequate funding.
- 4.3.3 It is noted initially at paragraph 2.3 above, and then throughout the Cabinet Report, that the proposed site for the Hardingstone Bike Park was leased by the Council to Delapre Golf Centre Limited on the 24th January 2005 for a term of 40 years from the 1st May 2003, and that at present negotiations are ongoing between the parties with respect to surrendering that part of the lease back to the Council.
- 4.3.4 If subject to the approval of West Northamptonshire Council (pursuant to and in accordance its Constitution and with the Scheme of Delegation to Officers) the West Northamptonshire Council are minded to proceed then it is recommended that further legal advice be obtained from Legal Services, with respect to both the transactional property elements, (including legal and financial due diligence) of this proposal and the grant funding element, (if successful) so that the obligations placed on West Northamptonshire Council with respect to same are understood, and finally legal advice with respect to the management structure to support the facility going forward once all facts,

obligations and potential liabilities connected to the proposal are known and understood.

4.4 Equality and Health

4.4.1 Services to the public will not be directly impacted as a result of the recommendation of this report. There are therefore no direct equality or health implications. However, there will be a variety of non-direct benefits that will come from this underused site coming back into use.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 The following Council Partners and Community Projects have been engaged with regarding the proposal and advised that there is a need for this project and give it their support:

Local Government

- Northamptonshire County Council – Highways, Walking and Cycling Officer;
- Northamptonshire County Council – Community Sports Development;
- Office of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Diversionary and Outreach Youth Service
- Northamptonshire Police
- Hardingstone Parish Council.

Youth Services

- Learn 2 Live – <https://learn-2-live.org.uk/>
- Community Courtyard – <https://communitycourtyard.org/>
- Peak Empowerment - <https://www.peak-empower.co.uk/>
- Lowdown – <https://thelowdown.info/>
- Free2Talk – <https://www.free2talkcic.org/>
- Northampton Town FC Community Trust – <https://www.ntfcccommunity.co.uk/>
- Northampton Association of Youth Clubs (NAYC)
- Northampton Saints Foundation
- Service Six - <https://www.servicesix.co.uk/>
- Spring Boroughs Youth Hub - <https://springsfamily.org.uk/>
- Talk Out Loud – www.facebook.com/talkoutlouduk

Others

- University of Northampton
- Northampton Schools Sports Partnership (Appendix 5e)
- Delapre Abbey Trust

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

4.6.1 This report will contribute to the priority corporate outcomes of

- Improving the health and wellbeing of local people through the creation of new free to access leisure facilities within the town.

5. Background Papers

Cabinet Report – 16 December 2020 – Asset Management Disposals
<http://www.northamptonboroughcouncil.com/councillors/documents/s63285/Disposals%20Cabinet%20Paper%20Final.pdf>

Contact: Kevin Langley, Acting Director of Economy and Assets

Appendix 1

