

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

**Executive – 18 January 2012**

## **Centre for Outdoor Activities and Community Hub (C.O.A.C.H) at French Weir Park, Taunton**

### **Report of the Chairman of the COACH project, Ian Payne and Robbie Lowes, Project Taunton**

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillors Catherine Herbert and Norman Cavill)

#### **1. Executive Summary**

This report requests that Taunton Deane Borough Council grant a 125 year lease, at a peppercorn rent, of the land at French Weir Park to Somerset Waterways Development Trust for the Centre for Outdoor Activities and Community Hub, COACH.

#### **2. Background**

The Project Taunton Steering Group gave their 'in principle' support to grant a long lease on the land required for the construction of a facility at French Weir Park (to include the existing toilet block) as match funding for the delivery of Somerset Waterways Development Trust's COACH project.

Initial investigation considered land at both the Firepool and French Weir ends of the River Tone through Taunton. In order to 1) minimise the impact on future commercial development at Firepool, 2) establish a gateway at French Weir Park and Longrun Meadow and 3) improve the amenities at French Weir, this southerly location is the preferred option and has the agreement of the Environment Agency in principle.

Somerset Waterways Development Trust, the COACH partnership team and Reed Holland Associates who won the design competition (funded by Project Taunton) to develop plans to pre planning application stage are now in a strong position to tender a funding submission.

#### **3. Details**

The COACH facility is both a building, including a floodable boat store on the ground floor and community facilities and cafe above, and a landmark boat lift to bring boats from below French Weir to the higher reaches of the River Tone and on towards Silk Mills. The building will provide a sustainable and functional permanent 'home' for a wide variety of clubs and community groups.

COACH has garnered tremendous public support from a wide range of organisations including: local government and education, community and friends groups, national sports governing bodies, sports/activity groups and uniformed organisations.

The project aims to:

- increase participation in wide ranging community and outdoor activities
- promote sporting excellence and provide a 'feed' to affiliated clubs
- encourage active lifestyles through ease of access
- promote the River Tone – an under-used asset
- add a community dimension to the town centre regeneration and beyond

Somerset Waterways Development Trust is the umbrella organisation managing COACH funding applications. The Trust has a successful record of winning and managing lottery monies for the benefit of the community.

Taunton Deane's grant of a lease for land on which the facilities would be constructed would count towards match funding and therefore substantially improve the chances of a successful bid.

The project is subject to full planning permission and for success in securing funding.

#### **4. Finance Comments**

Project Taunton has allocated £2,500 to the project, ring-fenced for architects' fees. Somerset Waterways Development Trust have granted the project £1,000, ring fenced to the design of the boat lift. SWDT, who have bid successfully for lottery funds previously, is pursuing funding from Big Lottery and other funders.

#### **5. Legal Comments**

A Lease Agreement will be required.

#### **6. Links to Corporate Aims**

This project links to the Regeneration corporate aim.

#### **7. Environmental Implications**

The facilities are planned for the flood plain and the ground floor of the community hub is designed as a floodable structure.

#### **8. Community Safety Implications**

The project will be managed for risks.

#### **9. Equalities Impact**

The resulting facilities will be fully accessible.

## **10. Risk Management**

The project will be managed for risks.

## **11. Partnership Implications**

COACH is an excellent example of multiple organisations working for the benefit of the community.

## **12. Recommendations**

That the Executive approves the grant of a long lease at a peppercorn rent of the land required at French Weir Park for the construction of COACH, subject to full planning permission being granted and funding for the project being secured.

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