

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF DELIVERY AND DISCOVERY

**SUBJECT:
FUTURE USE OF THE NATIONAL PARK SITE AT CILRHEDYN, LLANYCHAER**

Introduction

Following a detailed review of budgets and operational priorities earlier this year Members will be aware that the workshop presence at Cilrhedyn has been scaled back because of staff retirements and subsequent savings. At present the proposal beyond the 2015-16 financial year is to maintain the site, primarily, as a Warden and Ranger base only, with the surplus accommodation being made available to interested parties within an arm's length Landlord and Tenant contractual relationship.

Coed Cymru have been directly involved with the development and operation of Cilrhedyn over many years and in July of this year Coed Cymru and Tir Coed (a charity working to improve the quality of life in rural Wales by working in woodland management) presented an alternative vision for the future of Cilrhedyn site to the Operational Review Committee. Members considered their outline concept to be "*attractive and worthwhile and they looked forward to being convinced by a business plan in the near future*". That business plan was received by the Authority on the 2nd November (this has been circulated to Members only, in light of its confidential nature).

Background

The business plan suggests establishing a new partnership of Tir Coed and Coed Cymru called Wise Woods Wales. The Park Authority would maintain a Warden and Ranger base at Cilrhedyn but would lease the majority of the site to the new partnership. The Business Plan also suggests that the Authority maintains an ongoing role in the proposed project at Cilrhedyn but officers cannot endorse an approach that extends beyond a Landlord / Tenant relationship due to the current budgetary constraints and associated risks.

In light of the Business Plan from Coed Cymru / Tir Coed Members are asked to agree two parallel actions;

- That Members endorse 'in-principle' the outline business case being put forward by Coed Cymru/ Tir Coed and that authority is delegated to the Chief Executive to put in place the necessary arrangements to support an appropriate lease arrangement with Coed Cymru /Tir Coed.

- In tandem, Members are requested to agree the scaling back of the present activities at Cilrhedyn (in terms of the woodland centre / sawmill) in order to meet our budgetary targets for 2016-17. The site will remain a Warden / Ranger base and officers will seek to let the remaining building and yard space on the open market if the Coed Cymru option fails.

Financial Risk & Compliance Considerations

Officers are of the opinion that the business plan attached to this report does not provide sufficient detail or certainty to allow Members to make a final decision on the Coed Cymru proposal. However, it provides enough steer for Members to agree an 'in-principle' way forward with authority delegated to the Chief Executive to begin negotiations on an appropriate lease arrangement with Coed Cymru.

Human Rights / Equality issues

No issues in terms of public service but consultation with the on-site staff must be a priority.

Biodiversity implications / Sustainability appraisal

No issues.

Welsh Language statement

No issues.

Recommendations

1. That Members endorse 'in-principle' the outline business case being put forward by Coed Cymru/ Tir Coed and that authority is delegated to the Chief Executive to put in place the necessary arrangements to lease part of the site to Coed Cymru /Tir Coed by no later than March 31 2016 (subject to full analysis of a revised business plan).

And...

2. Members are requested to agree the scaling back of the present activities at Cilrhedyn (in terms of the woodland centre / sawmill) in order to meet our budgetary targets for 2016-17 and endorse the remaining building and yard space being advertised on the open market if the Coed Cymru option fails.

Background Documents

- Update Report on the Cilrhedyn Woodland Centre Operational Review Committee 15/10/2014
- Cilrhedyn Woodland Centre Verbal Update - Minutes of the meeting of the Operational Review Committee 22/04/2015
- Presentation by Coed Cymru & Tir Coed - Minutes of the meeting of the Operational Review Committee 01/07/2015

(For further information, please contact Charles Mathieson Head of Park Delivery)

Author: James Parkin Director of Delivery and Discovery,

Consultees: Charles Mathieson, Tegryn Jones, Gary Meopham, Geraint Harries.