

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT OF:- CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

REPORT NO:- DCS17

DATE:- 7TH MARCH 2005

TITLE:	SCIENCE DISCOVERY CENTRE FOR GRANTHAM: OUTLINE FEASIBILITY STUDY
FORWARD PLAN ITEM:	YES
DATE WHEN FIRST APPEARED IN FORWARD PLAN:	MARCH 2004
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	YES

COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Councillor J Smith (Economic)
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	Priority A: Developing Town Centres in Stamford, Bourne, and the Deepings and the development of Grantham as a sub-regional centre.
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	Science Discovery Centre for Grantham: Outline feasibility study. Final Report January 2005 – ABL Consulting.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 In April 2004 the District Council obtained financial support from Lincolnshire Enterprise to undertake a study into the viability of creating a science based visitor attraction in Grantham. Support for the study was received from the Grantham Town Centre Management Partnership and following a process of inviting competitive tenders ABL Consulting were appointed to undertake the study. This report summarises the results of the study.
- 1.2 The full document dated January 2005 is available in electronic format from the Corporate Director Community Services.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is requested to note the work undertaken by ABL Consulting and approve the following actions.

- 2.1 **To ask Officers to consider how the development of a Science Discovery Centre could be taken forward as part of future work into the development of the Grantham Canal Basin.**
- 2.2 **To ask Officers to bring forward options for the future use of Conduit Lane Car Park consistent with the Grantham Town Centre Masterplan.**
- 2.3 **To ask Officers to take forward discussions with Lincolnshire County Council to identify initiatives that promote and interpret Grantham's scientific heritage with the objective of increasing the number of visitors into the Town Centre.**

3.0 DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 The report was produced in response to the District Council's stated Category (A) Priority to see Grantham as a Sub-Regional Centre. In addition the Grantham Town Centre Masterplan identifies key actions for the improvement of the town. The main focus of the Masterplan is the development of Grantham's retail core by:
 - Attracting significant new retail operators to Grantham.
 - Encourage existing operators to reinvest in their provision.
 - Enhancing the traffic system.
 - Enhancing the public realm.
- 3.2 The development of a Science based visitor attraction with educational and other social benefits would support the implementation of the Masterplan by contributing to the enhancement of the public realm. It would also provide a

resource that would strengthen the retail offer by making it more attractive for people to visit the Town.

- 3.3 Grantham has a wide catchment, not only the 124,792 people who live within the District, but also the number of people that live within a 30-60 minute drive time. For a facility of this type research has shown that people are prepared to travel up to one hour. The research when applied to Grantham suggests that there are 1,710,627 within a 60 minute drivetime. Given that 20% of the population are likely to visit this type of facility the estimated market segment size for residents within the 30-60 minute drivetime is 342,125.
- 3.4 The Conduit Lane Car Park was surveyed and a mixed development was considered to include the Science Centre and another uses. This part of the study concluded that there was insufficient demand for anything other than a scheme that combined the Science Centre with residential development on this site.
- 3.5 The study has shown that a significant market exists for a medium sized Science Discovery Centre. It is clear that the number of people attracted to such a facility would be beneficial to the Town in economic terms. Conduit Lane Car Park has proved to be too small making it difficult for the site to generate a significant capital contribution. It has been suggested by ABL Consulting that we seek a larger site. They concur with the Council's view that the Grantham Canal Basin site offers a real opportunity to combine a visitor attraction with mixed development to create an interesting and exciting scheme. The site opens up the possibility of Section 106 funding contributing to the overall costs. As the Council develops its ideas for the Canal Basin through further research and studies it will be possible to combine the information gathered from this study into the feasibility plans for the Canal Basin.
- 3.6 ABL Consultants have also advised the Council to open up a dialogue with Lincolnshire County Council to examine opportunities for joint working. It may be possible to develop joint proposals that would deliver a Science Centre in Grantham.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The costs of building the Science Discovery Centre has been estimated at £10.6m offset by the projected residual value of the site for residential development. The value of the residual land that would be available for residential development has been estimated at £0.3m. The overall costs of the scheme are prohibitive.
- 4.2 Work was also undertaken to calculate the expected annual revenue costs of operating a Science Discovery Centre and this has been estimated at £263,693 per annum.

5.0 COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND STRATEGIC RESOURCES

I agree with the report's recommendations.

6.0 COMMENTS OF CORPORATE MANAGER DEMOCRATIC AND LEGAL SERVICES (MONITORING OFFICER)

No comments.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The feasibility study has demonstrated that a facility of this type would contribute significantly to the objective of developing Grantham as a sub-regional centre. The capital costs are prohibitive for the site under consideration. Furthermore, without significant external financial support from either regional or central funds or from Lottery Funds the project is not deliverable. At this time the possibility of attracting significant external funds for this project are low however, if combined with a larger development project such as the Canal Basin with greater economic outputs, it may be achievable to attract external funding in the longer term.

7.2 It is intended to continue discussions with Lincolnshire County Council regarding the development of joint opportunities for Grantham and any significant progress will be reported back to Cabinet as appropriate.

CONTACT OFFICER

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