

**Bolsover District Council**

**Meeting of the Executive on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**Pleasley Vale Regeneration Project – Flood Prevention**

**Report of the Portfolio Holder for Growth**

<b>Classification</b>	This report is Public.
<b>Report By</b>	Kay Gregory – Senior Economic Development officer for Pleasley Vale

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT**

- To update Members about the Pleasley Vale regeneration project and activities which have been carried out around the site.
  - To inform Members of future work and projects for Pleasley Vale Business Park.
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**REPORT DETAILS**

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Council is fully invested to make the best use of assets within their ownership, and to find viable ways to increase revenue streams. Pleasley Vale is recognised as an important asset, for its historic and cultural importance, the stunning parkland, and its success as an industrial and commercial Business Park. There is a strong commitment to ensure that the site is preserved and enhanced for future generations. The site is currently at approximately 85% occupancy, and overall, there are good levels of tenant satisfaction, many of which have been on site for over 20 years. However, the rents alone do not cover the extensive capital repairs required to maintain and improve the buildings and land.
- 1.2 To address this, The Business Growth Team within Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Limited employed a project officer in November 2022 to manage the regeneration project. With an allocated budget to commission reports and surveys to overcome site constraints and inform the principle of development, the objectives of the Project were initially to assess the viability and appropriateness of a range of regeneration options.
- 1.3 Flooding - One of the main constraints on site relates to flood risk. A significant area of the site is within flood zone 3b (functional flood plain). A functional flood plain is an area of land where water naturally collects. The

geological and geographical formation of the site within a limestone gorge, and the river Meden which flows in a west to east direction means that in storm events or following heavy rainfall, the site can become prone to flooding. This issue became particularly evident in October 2023, during storm Babet. This extreme weather event caused the river Meden to overflow and flood areas of the site, causing damage to property and land.

## **2 Project Update**

- 2.1 Funding opportunities - During the early stages of the project, a number of funding opportunities were explored for the site. Unfortunately, interest was limited for the Mill buildings, by reason that they are not afforded statutory Listing from Historic England and are currently in occupation as a Council run business park.
- 2.2 The lack of funding opportunities for the Mills (either for regeneration or improvement works as an ongoing business park) was unfortunate as the site needs significant capital investment. Without investment from external sources the overall condition of the Mill buildings and parkland will continue to decline along with tenant satisfaction.
- 2.3 However, discussions with funders have highlighted the importance of the natural environment on sites such as Pleasley Vale and there is interest to fund projects which seek to improve biodiversity and water management and to connect the visiting public with nature and history.
- 2.4 Natural Environment - The parkland surrounding the Mill complex contains many areas of ecological importance, including a Site of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI), ancient woodland and wildlife sites. There are also designated bridlepaths and footpaths around the site, with links onto the Meden Trail which bounds the southern boundary, and the Forestry England owned woodland adjoining the northern boundary. While footpaths are accessible, their current condition restricts certain groups, such as less able bodied, cyclists and horse riders, and many are not suitable as all-weather terrain.
- 2.5 The value of the parkland, and issues faced by visitors were confirmed in a visitor satisfaction survey which was conducted in September 2023. The results of the survey are included with this report. The report identified the importance of the parkland, and allowed visitors to express their views and provide recommendations on how the site should be improved. These range from improved walking routes, signage, and welfare facilities. The report identified that the majority of visitors are local and either walk to the site, or travel by private motor vehicle. Visitors also tend to visit for less than half a day because of the lack of facilities which if available would encourage a longer visit.
- 2.6 Gardeners Cottage and Coach House - The two Grade II Listed Gatehouses which stand at the western entrance to the Business Park are vacant but require significant investment to repair and get ready for occupation. A Schedule of Works was commissioned in June 2023, but the costs contained within will require updating as the report is 10 months old. In terms of

available funding, Historic England and the National Lottery have expressed interest and a project enquiry is currently underway.

### **3 Current position / future plans**

- 3.1 Flooding – As discussed in section 1.3 above, effectively managing flood risk, and protecting the site from future extreme weather events is of paramount importance if the site is to continue operations.
- 3.2 When the river Meden overflowed during storm Babet, it backfilled the millpond in front of Mill 1, causing significant flooding to the ground floor of Mill 1, damaging the property of both the landlord and tenants occupying those areas, and affecting their working patterns. Damage was also caused to the electricity substation, where flood water entered the building, damaging the LV panel beyond repair. Mill 1 was subsequently powered by an external generator for several weeks, until a new LV panel could be installed. The financial and economic cost to this flood event is still being felt now, with business operations of the tenants significantly compromised.
- 3.3 Other areas of the site suffered considerable damage, and the costs of this are still being assessed. Where the river is channelled underground, the storm water rose to levels which broke through the car park surface in front of Mill 1. The structural integrity of this was assessed and considered to be safe, resulting in a recent resurface of this area. Within mill 3, the storm water rose and broke through floor slabs within units, rendering them unsafe and therefore unusable. The cost of repairing these areas is still being assessed. The flood also caused damage to the river channel and millponds, destroying banks, retaining structures, and causing contaminants, such as sanitary products and building materials, to enter the water course.
- 3.4 The total cost of the flood is still being determined. The concerns are that the insurance excess is likely to increase, or insurance companies may be reluctant to insure the site, particularly if measures to reduce future flood events are not explored and implemented. Therefore, flood prevention and mitigation measures have to be a priority for the work of the Senior Economic Development Officer for Pleasley Vale and partners.
- 3.5 Beaumont Rivers are an environmental restoration company who specialise in nature recovery and water management techniques. The Council has appointed them to oversee a flood mitigation and water management project. Beaumont Rivers have previously worked with the Leisure Services team following the events of Storm Babet, overseeing a survey of the mill pond, and producing an expression of interest for natural flood management funding, which unfortunately was not successful due to extremely high levels of competition. During site visits, they inspected areas of the natural environment, and identified opportunities to mitigate flood risk on site and reinstate some of the original drainage networks. A Scope of Works – attached as Appendix 2, has been provided to outline the measures required, some of which are considered to be emergency measures that are recommended as needing to be carried out before winter 2024/25, or before the next major flood event.

3.6 The Scope of Works has been split into three priority areas. This cost does not include contractor fees, surveying, and assessments, or for any of the capital works required to facilitate the proposals. Beaumont Rivers commission will be covered from within existing approved budgets held by the Senior Economic Development officer for Pleasley Vale. There are additional funds of approximately £105,000 allocated to commence some of the identified emergency works on site. The priority 1 works, which must be delivered before winter 2024 comprise:

- 1) Permitting for Priority 1 emergency works.  
Undertake water quality testing.
- 2) Write scopes, procure 3 quotes for survey and construction works, assess quotes, make recommendations.
- 3) Construction attending to all immediate requirements in Reservoir Engineer's report.
- 4) Channel survey for Natural Flood Management scheme design (only required for the Meden and Forge Lane Drain but may not be required if there is a pre-existing survey).
- 5) Identify source of oil/grease pollution.
- 6) Permitting for Priority 2 works, inc. NFM
- 7) Planning and design for Priority 2 works.
- 8) Ecological Impact Assessment with BNG calculation for Priority 2 works.
- 9) Flood Risk Assessment if required for funding or permitting authorities.
- 10) Write an onsite plan for Mill Pond 1 (actions to be carried out in an emergency) and a pumping plan to be able to reduce the water level in an emergency.
- 11) Site visits to facilitate the above – to be agreed as required.

Some of these measures, including water quality testing and the Ecological Impact Assessment are underway and the costs have already been committed. It is anticipated that there will be a requirement for further financial investment to complete these works as the approved budget will not cover all the necessary works. Once costs are known, a further report will be brought to Council.

3.7 Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) has been appointed to produce a Nature Recovery / Blue and Green Infrastructure Masterplan for Pleasley Vale, to survey and assess the current condition of the site, identify constraints and opportunities for funding and collaboration with communities and education providers. Bringing together data from their desktop study, surveys, workshops and in-house habitat creation, DWT will prepare an ecologically coherent and visionary masterplan, which balances the interactions between existing and potential habitat stocks, and the wider regeneration plans for the mill complex, to achieve a success for wildlife at Pleasley Vale.

3.8 The cost of their commission is £9.885 plus VAT. This has been committed from the Senior Economic Development officer for Pleasley Vale's project budget, but once this Plan is complete and works identified, a further report will be brought back to Executive to fund additional survey work and to conduct any capital works proposed within the Masterplan. DWT will explore opportunities for Biodiversity Net Gain, assessing the suitability to register Pleasley Vale as a Receptor Site. This is a potential income stream for the Council, and Members will be updated accordingly on the progress of this.

- 3.9 Gardeners Cottage and Coach House  
Work is currently underway to oversee the renovation and reuse of the two Gatehouses properties.
- 3.10 *Funding opportunities* – Grant funding is currently being explored for renovation of the two properties. The properties are Grade II Listed and are considered to be ‘At Risk’.
- 3.11 The cost of carrying out only essential repairs for the properties is approximately £205,000. It is likely that planning permission will be sought to change the use to residential, or into a commercial use such as a café or office space. Residential, either on the holiday let or private rental market will provide the best rate of return on any investment. The cost of renovating these properties to an accommodation standard will be approximately £420,000, plus fees such as planning permission and surveys required to support a planning proposal. Therefore, in the event that applications for funding are not successful, Members are advised that additional funds will need to be allocated to these properties, although the actual cost is still unknown.
- 3.12 Owners of Listed Buildings have an obligation to maintain their properties in a good condition and prevent where possible long-term vacancy. The buildings are the only two Listed properties within Pleasley Vale (other than St Chad’s church) and as such, their renovation and re-occupation will enhance the character and appearance of the site and will provide an income to the Council.
- 3.11 *Educational programmes* - The project team are exploring opportunities with Vision West Notts to provide educational opportunities for students to work on the properties, developing techniques such as surveying, plan drawing and repairs, all to be overseen by the project team and Council’s Conservation Area. This will provide opportunities for students to learn about traditional retrofitting within the historic environment. Applications for funding will also include the commission of specialist contractors to provide training events for traditional retrofitting. The properties are Grade II Listed and are considered to be ‘At Risk’.
- 3.12 Other updates The Property Services Team are currently identifying all priority repairs for the Mill buildings, to identify the total cost of repairs. A report will be brought back to Executive at a later date when detail and costs are known. Options for improvements will include roof repairs/replacements, new/repaired windows, secondary glazing, and stone (including lintel and sill) repairs.
- 3.13 In December 2023, the project team hosted Nottingham Trent University for a full day, where third year students chose Pleasley Vale (or Bolsover town centre) for a group project, identifying constraints and exploring avenues for regeneration. The project lead, and Assistant Director of planning then attended the group presentations at the university. The day was a success and students benefitted from the opportunity of visiting an important heritage asset. It is expected that further educational opportunities will be explored when works commence in the natural environment.

The project team have also been developing a working group of stakeholders, including Leisure Services, Members, and representatives from Mansfield District Council to discuss site issues and opportunities for regeneration.

#### **4 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of the regeneration project and to highlight the current situation and challenges faced on site following recent flood events.
- 4.2 To inform Members of the works being commissioned to inform and be able to set out a clear plan of flood mitigation works and environmental improvements as the basis for protection of operation of the business park as well as exploring options for further regeneration works across the site. Once detailed costs are confirmed, these will be presented to Members for further discussion and approval.

#### **5 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 5.1 Do nothing - business as usual - This option has been rejected. Water management and flood prevention measures underpin any future plans for the use of Pleasley Vale for economic, social and leisure activities. Extreme storm events and flooding will continue to detrimentally affect ongoing operations at the Business Park. Failure to address this will result in financial losses to the Council and tenants operating on site, a high risk of not being able to insure the site for its current operations, as well as unusable parkland and workspaces leading to further deterioration of the site.
- 5.2 Do less – This option has been rejected. The works which have been identified are deemed to be a priority and a minimum level of intervention for the site if it is to continue operations, even to continue as a business park with no regeneration intervention.
- 5.3 Do more – This option has been discounted at the present time. Actual costs and budget shortfalls are currently unknown.

#### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That Members note the contents of the report.

Approved by Councillor John Ritchie, Portfolio Holder for Growth

#### **IMPLICATIONS:**

**Finance and Risk:**            Yes             No

**Details:** The 2023/24 renewal for flood insurance for Pleasley Vale was a significant increase before the Storm Babet event took place. Excess of £1m was initially suggested for the site but this was reduced after bargaining with the insurance company by the Council's Insurance Officer. There is no doubt there is a real risk that when it comes to the 2024/25 renewal, we are unable to afford or even find a company willing to insure it.

Additionally, the repair work necessary at the Mills has been described as considerable and discussed in the past, which is one of the main reasons for the Project Officer post. Any work is likely to be substantial and therefore capital in nature and would therefore be subject to a Council report to Members for approval. It

is unlikely that we would have enough in reserves to pay for the capital works, and prudential borrowing would have to be undertaken.

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

**Legal (including Data Protection):** Yes  No

**Details:**

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

**Environment:** Yes  No

*Please identify (if applicable) how this proposal/report will help the Authority meet its carbon neutral target or enhance the environment.*

**Details:**

**Staffing:** Yes  No

**Details:**

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

## DECISION INFORMATION

<p><b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b>          A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards, or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:</p> <p>Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please indicate which threshold applies</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>Is the decision subject to Call-In?</b>          (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</p>	<p>No</p>

<p><b>District Wards Significantly Affected</b></p>	<p>Pleasley, Ault Hucknall</p>
<p><b>Consultation:</b>          Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Executive <input type="checkbox"/>          SLT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input type="checkbox"/>          Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Details:</p>

<p><b>Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy, and Environment.</b></p>
<p>Economy - drive growth, promote the district and be business and visitor friendly.</p> <p>Environment - protect the quality of life for residents and businesses, meet environmental challenges and enhance biodiversity.</p>

<b>DOCUMENT INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
1	Visitor satisfaction survey – September 2023
2	Beaumont Rivers – Scope of Works

<b>Background Papers</b>
<i>(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Executive you must provide copies of the background papers).</i>