

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

12 JANUARY 2010

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, WELLBEING

BRYNGARW COUNTRY PARK VISIT WALES CONVERGENCE BID AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A 'BRYNGARW' MANAGEMENT BOARD

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise Cabinet of the details of a bid to be submitted to WEFO for Convergence Funding for a scheme at Bryngarw Country Park, based on the match funding coming from an application to the Western Valleys Strategic Regeneration Area Fund in March 2010, and
- 1.2 To seek approval to establish a Bryngarw Management Board to oversee the strategic management of Bryngarw House, Bryngarw Country Park and B-LEAF and ensure that the ongoing review of the facilities and their management, as well as the management and implementation of any successful funding bid has relevant Corporate input.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan/Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 The Corporate Improvement Plan 2008/11 contains the Council's corporate objectives, which in turn are directed and informed by the priorities embodied in the Community Strategy.
- 2.2 Bryngarw Country Park forms an integral part of the Council's regeneration activity while contributing to the Community Strategy's Healthy Living and Proud Past agenda. It will address the Council's priority themes for
 - Ensuring a Diverse and Sustainable Economy,
 - Caring for our Future
 - Opportunities for Disadvantaged Communities.
- 2.3 The European funded scheme would be procured, managed and delivered in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures and in accordance with WEFO's own guidelines.
- 2.4 The proposed Management Board will report in the usual manner to the relevant Service Directors and Corporate Management Board and will not have any additional separate powers.

3. Background

- 3.1 Delegated Power approval has been gained for the submission of a bid to WEFO for enhancements to the visitor facilities at the Country Park on the 11th December 2009.

- 3.2 Calculations from STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Measure) 2008 reveal that visitors to Bryngarw House and Park contributed to generating £2.77 million in the local economy. The Country Park is a much valued visitor attraction and local venue that generates a high degree of civic pride.
- 3.3 Bryngarw still holds considerable potential for further development both as a tourist destination and as a focal point to showcase local culture and heritage. There is also a growing educational market focussing on environmental issues and horticulture.
- 3.4 Bryngarw is currently subject to a review aimed at realising its potential and providing a more sustainable business model for the future. This can be considered as having three distinct features:
- The gardens
 - The house
 - B-LEAF Day Services Project
- 3.5 As part of this review a Workshop was held at Bryngarw on 24th November 2009, attended by a cross section of senior managers from across the Council. The event considered the 'future of Bryngarw' and was intended to allow a common understanding of the current position, gain cross Directorate input on the risks and opportunities and inform future thinking concerning the House and Park.
- 3.6 One key issue that emerged was the need to establish an Officer Management Group or Board to oversee the various services within Bryngarw and ensure integration, thereby allowing the service areas to better complement each other towards a common purpose for the venue.
- 3.7 It was generally recognised that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts in Bryngarw and that projects and initiatives should support an integrated attraction that complements regeneration plans for the wider area.

4. Current Situation

- 4.1 Visit Wales (the tourism arm of the Welsh Assembly Government) recently announced that their expression of interest for a new Centre of Excellence concept under the Convergence programme was successful. They invited councils to come forward at short notice with bids under this initiative and have encouraged local authorities across the South West Wales region to work collaboratively based on a Historic Gardens theme. Officers from Bridgend have been working with their counterparts in the City and County of Swansea, Ceredigion CC, Carmarthenshire CC and the lead authority Neath Port Talbot CBC, on a joint bid based on the improvement and promotion of historical parks and gardens with the aim of enhancing visitor experiences.
- 4.2 The focus of the Bryngarw element will be to enhance the profile of the historic park and garden through restoration and enhancement, interpreting from both a historical and horticultural perspective. Aligned to this is the

development of new and much needed visitor facilities with a greater focus on enhancing the experience for visitors. The project is a key component of other sustainable transport regeneration projects linked to cycling and walking within Bridgend.

- 4.3 Extending and enhancing the current visitor centre will form a vital facility for visitors and families and an indoor base for coordinating an exciting range of environmental and heritage events and volunteer activities.
- 4.4 The current toilet, classroom and café facilities in the Park will be upgraded and extended into a multi-functional venue for educational visits, re-enactment performances and small conferences. This links directly with Bryngarw House and Park's cultural heritage, which has continued to the present day with the highly popular summer arts festival. Investing in audio visual equipment and presentation facilities will enable Bryngarw to broaden its visitor appeal by hosting specialist events and exhibitions.
- 4.5 As part of the Gardens Centre of Excellence project it is proposed to add value to the B-LEAF Day Services project by providing a 'shop-front' for visitors and enhancing B-LEAF's role as a sustainable development programme.
- 4.6 The project will support Bryngarw House and Park to increase engagement with local communities while enhancing its role as a destination of choice within a network of Gardens along the South Wales region.
- 4.7 The deadline for the submission of bids was the 14th December 2009. The application included confirmation of match-funding for revenue elements, and confirmation that the majority of match-funding will be applied for from the Western Valleys Strategic Regeneration Area Fund. It was therefore necessary to obtain relevant delegated powers to submit the application by this deadline.
- 4.8 A summary of the project costs, grant and gap funding is provided in a table in section 7.
- 4.9 As part of the submission the Council has indicated it will establish a Bryngarw Officer 'Management Board' to oversee the implementation of the project. However, it is also felt that such a 'Board' would have significant merit on a wider basis as a means of overseeing the various facilities in Bryngarw. It is hoped that the Board could be in place early in 2010 and is it proposed officers from the following departments would be invited to be represented at senior level:

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|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| i) Healthy Living | vi) Legal |
| ii) Adult Social Care | vii) Regeneration |
| iii) Property | viii) Human Resources |
| iv) Tourism | ix) The House Manager |
| v) Finance | x) The Head Park Warden |

- 4.10 In view of the projected budget saving identified for Bryngarw House in the Draft Council Budget for 2011/12, one of the first tasks of the Board would be to explore ways of reducing and ultimately removing the subsidy for the operation of the House. This work will inevitably include some market sounding/testing with commercial operators to test the potential for capital investment and the viability of the current facility running on a commercial basis. It is recognised that there are many significant implications from this process and that it will need to be handled extremely carefully, and that Corporate input will be crucial.
- 4.11 It is also proposed that the Board would immediately pick up other key issues identified in the recent workshop. These include, more coherent marketing, events, community involvement and engagement including volunteering, green flag development and the potential for further grant applications.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no impact on the Policy Framework and Procedure rules.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications to this report. The scheme to improve visitors facilities would in due course require planning consent, which will be pursued following the grant decision.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The grant intervention rate under the Centre of Excellence concept is expected to be 60%. The total eligible cost of the Bryngarw element would be £650, 000.

- 7.2 The financial breakdown of the project is provided in the following table.

Bryngarw – Convergence bid	
Total Project Cost	£650, 000
Convergence Grant applied for (60%)	£390, 000
Funding Gap - Represents the agreed bid to WV SRA	£260,000
Revenue Contribution to Central Management & Marketing	£20, 000
Over four years (to be found from existing Bryngarw Country Park budgets)	

- 7.3 The cost of establishing and servicing the Bryngarw Management Board will be found from within existing Bryngarw revenue budgets.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 That Cabinet note the details of the submission of the bid for Convergence funding and the pending match funding to the Western Valleys Strategic Regeneration Area Fund to improve visitor's facilities at Bryngarw Country Park and approve the establishment of an Officer, 'Bryngarw' Management Board with representation from relevant departments from across the Council.

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22 December 2009

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Background Papers: - None