

RAYLEIGH WINDMILL - LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report advises Members on proposals for the use of each floor of the windmill, public consultation and a launch strategy.
- 1.2 This report also asks Members to consider forming a formal partnership with the National Trust, for their future involvement with this project.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Following the award of the grant from Thames Gateway for £340,000 for the refurbishment of the windmill and the sensory garden, officers have been developing more detailed proposals for the potential use of the windmill, including use of each floor level.
- 2.2 The refurbishment contract commenced in December 2004, with internal surveys of the building only before Christmas and the main works commencing in January 2005.
- 2.3 Initial meetings have been held with the National Trust and Soundtrack, to develop the IT strategy and brief and an internal project team has been set up to develop the IT.

3 DEVELOPING FUTURE USE

- 3.1 In exploring future uses of the windmill as a community facility, it is important that the community is fully engaged in the development process, to ensure that opportunities for usage are maximised. However, some preliminary decisions have had to be made, in order for the current refurbishment contract to be progressed. These decisions will provide for the necessary fixed services to be installed at the appropriate locations. These decisions now need to be considered and confirmed by Members.
- 3.2 Having considered the options for each floor, officers put forward the following suggestions for consideration. The proposals provide what is considered to be the best location for the museum interpretation, but ensure maximum flexibility for all floors:
 - Ground Floor – Predominantly classroom / exhibition space with computer screen(s). Include a small display area for the museum.
 - First Floor – Museum display with some class space / exhibition space
 - Second Floor – Meeting / exhibition space
 - 3rd. Floor – Viewing level, Rochford scale model / history timeline
 - 4th/5th floors – Not suitable for use – maintenance purposes only

- 3.3 The long term viability of this project is dependent on attracting community groups, other organisations, Chambers of Trade, etc, into and using the facility. It is therefore proposed that targeted meetings be held with various interested groups at this stage, to identify their aspirations within the project beyond those already agreed.

3.4 National Trust

- 3.4.1 Discussions have taken place with the National Trust on the project and they are now seeking a more formal partnership arrangement with the District Council in order that they can provide support, both in expertise and finance where possible and to allow for some elements of materials to be included in the windmill providing linkage with the Rayleigh Mount. The National Trust sees the windmill as a key element in developing the tourist potential of the Rayleigh Mount. However, no specifics have yet been discussed.

3.5 Information Technology (IT)

- 3.5.1 As stated earlier in the report, an internal working party has been set up to ensure the IT opportunities are fully exploited in this project. The opportunity to provide web access to the windmill is a very positive link. The opportunity to create an archive of materials, especially containing documents already held by the Rayleigh Historical Society, will lead to the site becoming a research site, especially for local interest. It is the key to making much more material available than at present, especially within this relatively small building. The discussions will involve the Essex Museums Service and allied services, to ensure that appropriate systems are put in place.

4 A STRATEGY FOR THE OPENING OF THE WINDMILL

- 4.1 One of the key elements for this project is a launch strategy that gains maximum publicity for the windmill.
- 4.2 The physical works of refurbishment are programmed for completion by July 2005. The sensory garden work will commence in August and is programmed for completion in November. The sensory garden could be opened to the public in November /December, to stimulate further public interest.
- 4.3 Much work needs to be completed for the educational package, museum displays and other internal detailing before the windmill is finally opened to the public. The Arts Development Officer (ADO) is working with the Museums Service, Libraries, Education and other bodies to facilitate these elements. The interpretation for the displays will need to be developed, including a collections policy. This needs to be developed by the Rayleigh Historical Society, supported by the Museums Service, with assistance from the Council's ADO. This work will be ongoing after the opening of the windmill as the archive is built up.

- 4.4 The windmill requires internal works to fitting out the IT, museum, displays, etc, and would potentially be able to open in April 2006, accepting that the museum development will not be complete at this stage, as archiving of documents is an ongoing project.

4.5 The Sensory Garden

The National Trust has already provided some information for this and research into elements that are successful in sensory gardens is being carried out, particularly through the use of the Internet. It is anticipated that some of the work in developing the content of this garden will be facilitated through schools, disability groups and other community groups, to ensure public ownership of the garden.

4.6 Future Management of the Windmill

Before more detailed discussions are held with the Council's Leisure Contractor, Holmes Place, decisions will have to be made about uses, and opening times, and the type of management the Council is seeking for the day to day running of the windmill.

4.7 Ongoing Publicity

As part of the ongoing publicity for the project, it is planned to include regular features outlining progress on the project in *Rochford District Matters* and a regular photographic update on the Council's website.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Strategic Risk

The project offers the ability to realise the tourism, cultural and historic potential of this site and upgrade the area generally.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Tenders had been sought in preparing the bid in line with Heritage Lottery Fund requirements, from specialist contractors. The costs for works for total external and internal refurbishment are tendered at a cost of £286,000.
- 6.2 Works to the sensory garden are estimated at £50,000. IT costs are estimated at £25,000, fees and other costs make up the balance to £400,000.
- 6.3 The Council has a sum of £60,000 in the Capital Budget to bring the total budget to £400,000, including the £340,000 grant from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

- 6.4 Continued membership of the Essex Museums Service is likely to be in the order of £1500 for 2004/05. Membership of this service was agreed at a meeting of the Community Services Committee on 2 September 2003 (Minute 388/03).
- 6.5 Negotiation of the management fee with the leisure contractor is on hold at this stage. Depending on the type of management arrangements required, this could require an additional annual sum to be included in the leisure contract from April 2006.
- 6.6 Depending on the uses that develop for the windmill, there may be the opportunity to provide some income stream that would help offset any management costs. Exhibitions, meetings, possibly weddings, etc, are the likely incomes possible.
- 6.7 Once constructed in quality materials, the sensory garden should only require a small amount of maintenance to be included in the grounds maintenance contract. Costs will be provided as the design is completed.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There is a legal obligation to maintain the windmill as it is a Grade 2 listed building.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**
- (1) To agree the proposals for the floor usage.
 - (2) To agree the broad strategy around the opening of the various elements of the project.
 - (3) To agree that the principle of a Partnership arrangement with the National Trust should be pursued to the overall benefit of the project, with details reported back to the Sub-Committee.

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Background Papers:

None.

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