

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Wednesday 2nd November 2005

**Update Report: Plas Dol-y-Moch Outdoor Education Centre –
Refurbishment Works**

Following a request by the CCC Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, the purpose of this note is to provide an update on the progress being made in respect of the Refurbishment Works at Plas Dol-y-Moch, North Wales as part of the New Opportunities Fund PE & Sport Capital Programme.

Given the slightly unusual situation in terms of managing a £1m project procurement some 150 miles away from Coventry, I believe we are progressing 'very well' with the refurbishment of the City's Outdoor Education Centre in conjunction with a local building contractor Henry Jones Ltd and North Wales based project team.

On commencing the works at the Centre, it soon became apparent that an alternative method of project management would have to be adopted in order to deal with the 'cultural' differences or 'attitudes' to working practises to ensure compliance with project programme and ultimately project budget and as such weekly site visits and meetings have been carried out to emphasise that the distance of the Client would not mean that project scrutiny was not been implemented accordingly.

The first signs of this became apparent during the appointment of Mechanical Sub-Consultants to the Main Contractor when CCC were asked to approve the 2nd lowest tenderer although some £14,000 above that of the lowest tenderer without any significantly justifiable reasoning. In the absence of such information, a decision was taken to request that the Mechanical Sub Package of works be re-tendered (albeit with some revised scope with the omission of the proposed Ground Source Heat Pump which following further review did not offer the cost effectiveness originally proposed) and following the revised tender returns resulted in a cost saving to the overall project of approximately £36,000.

As outlined within the previous report to the Scrutiny Committee following the increased tender prices received and subsequent value engineering exercises carried out resulting in an overall reduction of some £200,000 from the proposed scheme, it has been the intention of the project team to identify potential cost savings using alternative solutions then re-employing back into scheme to identify increases and improvements to the scope of works which can be carried out adding back further value.

Further improvements to date have included replacement of additional oak windows and doors, further upgrade of fire alarm systems, upgrading of kitchen canopy system and an extensive improvement to the proposed external works including an upgrade of car parking and mini-bus \ trailer parking.

As with any refurbishment programme of old buildings especially a 370-year-old Grade 2 listed building with the constraints of a national park authority, unexpected situations do arise, with Plas Dol-y-Moch being no exception. On demolition of the Rear Corridor to the Main House, a significant culvert was discovered acting as a drainage channel to water running from the hill to the rear of the main house. It appears, the extension constructed by CCC previously, without planning permission, this was covered and constructed over and in the absence of any marked up or detailed plans available on file this could not be detected until demolition was carried out. This has resulted in the construction of a revised floor slab detail, retaining wall, and drainage channel together with upgrade of electricity cable increasing constructional costs by approximately £17,500.

A number of other issues have arisen following previous works carried out at the Centre by CCC including the underpinning of a fire escape (£1,000) which was not carried out during its construction and the problem of tanking and damp-proofing (£2,500) a building which was originally designed for animal use and not upgraded when the City Council converted the Stable Block to dormitory accommodation in 1973 by employing apprentices to carry out the conversion.

In addition to the above, within the Main Stable Block area, a number of door and window lintels to a section of the Block, once exposed, showed significant signs of fire damage which required replacing at a cost of some £4,700 of which we had no advice on previously and just seem to have been covered over.

At the time of writing this note, an updated Financial Statement is currently being prepared and it is proposed the Statement be made available at the Committee Meeting. Early indications suggest that Financial Statement will indicate the project is currently running at approx £25,000 under the proposed constructional budget for the scheme.

In terms of project programme, after 25 weeks, the Main Contractor has suggested the overall scheme is currently 25 days (5 weeks) behind schedule with 13 days being lost to inclement weather and 12 days due to additional works being carried out as a result of increased scope of works.

Work is currently progressing with the Main Contractor to review the current project programme with suggestions being made to revise some sequencing of works packages in order to effect time savings. In addition to programme review, in lieu of increased Prelim Costs due to project extension of time, an option of accelerated programme costs including weekend working is

currently being negotiated with a revised project completion date of December 23rd 2005 (1 week delay) currently being targeted.

The installation of the Tubes Challenge activity has now been complete with the Centre currently preparing Operational Risk Assessments prior to usage.

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