

## Report to the LDF Cabinet Committee



Epping Forest  
District Council

**Report reference:** ~~C-nnnLDF-025-~~  
2010/11

**Date of meeting:** 28<sup>th</sup> March 2011

**Portfolio:** Leader

**Subject:** Lee Valley White Water Centre ~~Progress~~-update &  
~~Introduction of the OlyOlympics~~ Regeneration Officer

**Responsible Officer:** Kassandra Polyzoides (01992 564119)  
~~Max Houseago~~

**Democratic Services Officer:** Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

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### Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) ~~To no~~Note, the appointment of the Olympics Regeneration Officer and emerging workstreams; and

(2) ~~To n~~Note the update on the Lee Valley White Water Centre Economic Development Study.

### Executive Summary:

The Olympics Regeneration Officer was appointed in December 2010 and has been working jointly for Epping Forest District Council, Broxbourne and Hertfordshire County Council and in partnership with the Lee Valley Regional Park. In December 2010 Nathaniel Litchfield & Partners were jointly appointed to deliver the Lee Valley White Water Centre (LVWWC) Economic Development Study. Some initial key findings following their feasibility and baseline work are reported here along with key considerations for progressing further work.

### Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To note the progress on the LVWWC Economic Development Study and be introduced to the Olympic Regeneration Officer and be brought up to speed on their workstreams. The Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee requested an update on the economic development study and the wider work being delivered by this post.

### Other Options for Action:

~~N/A~~None.

### Report:

1. The post of Olympic Regeneration Officer was put forward by the Olympic Legacy Partnership Board; a multi agency partnership established by Broxbourne Borough Council with membership from Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Enfield Council, Lee Valley Regional Park, and Waltham Abbey Town Council amongst others. The Board created the 2 year post understanding the importance and need to maximise the legacy potential and development opportunities created in the area by the hosting of the Olympics, and the building of the Lee Valley White Water Centre. Funding for the post has been

provided by Broxbourne Borough Council £20,000 p.a., Hertfordshire County Council £20,000 p.a., and Epping Forest District Council £10,000 p.a. The post was appointed to in November 2010 and the Olympic Regeneration Officer, Max Houseago, took up the position on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2010. The officer is based within Broxbourne Council, but will work collaboratively across all funding partners and with other partner agencies to ensure delivery of key projects.

2. In the first 12 weeks, the officer has been focusing on projects that generally benefit all Parties:

(a) an Economic Development Study, coordinating work with the consultants Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners;

(b) Developing Olympic Web pages for Broxbourne Council;

(c) Assisting in organising the business breakfast/seminar, on 16<sup>th</sup> March, which is a joint venture between Epping Forest District Council, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, Broxbourne District Council, Essex County Council, and Hertfordshire County Council; and

(d) Assisting the British Canoe Union with creating their presentation and sponsorship list for the 2015 Canoe Slalom World Championships bid.

3. From mid March the Officer proposes undertaking the following work for Epping Forest District Council in partnership with EFDC Planning Officers:

- Obtain a confirmation from Heritage Lottery that a bid to Heritage Lottery Fund, Townscape Heritage Initiative, for Waltham Abbey is feasible. Look at obtaining funding, as above, but also from other potential sources for a Waltham Abbey Town Centre strategy. The Olympics Regeneration Officer is delivering a similar strategy for Waltham Cross. There are ideal opportunities for joint working on these strategies and identifying synergies and common opportunities for the wider area as well as creating more coherent physical links.
- Waltham Abbey walk about with Waltham Abbey Town Council and Epping Forest District Council to identify key issues and additional quick win projects.

#### Lee Valley White Water Canoe Centre Economic Development Study

4. An Economic Development Study to identify the legacy benefits that could be provided by the Lee Valley White Water Centre was requested by the Olympic Legacy Board. As owners of the facility the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority were given the lead in procuring the consultants, along with the Olympic Regeneration Officer and representatives from Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council, and Hertfordshire County Council all as members of a steering group.

5. A brief with invitation to tender was sent out to 15 Consultants in November 2010. The responses were evaluated by the steering group and four consultants were short listed. Following interviews on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2011, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners were appointed.

6. Nathaniel Lichfield provided a strong, clear practical methodology, and they also have extensive knowledge in undertaking such studies and advising on successful strategies for similar types of facilities to those of the white water centre. They advise

on leisure attractions including Alton Towers, Legoland, Chessington World of Adventure, and Thorpe Park. Nathaniel Lichfield are also working on behalf of the Football Association assessing the socio-economic impacts of The National Football Centre near Burton on Trent; development associated with the football centre includes hotel and conference facilities, and a sports clinic to increase the overall viability of the centre.

7. Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners have been looking explicitly at how the white water centre can be part of, and contribute to, a popular visitor destination; and will be providing further advice on the opportunities for attracting further leisure attractions into the area. They will be looking at ways in which to maximise visitor numbers and spend in the area, and how local people can benefit from this through job, and training opportunities. They will also establish where the development opportunities are, both physically and sector wise, for business that will support the development of the area economically.
8. With regard to consultation the consultants have engaged with relevant local council economic development departments, commercial property agents, chambers of commerce that can provide avenues for inward investment, tourism, sports and business organisations (i.e. Gunpowder Mills) which could provide potential pointers to future potential. Contact will also be made with operators of similar sports/leisure venues/developments elsewhere to identify planned initiatives or experiences of developments linked to the venues.
9. The Olympic Regeneration officer has been aiming to provide updates to key parties, such as Town Centre Partnerships and Town Councils on the progress of the study.
10. The consultants Nathaniel Lichfield were present at a business seminar event at Waltham Abbey on ~~the 16<sup>th</sup> of~~ March 2011 where local businesses and Members had the opportunity to put forward their ideas about how development and regeneration opportunities might be created for the wider area.
11. The consultants have produced some initial research findings; however it is important to recognise that the draft report won't be produced until ~~the 25<sup>th</sup> of~~ 25 April 2011, and a final report produced on ~~the 30<sup>th</sup>~~ 30 May 2011. The consultants also presented initial findings at the Olympics Legacy Board meeting on ~~the 17<sup>th</sup> of~~ 17 March 2011.

The Work So Far has included:

12. A review of a wide range of white water centres in UK and overseas, which has found little evidence white water centre visitors by themselves attract significant new facilities to the site or surrounding area; most have nothing other than a cafe or small shop.
13. Only two white water centres were found to have a fairly extensive range of outdoor activities on their sites - Charlotte in USA and Cergy near Paris - these were both planned as leisure sites with a set of mixed uses, other uses were not attracted afterwards by the centres; neither have hotels or much commercial leisure uses, and they are not planning further expansion, but do attract visitors by holding non-sporting events.
14. Other participatory sports facilities looked at - e.g. Xscape snowdomes support a range of leisure/retail uses on their sites but are not really comparable with the LVWWC, being in locations with many times more visitors (3 million +); ~~the the~~ Castle Indoor Climbing Centre in North London attracts over 150,000 visitors p.a. but has

attracted nothing else nearby, with its own shop/cafe within the building.

15. The area around the LVWWC does not appear to have significant unmet demand for leisure uses at present. It has fairly good hotel provision nearby, although mainly high quality with conference facilities, health & fitness centres in the area, the second largest canoe/sailing equipment shop in the UK, ~~and, and~~ a golf driving range planned at Waltham Abbey. So some potential areas of demand are already met. The consultants are still talking to operators of other leisure facilities (e.g. aerial ropes/zip wires) that appear to have some potential.
16. The profile of a canoeist visiting the white water centres indicates a mainly young adult male market, with relatively few family visitors; they also tend not to spend large amounts on accommodation/food etc locally, and tend not to travel far from the white water ~~centre~~ site ~~centre site~~. However, the white water rafting offer will appeal to a wider market. Initial work undertaken for Lee Valley Regional Park Authority has given anticipated visitor numbers to the Lee Valley White Water Centre as 70,000p.a. Initial work undertaken by consultants Nathaniel Lichfield has found that other white water facilities across the world obtain visitor numbers in the region of 40,000 visitors p.a.
17. Therefore the picture emerging is a need to increase visitor numbers to the LVWWC site with a range of other activities close by to widen the age range of visitors, and to provide enough attractions on the site to keep visitors there for a day rather than a few hours. Taking into account constraints, and the need for branding, this suggests creating an active sports/adventure activities destination that raises the profile of the area. It would also be good to include some indoor activities, such as climbing walls etc, on site or nearby, to reduce seasonality, effects of bad weather, and hours of operation. Branding is central to bringing together this wider vision, and active marketing will also be of key importance. A small scale conference venue on site may also have some scope, and is being further evaluated for feasibility.
18. The initial findings also suggest that most economic impacts will be fairly localised, in the short-medium term. If the destination builds up visitor numbers and raises its profile over a longer period, it may be possible to attract some more commercial uses spread over a wider area e.g. budget hotel and some retail.
19. Potential constraints will have to be taken into account in developing a likely range of activities for the site e.g. Green Belt constraints on very large buildings, environmental constraints on noisy/disturbing activities, high trees and high pylons nearby for aerial ropes/zip wires, limited large sites within park and surrounding area for land hungry uses, limited car parking at the white water centre for activities with large visitor numbers.
20. The initial view is that the more likely range of adrenalin/adventure activities for the site will not be greatly affected by different pictures of national economic growth.

### **Resource Implications:**

Cost of study: £40,000  
EFDC contribution: £12,000

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

The study and study outcomes will not have a legal status and there are no legal and governance implications.

### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

The outcomes of the study may lead to development and regeneration proposals and business development opportunities that will promote the improvement of the wider **area including area including** Waltham Abbey.

### **Consultation Undertaken:**

Economic development, commercial property agents, tourism, sports and business organisations (i.e. Gunpowder Mills). Sports operators of similar sports/leisure venues/developments. Updates provided to Councillors, town councils and Town Centre Partnerships.

### **Background Papers:**

N/A None.

### **Impact Assessments:**

#### Risk Management

The apparent risk would be that without subsequent work around the study outputs the districts, including EFDC would miss out on the momentum built up as a result of this work. Following the final report in May therefore the client team will discuss with senior officers and Members regarding the required next steps and ongoing work to support the key outputs.

#### Equality and Diversity:

*Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications?* No

*Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken?* No

*What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?*

N/A

Nathaniel Lichfield Partners have an Equal Opportunities Policy and are aware of the client group Equal Opportunities Policies.

*How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?*

N/A.