

Bolsover District Council

Meeting of the Local Growth Scrutiny Committee on 29 April 2024

Update on Pleasley Vale Regeneration Project

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Growth

Classification	This report is Public.
Report By	Natalie Etches – Head of Business Growth Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Limited

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.
- 1.2 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.

2.0 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, negatively impacting on tenant satisfaction / retention.
- 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 Interest (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 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 costs contained within 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.

3.0 Current position / future plans

- 3.1 Flooding – 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 until a new LV panel could be installed (post install defects still being rectified as at April 2024). The financial and economic cost to this flood event is still being felt, with business operations of tenants significantly compromised. Within Mill 3, the storm water rose and broke through floor slabs within units, rendering them unsafe and therefore unusable.
- 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.
- 3.6 A Scope of Works has been agreed and focusses on 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) Permits for Priority 1 emergency works and 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 (NFM) 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 Biodiversity Net Gain (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.

- 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 This has been commissioned, but once this Plan is complete and works identified, a further report will be taken 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 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'. 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 Officer. 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.
- 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

taken 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.
- 3.14 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.

4.0 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.

5 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 This report is for information only. There are no alternative options.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That members note the contents of the report.

Approved by Councillor John Ritchie Portfolio Holder for Growth

IMPLICATIONS:

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details:

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report, however it should be noted that if intervention and investment is not made in to the Natural Flood Management and mitigation actions there is a risk that the insurance policy and excess could significantly increase when retendered, or even be uninsurable.

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details:

There are no legal implication arising from this report

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Environment:

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

Details: the report sets out the work being done to address the risks of flooding within the Vale, and how opportunities to enhance biodiversity and natural flood water management will enhance the environment.

Staffing: Yes No

Details:

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? 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: Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i></p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? <i>(Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</i></p>	<p>No</p>

<p>District Wards Significantly Affected</p>	<p>Pleasley</p>
<p>Consultation: 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Details: None</p>

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

<p>DOCUMENT INFORMATION</p>	
<p>Appendix No</p>	<p>Title</p>
<p></p>	<p></p>

Background Papers

(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).