

---

**REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 6 FEBRUARY 2019**

**PORTFOLIO: ENTERPRISE**

**REPORT FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**SUBJECT: HERITAGE GROWTH PROJECT – WALLASEA ISLAND**

**1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 To note the arrangements being made to secure the long term visitor potential of Wallasea Island, including an event in May 2020 allied to the Council's Discover 2020 Festival.

**2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The goal of the heritage growth project is to make the most of the opportunities created by the presence of the final resting place of HMS Beagle and the RSPB's Wild Coast Project at Wallasea Island within the District in order to facilitate economic growth through increased tourism and employment. It is allied to broader proposals for the Discover 2020 Festival and the draft Tourism Strategy for Rochford District, previously considered by the Executive.

**3 SALIENT INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Through partnership working and joint visioning activity the Council and the RSPB are positioned for Wallasea Island to be the focal point of national/international recognition of the final resting place of HMS Beagle, other District related heritage and the achievements of the RSPB. Up to this point the RSPB has invested more than £50m on the Island, including over £400,000 on recent additional habitat creation.
- 3.2 A budget of £50,000 was included in the Council's 2018/19 capital programme for the heritage growth project. The working intention is that these monies will be utilised to fund an HMS Beagle viewing platform, drainage culvert with vehicular crossing point and car park facilities, which would provide a long-term legacy for the District and bring in associated tourism. As construction is not likely to be able to start until Summer 2019 the funding is subject to Council agreement to slip the £50,000 capital budget into 2019/20. Works would not commence until a memorandum of understanding is in place with the RSPB.
- 3.3 The Council's Discover 2020 Festival is to commence with an event on Wallasea Island on the last weekend of May 2020 commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of HMS Beagle in May 1820. The RSPB has agreed that the three recently created lagoons in the vicinity of the proposed viewing platform will be named Beagle, Darwin and Fitzroy in homage.

- 3.4 Planning for the Island event is underway with partner organisations – the RSPB and Southampton University’s School of Marine Archaeology. It is intended that a central location on the Island will have a marquee and tents with exhibits and information on HMS Beagle, other District related heritage and the RSPB. Plans include historic group interpretation and access to the HMS Beagle viewing platform where further information/interpretation from Southampton University and, it is hoped, virtual reality representation will be available. Toilet and food/refreshment facilities will be provided. Planning is on the basis that activities on the day should be cost neutral, achieved through a mix of sponsorship, concessions and an event charge. The event could attract up to 2,500 visitors per day.
- 3.5 The locations of the viewing platform, the drainage culvert for the crossing point and car parking facilities are identified on the appended map.

#### Viewing Platform

This would be achieved through the building up and surfacing of an area of the existing sea wall to enable visitors to see the position of HMS Beagle as located in the water off the Island between 1845 and 1851. The platform would match the dimensions of the ship (90’ x 24’8”) and be accessible from three directions with sloping for disabled access.

#### Drainage Culvert for Crossing Point to Car Park

The construction of an access culvert across a pre-existing wide drainage ditch would enable permanent vehicular access to a car park located to provide closer access to the HMS Beagle viewing point than the current limited arrangement and to the optimum location for effective visitor facilities (both now and in the longer term).

#### Car Park

This would have a capacity for about 135 cars and be additional to the facility at the current Island entrance, which is suited to about 20 cars and is a significant distance from the proposed viewing platform. The new car park location is adjacent to the site where the proposed marquee and tents will be placed as part of the May 2020 celebration.

To maximise the number of vehicles able to park in a suitable location at the May 2020 event and provide an additional parking facility further surfacing suitable for vehicles will be introduced adjacent to the road accessing the event site.

### **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 No other options have been considered at this time as the heritage growth project is focussed on delivery of the May 2020 event and on-going visitor potential as part of the Discover 2020 Festival.

## 5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As set out in paragraph 3.2, provision was made in the Council's 2018/19 capital budget for £50,000 of works on the Heritage Growth Project, but as the planned works will not commence in this financial year Council would need to agree that the budget can be slipped into 2019/20.
- 5.2 The estimated costs of the intended capital works are set out below, leaving c£5,000 (10%) as contingency:

Planned Works	Estimated Cost
Crossing point over drainage culvert	12,993
Viewing platform	14,847
Car Park	7,254
Road works	10,000
<b>Total Estimated</b>	<b>45,094</b>

- 5.3 As these assets would not sit on the Council's balance sheet (i.e. they will be controlled by RSPB) the funding would be transferred to RSPB by way of a capital grant and treated as Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital Under Statute (REFCUS) within the Council's accounts, subject to them meeting the Council's policy for capitalisation.
- 5.4 As the Council will not own the assets, RSPB will be responsible for any costs associated with their repair and maintenance, plus any ongoing running costs. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and RSPB will be put in place before any capital grant is made.

## 6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 To ensure that the Council and RSPB work in partnership to deliver on the Heritage Growth Project a Memorandum of Understanding will be entered into by both parties. The MOU will put in place agreed aims and targets in relation to the infrastructure and the May 2020 event.

## 7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and found there to be no impacts (either positive or negative) on protected groups as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

LT Lead Officer Signature: John Bostock

**Assistant Director Democratic Services**

---

**Background Papers:-**

None.

For further information please contact John Bostock on:-

Phone: 01702 318140

Email: John.bostock@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

Appendix

