
Subject: **MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT WITH TAYLOR WIMPEY UK LTD IN RELATION TO THE BACKDOOR TRAINING AREA, SHORNCLIFFE (A WHITE CLIFFS COUNTRYSIDE PARTNERSHIP PROJECT)**

Meeting and date: **Cabinet – 6 December 2021**

Report of: **Richard Haynes, Natural Environment Manager**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Oliver Richardson, Portfolio Holder for Community and Corporate Property**

Decision Type: **Executive Key Decision**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Purpose of the report: To enter into a 10-year Management Agreement with Taylor Wimpey in relation to the Backdoor Training Area, Shorncliffe.

Recommendation: To enter into a 10-year management agreement with Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd in respect of the Backdoor Training Area, Shorncliffe.

1. **Summary**

1.1 Taylor Wimpey has approached White Cliffs Countryside Partnership (WCCP) regarding entering a 10-year management agreement to manage the Backdoor Training Area (BTA), Shorncliffe – approximately 34 ha of semi-natural habitat in the Seabrook Valley, Folkestone – for the benefit of wildlife and local communities.

2. **Introduction and Background**

2.1 Circa 2015, Taylor Wimpey started discussions with WCCP regarding the management of the BTA – an area of some 34 ha of grassland and woodland located within the wider Seabrook Valley. The future management of which was a condition of its successful planning application for the development of Shorncliffe Barracks.

2.2 The broad objectives for managing the BTA are as follows:

- Implement an active management regime to enhance the natural habitats and biodiversity, in line with agreed mitigation measures for bats and reptiles.
- Protect and enhance the significant suite of archaeological assets located within this area, principally comprising defence and training works from the Napoleonic Wars, World War I and World War II.
- Deliver and sustain improved access within the BTA and its links with the rest of the Seabrook Valley and wider landscape.
- Enrich visitors' understanding and enjoyment of the valley as an ecological, heritage and recreational asset.

2.3 With a value of nearly £1 million over 10 years, the agreement will fund a 0.2 FTE contribution towards a Partnership Officer (existing post) and a 0.6 FTE Ranger (which will need to be recruited) along with all associated employment costs and equipment. The budget also covers a range of capital improvements to the BTA, including installation of stock fencing and water supplies to facilitate grazing.

2.4 The budget will be agreed annually with Taylor Wimpey for the delivery of the capital programme required to deliver the management plan. This will be funded by Taylor Wimpey.

3. Identification of Options

3.1 Option 1: To enter into the agreement.

3.2 Option 2: To not enter into the agreement.

4. Evaluation of Options

4.1 Option 1 is the recommended option. This 10-year agreement will not only add greatly to the financial and staffing resilience of WCCP, but it will also send a strong signal to one of WCCP's founding partners, Folkestone and Hythe District Council, that we are taking on and delivering ambitious projects in the district. This is particularly timely given the developments at Otterpool and elsewhere. In addition, entering into this agreement aligns perfectly with WCCP's core purpose to protect and enhance the wild spaces of south-east Kent by inspiring people to act for their local environment.

4.2 Option 2 is not recommended. To not enter into the agreement at this stage would cause significant reputational damage to this council with FHDC councillors and officers, local communities and other partner organisations and stakeholders. It would open the door for other organisations to deliver the agreement and have a presence in the WCCP area, which could have wide ranging consequences for our other funding streams in the district.

5. Resource Implications

5.1 Globally, this contract is worth nearly £1 million over a 10-year period.

5.2 Taylor Wimpey will provide WCCP with a yearly indicative budget plus an annual inflationary uplift of 2.5% for WCCP to claim back repayments for the running costs of site management over the next 10 years. The annual inflationary uplift was negotiated with Taylor Wimpey to bring it into line with other agreements of this nature e.g. the agreement with the Land Trust.

5.3 The budget will cover the employee related costs (salaries, staff training, fuel/mileage, phones etc.) of a 0.6 FTE Ranger and a contribution to a Partnership Officer post (equivalent to 0.2 FTE) with additional funding available for any infrastructure and equipment purchases required to manage the site. The annual budget will vary year on year due to the nature of the delivery of the capital programme.

5.4 The site management and operating costs of the Backdoor Training Area will be fully funded by the annual indicative budget agreed by Taylor Wimpey and WCCP as outlined in the Management Agreement. Any costs incurred outside of this annual budget would be agreed and met by Taylor Wimpey. There are no DDC resource implications as the annual budget from Taylor Wimpey will fully cover WCCP's operating costs at Shorncliffe.

6. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

6.1 The delivery of the contract would have a positive impact on biodiversity, creating greater resilience and connectivity in the Seabrook Valley. The engagement of members of the public and schools would have a positive impact on health and well-being, as well as allowing us to communicate messages around climate change, sustainability and the environment.

7. Corporate Implications

- 7.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy have been consulted on this report. We have discussed the inflationary uplift with the report writer as per a query from Mike Davis and are happy with the 2.5% stated. We have no further comments to add. (AT)
- 7.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Head of Governance and HR has been consulted during the preparation of this report and has no further comment to make.
- 7.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report does not specifically highlight any equality implications, however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>
- 7.4 Other Officers (as appropriate):
- 8. **Appendices**
None.

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