

Mountsandel Update	11th April 2017
To: The Leisure and Development Committee For Information	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Protecting and enhancing our environment and assets
Outcome	Generating economic and social returns without compromising the sustainability of our natural assets
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation
Cost: (If applicable)	£0- £25,000

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the work currently ongoing to assess the potential future use of the Mountsandel woodland and the surrounding public amenity on both banks of the River Bann.

Background

At Council's Leisure and Development meeting in October 2016, Council Officers presented a 'blue print' document setting out a possible strategic vision and potential options for development of the wider Mountsandel site, including the adjacent lands on the western bank of the Lower River Bann.

The Recommendation from this meeting allowed Officers to proceed with the completion of Stage 1 Outline Business Case activities, assessing costs & benefits of potential development of the site under the following strategic areas:

- Improved public realm, facilities and natural amenity for the citizens of the area.
- An educational resource for all.
- Development of our tourism infrastructure, visitor economy and the regeneration of the area.

Funding Support and budget

Support from the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) has led to £20,000 of external funding being allocated to assist Council with this project.

Appointment of Professional Services

In March, Council Officers issued a Terms of Reference seeking 'Appointment of Professional Services to carry out a scoping and feasibility exercise, an establishment of need, and options for development in relation to the Mountsandel historic sites and the surrounding area'. Following procurement procedures, Council Officers have invited submissions from a number of specialist companies whom Officers believe have the necessary competencies and experience to fulfil the activities set out in the Terms of Reference. This process has now been completed and Doran Consulting have been appointed to assist Officers in the completion of the following activities:

Activity 1

Carry out an assessment of the Council produced document, entitled 'A Blueprint for Mountsandel'. Critique the findings and where necessary make recommendations for additional proposals, or an alternative approach to ensure that the Blueprint's concept fulfils the document's visionary statement. This activity will require close consultation with, and the agreement of, the Project Steering Group.

Activity 2

Undertake relevant widespread consultation with a range of stakeholders who can bring benefit to the process and may receive benefit from the process e.g. local community and tourism and recreation sectors. Academics and sectoral experts will require one-to-one consultation, as will officers from key statutory agencies. The following should be factored for:

- Deliver minimum of 3 public consultation meetings/workshops (Publicity and venue will be provided by Council).
- Conduct a series of one-to-one meetings with key identified individuals (up to 30) – to be identified by consultancy team with agreement from Council.
- Deliver 2 Councillors' workshops (Venue provided by Council).
- Attend a minimum of 5 office-based meetings with Project Steering Group.

Activity 3

Based on outcomes of Activities 1 and 2, formulate and advance recommendations for possible interventions for a Mountsandel Experience. As part of this process, a detailed market analysis of the potential to generate footfall and usage of the sites is required, demonstrating the need for economically sustainable development proposals. Bench marking from other relevant landscape /heritage/ educational/ learning based attractions must be included.

Based on the recommendations for proposed interventions, develop a concepts design that will include outline proposals for structural and building services systems, outline specifications and a preliminary cost plan (RIBA Plan of Work Stages 0-2).

Drawings, concepts and plans advanced to a level that allows for pre-planning discussions being submitted, so that planning officials can comment on proposals. Technical designs and specifications will include a detailed assessment of costs. (Cost of pre-planning application and submission to be met by Council).

Activity 4

Provide a digital topographical survey of relevant areas. Manage and carry out a geotechnical investigation to the extent required to demonstrate the feasibility of the proposals.

Activity 5

Economic Appraisal

An economic appraisal, that will be prepared in accordance with H M Treasury Guidance Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government (The Green Book HMSO 2003) and the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation. (DFP20\09).

Activity 6

Attendance at two Council meetings, outlining process, findings from consultation, project scoping, design development options, findings from economic appraisal, and presentation of recommendations.

Timescales

It is envisaged that the main body of the work will be completed by mid-summer 2017.

Next Steps

Officers aim to present findings to Council in early Autumn.