

Report



Cabinet Member for Assets

Part 1

Date: 5 May 2020

Subject **ACQUISITION OF LAND ADJACENT TO TRANSPORTER BRIDGE, NEWPORT**

Purpose To seek approval from the Cabinet Member for Assets to acquire the freehold of a parcel of land adjacent to the Transporter Bridge to enable the development of the new Visitor Centre.

Author Housing and Asset Manager

Ward Pillgwenlly

Summary The subject land is currently owned by Associated British Ports (ABP) and is part of a vacant site previously occupied by AIC Steel. This report seeks approval to acquire the freehold of a small parcel of land from ABP to assist with the Transporter Bridge project.

Proposal **Agree to the acquisition of the land on terms to be agreed by Head of Law and Regulation.**

Action by Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Strategic Director - Place
- Head of Finance – Chief Finance Officer
- Head of Law and Regulations – Monitoring Officer
- Head of People and Business Change
- Head of City Services
- Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing
- Housing & Assets Manager
- Associate Director of Property Services, Newport Norse
- Associate Valuation and Estates Management, Newport Norse
- Capital Strategy and Asset Management Group
- Service Manager (Waste and Cleansing)

Signed

Background

Newport City Council is creating a new visitor centre for the Transporter Bridge and a 190m² parcel of land which is currently owned by ABP is required as part of the development. Discussions have taken place with ABP and a purchase price of price of £17,500 has been agreed.

The acquisition of the land will improve traffic management on site and offer more accessible parking spaces close to the proposed visitor centre. The additional land will also make coach drop offs and turning easier to manage. The envisaged increased visitor number to the site will bring more traffic and more space on the west side of the bridge will be hugely beneficial.

The existing palisade fencing impacts the setting of the Bridge and the additional piece of land will enable some landscaping works to significantly improve this aspect. The palisade fencing makes the west side approach feel constricted and impacts the aesthetics of the Bridge.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund have asserted that the acquisition of some additional land is very important to the project overall and we must do everything we can to ensure the Stage 2 application to the NLHF has the best chance of success.

The proposed acquisition will assist with meeting some of the seven well-being goals as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015;

- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language – the Transporter Bridge is an important historic structure. It is Grade 1 listed and one of only 2 working transporter bridges in the UK. The promotion of this asset within Newport is beneficial.
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A prosperous Wales – an improved Visitor Centre will attract more people to visit the bridge thereby bringing an economic benefit to the area.

Financial Summary

Option 1 – purchase the Freehold of the land from ABP

ABP have agreed to sell the freehold of the land for £17,500. This will give the council full control over this piece of land which is needed to facilitate the visitor centre development.

Option 2 – do not purchase land

If this parcel of land is not purchased then the current plans for the visitor centre would need to be amended which could be detrimental to the overall project.

Risks

If the land is not purchased then the overall Visitor Centre scheme will need to be modified and this may also be detrimental to the National Lottery Heritage Fund bid. If the land is not purchased the traffic management on site will be more difficult, it may be more difficult for coaches on sites and the aesthetics and landscaping around the bridge may be affected. This in turn will have an adverse effect on the visitor experience.

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The project delivers against the “Thriving City” theme of the corporate plan. Additionally the project contributes to the Council’s wellbeing objectives; namely to promote economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting the environment and to build cohesive and sustainable communities. Purchase of the land is needed to provide the full Visitor Centre scheme which contributes to these objectives.

Options Available and considered

1. Purchase freehold of the land at £17,500
2. Take no action and do not purchase the land

Preferred Option and Why

Purchase freehold of the land on terms to be agreed by Head of Law and Regulation in order to facilitate the creation of a new visitor centre for the Transporter Bridge.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

Approval for a potential £1.25m contribution from Newport Council Capital Programme has previously been given, of which £250k was identified as being required in Phase one of the project. Phase one of the Transporter Bridge is due to be completed by the end of April 2020 and an underspend is expected of £329k. Out of the NCC contribution of £250k to date only £204k has been required to fund phase one, therefore money is available to purchase the land. As it is not part of the original development proposal HLF will not fund the purchase.

Phase two of the project has not yet been approved, this will be known later on this year

Comments of Monitoring Officer

The proposed action is in accordance with the Council's legal powers under section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 to acquire land by agreement for the purposes of its statutory functions or for the benefit of the area. The acquisition of this parcel of land from ABP will facilitate the development of the Visitor Centre by improving traffic management and parking within the site. Following its acquisition, the land will need to be appropriated for this purposes under section 122 of the Act. The land transfer from ABP will need to be unencumbered and free from any restrictions on future use and development of the land, to enable the site to be used for this purpose. Because of the size of the site and the purchase price agreed, it exceeds the limits of the officer scheme of delegation for minor property transactions and, therefore, the decision will need to be taken by the Cabinet Member.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

The report writer has fully considered the Well-being Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 when developing this report. As stated in the report the proposal supports three well-being goals and does not adversely affect the other four. In addition, the it works towards two of the council's well-being objectives. Finally, in the appropriate section the report writer has set out how the proposal meets the sustainable development principle (five ways of working – long term; prevention, integration; collaboration; involvement).

From a staffing perspective, there are no HR implications to this proposal.

Comments of Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture

I fully support the decision to purchase the parcel of land adjacent to the Bridge entrance. The current fence line impacts the setting of the Bridge and this will be improved immeasurably if the fence line is moved to the new proposed boundary. The increased foot print will also be important to the redevelopment project should it receive funding as it will offer increased onsite accessible parking close to the proposed new visitor centre. The National Lottery Heritage Fund grant officers have been unanimous in their opinion that the purchase of the land is an important aspect of the project for the improvement it would make to the landscape setting as well as improving on-site parking. This point of view is shared by representatives of Cadw who have also stated the a larger footprint would help the setting of the Bridge.

Local issues – Comments of Ward Members

No comments received.

Comments of Non-executive Members

Comments from Councillor M Evans:

Very happy to support this land acquisition which would provide significant benefits for a relatively small financial outlay. Hopefully, this will improve our chances of being successful in the next stage of our National Lottery Heritage Fund application, which would greatly enhance one of Newport's finest landmarks.

Comments from Councillor Ferris:

I would like to echo Matthew's observations. If we did not buy this at £17k, it would be irresponsible and negligent. It is space needed to develop the site and if we were to pursue World Heritage Status; one of the criteria is what is done with the surrounding area. Perhaps, in the future we might explore getting access to the gantry via a lift- as has been done at other bridges. This would give the space to facilitate this- all for the price of a new family saloon car.

Comments from Councillor Berry:

This project has my full support, I look forward to this project moving to the next stage.

Comments from Councillor J Watkins:

I think this a very sensible move given this bridge is of cultural value and it is an important part of the history here in Newport.

Comments from Councillor Hourahine:

It has my total support.

Comments from Councillor Holyoake:

I would like to support the decision to buy the land at the side of the Transporter Bridge. The Cabinet Member for Business and leisure along with officers have worked extremely hard for funding towards the development.

The Transporter Bridge is iconic not only to Pillgwenlly Ward residents but also to the whole of Newport. The development would encourage tourism from all over the world, creating vital jobs in the state of the art visitor centre.

I am very excited for the future of the Transporter Bridge, and New Visitor Centre, this will leave our next generation the heritage that is a vital gateway into their ancestor's history.

Comments from Councillor Al-Nuami:

The report set out the reasons for the proposed action, I am very pleased to support the proposal to purchase the land as set out in the report. The Transporter Bridge is a very important industrial heritage of Newport and is developing into an important tourist site.

The proposal makes sense and will meet some good wellbeing objectives.

Response from Councillor Rahman:

It is heartening to read the supportive comments from my fellow Councillors to purchase this piece of land that will be very important to the wider project to repair, restore and interpret the Transporter Bridge.

Scrutiny Committees

N/A

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 contains a Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force on 06 April 2011. The Act identifies a number of 'protected characteristics', namely age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership. The new single duty aims to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the regular

business of public authorities. Compliance with the duty is a legal obligation and is intended to result in better informed decision-making and policy development and services that are more effective for users. In exercising its functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The Act is not overly prescriptive about the approach a public authority should take to ensure due regard, although it does set out that due regard to advancing equality involves: removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics; taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these differ from the need of other people; and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

Although no targeted consultation takes place specifically aimed at children and young people, consultation on planning applications and appeals is open to all of our citizens regardless of their age. Depending on the scale of the proposed development, applications are publicised via letters to neighbouring occupiers, site notices, press notices and/or social media. People replying to consultations are not required to provide their age or any other personal data, and therefore this data is not held or recorded in any way, and responses are not separated out by age.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The author has given consideration to the Act throughout the background of the report. The proposed acquisition will assist with meeting some of the seven well-being goals including a prosperous Wales, by utilising resources efficiently and proportionately.

LongTerm: The project as a whole aims to extend the operational life of the Bridge by a further twenty-five years ensuring that the Bridge is available for a further generation to enjoy. The land purchase is a component of the project as a whole and is a key aspect of improving the visitor experience which in turn will improve the Bridge's financial sustainability,

Collaboration: The project has developed over a five year period and Council Officers have consulted Cadw from an early stage in the project. The Council is working closely with Visit Wales as a likely contributing funder. Likewise, we consulted the National Lotter Heritage Fund from an early point as the project is seeking around 9.5 million in grant aid for the Heritage Fund. We have also consulted other UK transporter Bridges for advice.

Involvement: The Transporter Bridge has been subject to considerable consultation with the public and statutory bodies. Consultation has been carried out in a number of ways including face to face and focus groups together with on line web based consultation

Prevention: The project aims to prevent the condition of the Bridge deteriorating and ensure the Bridge operates for a further generation. Additionally investment now will reduce the call on public funds for the foreseeable future. The project will deliver an increase in visitors which will increase the income so more resource can be invested in maintenance.

Integration: Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

Consultation

Comments received from wider consultation, including comments from elected members, are detailed in each application report in the attached schedule.

Background Papers

None

Dated: 27 April 2020