

**Open Report on behalf of Executive Director for Communities**

Report to:	<b>Executive Councillor for Economic Regeneration</b>
Date:	<b>26 September 2011</b>
Subject:	<b>Heritage Skills Centre, Lincoln Castle</b>
Decision Reference:	<b>01900</b>
Key decision?	<b>Yes</b>

**Summary:**

A Heritage Skills Centre is proposed to be built at Lincoln Castle. It will provide training in stone masonry, stained glass and lime work. European and regional funding has been successfully applied for, matched with Lincolnshire County Council funding. The project is part of the regeneration of Lincoln Castle.

**Recommendation(s):**

It is recommended that approval is given to the County Council constructing the Heritage Skills Centre in accordance with the planning permission that has been granted by the County Council. The building project will comply with all external funding conditions.

**Alternatives Considered:**

1. Working with Lincoln College and the Cathedral Works Department there has been much discussion as to the best layout of the building. We looked at three and four workshop models but after much discussion agreed that two large workshops was the most flexible option.

**Reasons for Recommendation:**

This project of £2.1m has attracted £1.5m of external funds and therefore represents good value for money.

**1. Background**

As part of the regeneration of Lincoln Castle it was decided to build a Heritage Skills Centre (HSC) on the former car park within the grounds. LCC has been working increasingly closely with Lincoln Cathedral on the skills agenda and the growing concern that there is a shortage of those skilled at the highest levels who are able to repair historic buildings. LCC made a funding bid for ERDF and regional

funds to build the HSC and was successful. Shortly after and to complement the HSC, LCC and the Cathedral made a further successful bid to HLF Skills for the Future programme for £500K to run bursaries over the next five years in joinery, stone masonry and lead work.

As the funding for the HSC was obtained at the same time as the Round 1 pass for Lincoln Castle Revealed (LCR) was awarded by HLF, it was decided to run a joint OJEU process to obtain a design team. Tenders had to cost the HSC and LCR separately and we could have appointed two teams, but decided that the two projects were so completely inter-related that it made sense to have one design team. Led by a conservation architect, all the design team specialise in historic buildings.

The HSC building was to be a contemporary design that needed to fit into an historic site. It needs to be a design of quality not just because of its setting but because it needs to reflect on the quality of skills that are being taught within it. The former car park was largely hidden from view, and so the new building has been designed to be low lying and cannot be seen in most of the Castle's historic views. The building has been designed to be environmentally friendly; it has a grass roof, hempcrete walls and air source heat pumps; we plan to achieve BREEAM Very Good. It has two workshops; one is for clean skills such as stained glass, the other is for dirty skills such as stone masonry and lime work. There is a central spine which will be open to the public, allowing them to view into the workshops and to see exhibitions of student's work.

LCC has worked closely with the Cathedral Works Department and Lincoln College on the business plan and on the design. The possibility of three or four workshops was investigated but it was decided that two was the most flexible approach. It was agreed at the beginning that the HSC was not to duplicate anything that was already being done in the city and it was decided not to cover joinery as this is well covered at the College and requires a significant investment in machinery.

The HSC has to be built next to the working Crown Court, in the past the Judges have had issues with noise, so the design team has had to take this into consideration. The building will not be piled, partly because of noise concerns and also because of archaeology. It will have a timber frame and prefabricated hempcrete insulation panels; this means that much of the construction takes place off-site.

The Cathedral through their networks have been discussing the establishment of a qualification in stained glass, as currently none exists in the UK; it is now looking very likely that the first ever such qualification will be offered at the HSC.

A total of £2.1m is available for the HSC, £600K of which comes from LCC and is contained within the Historic Lincoln capital programme. After an extensive PQQ process, four contractors were shortlisted to tender. All the tenders came in over budget and so a value engineering exercise to bring the project in on budget was undergone. The lowest tender is now within £19K of our budget and we propose that this extra can be found from within the Historic Lincoln capital programme. Any further value engineering will involve us renegotiating the design with English

Heritage and with our planning permission. Our external funds don't allow us the luxury of this delay. It is fair to say that the BREEAM environmental rating system, the achievement of which was a condition of the funders, has added considerably to our costs.

It is planned for work to begin on site in October and for the works to take 10 months.

A business plan has been provided by Oakmere Solutions and it is the intention of the tourism development team to put the necessary structures and partnerships in place to ensure that the HSC is ready to go into operation by September 2012.

## **2. Conclusion**

The HSC will see a striking contemporary building placed within what has always been an unattractive part of the Castle site. It will provide valuable training in heritage skills and will make an attractive and appropriate addition to the visitor facilities within the Castle.

### **3. Legal Comments:**

The development will need to be in accordance with the planning permission and comply with any funding conditions

### **4. Resource Comments:**

Subject to the approval of the scheme appraisal, this report will commit the County Council to £0.6m of capital expenditure of a total scheme cost of £2.1m building a Heritage Skills Centre in Lincoln Castle. £1.5m of external funding will be levered in from ERDF and regional funding. The Council's contribution will be provided from the current Historic Lincoln capital programme.

## **5. Consultation**

### **a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?**

Yes

### **b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?**

Yes

### **c) Scrutiny Comments**

This project has been presented to the value for Money Scrutiny Committee at every stage and they are very supportive of the Heritage Skills Centre.

### **d) Policy Proofing Actions Required**

n/a

## **6. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

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