

PORTFOLIO: LEISURE, CULTURE & YOUTH MATTERS**CABINET: 5 DECEMBER 2007****ELING EXPERIENCE: PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT****1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In September 2006 Cabinet agreed the development of the “Eling Experience” concept as the way forward for the future of Eling Tide Mill and related interests. This report brings to Cabinet the outcome of that development and presents key principles for implementing the partnership.
- 1.2 Leading up to the 2006 paper, a number of options had been explored that ranged across: development of the current trust, a new independent trust for the Mill, a more formal link with Eling Sailing Club, an existing trust working in Hampshire, an existing trust working nationally, direct operation by NFDC, HCC or TETC. From these it was decided to pursue the project through creating of a relationship with Totton and Eling Town Council and Eling Tide Mill Trust. Since that time a working party has developed a proposal which is presented to Cabinet as a further step towards implementing the “Eling Experience”.
- 1.3 This paper presents key principles for the “Eling Experience”, seeking support from Cabinet for the proposed direction and if contained within the parameters set, for the project to be implemented. The paper is based substantially on a report to Totton and Eling Town Council with commentary on implications for NFDC within this covering report. It is brought now because there is great advantage to introducing the new management approach ahead of the next season and peak visiting time.
- 1.4 The Council owns the Eling Tide Mill / Eling Sailing Club building and the toll bridge. It is a Grade 2* Listed structure and therefore it is the Council’s duty to ensure its proper maintenance.

2. PROPOSAL FOR MANAGEMENT

- 2.1 A working party comprised of member representatives of both Councils plus two Trustees from Eling Tide Mill Trust, have acted as a reference group for how the “Eling Experience” might best be developed. In essence, the suggestion is based around bringing together the various interests into one line of management, which would be Totton and Eling Town Council.
- 2.2 At the moment, management responsibilities are spread across three Services of the District Council, the Town Council and the Eling Tide Mill Trust. Effort is dissipated and resources inefficiently applied. There has been substantial investment in the Tide Mill, Bridge and Heritage Centre and unless there is some integration of management best use will not be made of past investment, nor create the best framework for future bids to external agencies.

- 2.3 The essence of the proposal is for Totton and Eling Town Council to be the focus of operational management responsibility. Appendix 1 is a copy of their report.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR NFDC

- 3.1 The proposal is at a mid point in its development. However, with a strong desire to move matters along promptly, this paper is seeking support for the direction being taken. Therefore, whilst not definitive in terms of solutions, the intention is that the key items have been identified and are capable of achieving positions where all parties will agree the arrangements.

- 3.2 Without repeating all of the attached paper, a number of matters apply:

- The tide mill is a financial liability, NFDC is the owner and has responsibility for its proper stewardship. If there are means to defray capital costs, this is a benefit – this scheme may achieve this through a future capital bid to external funders.
- There are no organisations that are in a position to relieve the Council of the landlord responsibility.
- If revenue costs can be contained it will be a benefit – this scheme aims to do this by achieving increased visitor numbers.
- Bringing the features at Eling together creates a more marketable offer
- A more marketable offer has the potential to increase visiting such that revenue demands can be contained.
- The scale and method of operation there is weak and the additional time spent by Council officers supporting it is substantial.
- The Trust is set to continue – it serves a need for reporting and potential fundraising.
- In this arrangement, NFDC roles devoted to supporting the Trust remain but the extent of time commitment should diminish.
- For this to work TETC should be allowed to manage, so there will be some reduction in “control” but Agreements would set parameters in aspects such as Toll fees and policy.
- Agreements on management processes and responsibilities are key to being able to operate in the proposed timescale.
- A lease to the Trust will be needed, particularly for any external funding bids. Whilst desirable to resolve in the same time frame as Management Agreements but it is not critical to the practical matters of operation, so could follow on.
- There should also be an explicit Agreement to establish member level group to provide steering / contact (similar to the current working group), meeting perhaps twice a year. There should also be a reference group for wider interests to provide input, meeting perhaps once a year.
- With appropriate safeguards on policy issues, it would appear NFDC has little to lose and the prospect of much to gain.

- 3.3 In relation to specific functions:

NFDC FUNCTION	COMMENT
Landlord of the Tide Mill	Lease required to the Trust, which was needed anyway. Trust provides a vehicle for operational monitoring and fundraising. Landlord role will be to retain capital works – schedule being devised. No change in that respect

NFDC FUNCTION	COMMENT
Officer roles in support of the Trust (Company Secretary, Treasurer)	Will continue but need for support should reduce as on-site professionalism increases
Management of the Mill	Not an NFDC function but in effect paid for by NFDC. Leads to current lack of clarity of who actually employs who. The new arrangements will be clearer, however employee matters will need sensitive handling.
Revenue support to the Trust	Will continue at current levels – no change
Toll Bridge operation	Agreement will set parameters for management action and define policy position on items such as traffic management and concessions. It will also identify a process for change management. Implications for employees will need sensitive management. Assessment required of how to allocate overheads attached to the cost centre.
Toll Bridge structure	No change – NFDC responsible
Landlord of Sailing Club and site rental	No change. Rental income retained.
If a capital scheme secures funding, there could be appropriation of the public conveniences and car park.	This may have operational benefits for the Council, if management is done locally. Nature of arrangement would be determined as part of the capital project development. No change at this stage.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In revenue terms, the proposal relies on the Council continuing at its current level of funding to Eling Tide Mill (£31,600 core revenue funding and £3,000 retained maintenance sum). The toll bridge will mean a loss of fee income (£47,120) but this is offset by no longer needing to cover costs of operation. The detail of this has yet to be agreed but it should be cost neutral.
- 4.2 With changes to management arrangements it may be anticipated that there will be cost implications. However, in this case, if they do occur, it is not expected that these will be any different than if the management arrangements were to stay as they are.
- 4.3 In terms of capital, there is currently £20,000 in the capital programme to act as development funding for the partnership capital bid. It is known that there are further investment needs at the Mill. The “Eling Experience” is much more likely to bring forward external funding than going it alone. This of course depends upon being successful but there is at least a prospect of support.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Tide Mill and bridge is a 2* listed property. There are fewer than 10% of all listed properties in this category nationally. It has a special place in the heritage of the District and is the only working tide mill in production in the U.K. Its proper stewardship is vital to the environmental quality of Eling and indeed beyond.
- 5.2 A partnership scheme would deliver a strong and consistent message about the environment of this specific place, its heritage but also its relevance today.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no particular implications arising from this report. In the most general of terms, a building and area that is well managed and in active use is much less of a target for anti social behaviour.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no particular implications arising from this report. In the most general of terms, this partnership would be able to demonstrate the particular local cultural background and its connection both the Forest and the industrial heritage of the Totton and the Waterside.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 There were initial discussions with local organisations in the development of the “Eling Experience” concept. The Town Council and Trust are members of the Working Group and have been fully engaged in the drafting of the proposal which is embodied in the Town Council’s paper attached as Appendix 1.

9. PORTFOLIO HOLDERS COMMENTS

- 9.1 The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Youth Matters is a member of the working group and supports the direction of the “Eling Experience” proposal.

10. RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 It is recommended that the “Eling Experience” be implemented in the form proposed in the report, subject to:
- i) Net revenue costs being no greater than current levels.
 - ii) Employee consultations complying with the Council’s practice.
 - iii) Appropriate lease and Agreement arrangements are made to the satisfaction of the Head of Legal Services.

- iv) An agreed maintenance schedule for buildings and equipment identifying the responsibilities of this Council, the Totton and Eling Town Council and Eling Tide Mill Trust.
- v) the Portfolio Holder being satisfied with the detail of the arrangements for implementation, including the above criteria.

For further Information contact:

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Background Papers:

Attached report

TOTTON AND ELING TOWN COUNCIL

COMMITTEE REPORT

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL (NOW PUBLIC)

Committee	:	Various
Date of Meeting	:	
Subject	:	Tide Mill and Business Plan
Report from	:	Town Clerk

THE ELING EXPERIENCE - BUSINESS PLAN

The Town Council wishes in partnership with the New Forest District Council and the Tide Mill Trustees to manage directly the “Eling Experience”. The Eling Experience will include the following:-

Eling Tide Mill
 Totton and Eling Heritage Centre
 Eling Toll Bridge
 Eling Creek Café
 Marked Heritage Trails
 Wildlife Walks
 Eling Saxon Church
 Coastal Walks, Riverside Walks and Walks to the Testwood Lakes and Salmon Leap (including the Test Way), Barbecue and picnic park area including a smugglers ship play area for young persons.

The sale of flour and possibly other products made from the flour of the Tide Mill.

Commercial enterprises such as the local pubs may wish to be part of the enterprise promotion.

A summary of the existing situation

The Tide Mill was purchased by the District Council in 1975 and the Town Council built the Heritage Centre and Café in 1996. The area about 10 years ago used to receive about 14,000 visitors but recently this has dropped to about 7,000 to 8,000 paid visitors. The drop in numbers is probably associated with the national drop in visitors and the lack of proper and effective marketing.

A summary of the existing situation (contd)

The existing management structure is weak, lacking in sufficient staff hours and the correct skills required to manage a project of this nature. The problem will be exacerbated when the Eling Experience is created and needs to be resolved. The intention would be to restore the visitor numbers to about 14,000 to 18,000 but probably not to be beyond these numbers as is important not to prejudice local resident's quality of life by visitor numbers. These numbers will sustain a viable business plan.

The Heritage Centre and café are subsidised by the Town Council by approximately £25,000 per annum and the New Forest District Council fund approximately £27,000 per annum for the Tide Mill. The Toll Bridge currently produces fee income of approximately £45,750 per annum. With the costs anticipated for operation, this should produce a very small surplus with one of the main reasons for charging being to restrict traffic flows over the vulnerable Toll Bridge. There will be a need to continue with those policies through NFDC/HCC. The existing charge for the Toll Bridge is £1.00 for cars, 70p for motorcycles and £5 for a weekly ticket. Arrangements will be made to describe the mechanism by which charges are made.

PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

Legal Principles

- (a) That the Town Council enter into a management agreement with the Trustees of the Tide Mill to manage the Tide Mill for a 5 year period. The agreement to include a review at 2 years and the ability of either party to terminate giving 12 months notice.
- (b) That the Town Council enter into a management agreement with New Forest District Council to manage the Toll Bridge for a 5 year period. The agreement to include a review at 2 years and the ability of either party to terminate giving 12 months notice.
- (c) The New Forest District Council will retain control of the lease in respect of the Eling Sailing Club.
- (d) The New Forest District Council will as part of the agreements retain responsibility of the structural maintenance of the Toll Bridge and Tide Mill and shall in detail identify with the Town Council those items which will be part of the agreement.
- (e) The Town Council will enter into some form of letter agreement relating to the car parking remaining free and the hours the public toilets will be open.

Marketing

- (a) The Town Council will appoint a part time Marketing Manager (Approximately 22 hours) who will be responsible for marketing the whole Eling Experience and responsible for not only the marketing but the day to day management under the Council's control. The role will be filled by someone who has previous experience in this field with a target of increasing visitor numbers to a minimum of 15,000 within the next 2 to 3 years.

- (b) Marketing will be aimed to increase the diversity of visitors having regard to the following markets:-
- (i) Local residents within a 20 mile catchment area where it has been identified that a significant number are not aware of the facilities.
 - (ii) School and educational parties.
 - (iii) History Groups and persons interested in genealogy.
 - (iv) Ramblers and others interested in walking.
 - (v) Tourists from other areas of the UK and abroad interested in the particular specialist field being offered.
 - (vi) In respect of the café, local residents and businesses.
- (c) As part of the marketing, special events and exhibitions will be promoted.
- (d) The sale of flour will be marketed extensively.
- (e) The marketing manager will be responsible to liaise with other organisations in the area (eg the Church) to try to ensure that the Eling Experience is as extensive as possible and offers the full half day experience being proposed.
- (f) The Town Council will promote the History Trail and Heritage Walks together with ecology walks in the area and part of the project will be to make the area more young person friendly to attract families to the area. This will include a pirate ships play area in the Picnic Park and both the Heritage Centre and Tide Mill to include facilities which will engage young people more than at present.
- (g) As part of the marketing other facilities in the Town like the Tennis Centre and Arts Centre will be encouraged to be part of the marketing exercise as will local tourist facilities near to the Town (for example Furzey Gardens). The marketing Manager will also identify if local commercial organisations wish to be associated with the project (eg the local superstores).

Staffing

The following staffing structure is proposed:-

Marketing Manager part-time approximately 22 hours.

Eling Miller part-time approximately 25 hours.

Eling Experience information assistant – full time

Café Supervisor - approximately 25 hours plus café staff as required.

Toll Keepers – part time flexible working and where possible to include training to be able to cover for the information assistant in the reception at the Mill.

- (a) A basic job specification for each of the posts is attached but more work is required before finalising the detailed job description.

- (b) The Town Council will encourage a “Friends of Eling” Association to be formed and hopefully form a pool of helpers, obtain volunteer millers and guides to the local history of the area. The work of the Historical Society would be recognised as part of this process.
- (c) There is the possibility of a redundancy situation relating to the existing staffing structure for both the Town and District Councils. Both will be responsible for their own areas of responsibility relating to any costs thereto.

Financial Implications

- (a) It is intended that the Town Council and the New Forest District Council will agree to input their existing funding adjusted for the RPI during the period of the agreement and subject to the review at 2 years.
- (b) It is proposed that the Tide Mill Trustees should make a yearly payment to the Town Council of £350 to legitimise the Management Agreement. This figure is based on the interest of their current funds with an offset to take account of their reducing balances caused by inflation. All income from the facilities would go to the managing agents The Town Council.
- (c) At the 2 year review period the District, Town and Trustees will examine if the financial position is fair and relevant having regard to the intended visitor numbers.
- (d) The Town Council shall have freedom within boundaries agreed by the New Forest District Council and the Tide Mill Trustees to adjust entry fees and Toll Bridge charges and their detailed implementation.
- (e) Attached is a spreadsheet showing the projected income and expenditure relating to the project and having regard to visitor numbers. Before the commencement of the project some additional work will be required to identify the effects of any changes to entry fees etc.
- (f) It is intended the operation of the Toll Bridge will remain as at present, the Town Council would want to negotiate with New Forest District Council some flexibility regarding timings and discounts for Eling Experience users.
- (g) It is suggested that joint ticketing should be re-introduced with a nominal sum entrance fee for the Heritage Centre and the Tide Mill entrance fee be adjusted to be more in line with current charges. It would be proposed that there would be added value in respect of charging as for example the entry fee would include a leaflet of the history of the area and local walks etc.

Programme

The programme for implementation is suggested as follows:-

November 2007 – Totton and Eling Town Council consider proposal

December 2007 – New Forest District Council and the Trustees consider proposal

End December 2007/January 2008 – Formal discussions with staff commence

January/February 2008 – Legal agreements are signed between the various authorities

February 2008 – Advertising for the new posts commences

February 2008 – Advertising campaign commences locally in connection with the Eling Experience aimed at a launch date of Easter 2008

Easter 2008 – Formal launch and ceremony for the Eling Experience

That by April 2009 a Lottery Application be submitted in respect of the following:

1. The new Heritage Centre displays
2. Works required to the Eling Tide Mill to ensure its continued operation
3. Audio visual displays for both facilities
4. Education facilities either in the existing buildings or in a purpose built new building
5. The extension to the Heritage Centre building to improve the café and the audio visual display area

Projections					
	Present situation	Projection			
(1) - Tide Mill	8000 visitors	Projected at 14000 visitors		Projected at 10000 visitors	
		Plus 25% increase in ticket price		Plus 20% increase in ticket price	
Admission	14000	30625		21000	
Flour sales	3000	4500		4000	
Shop sales	1870	2244		1900	
Investment	50	200		200	
Other	350	350		350	
Donations	50	50		50	
Specific	50	50		50	
Total Income	19370	38019		27550	
Salaries	22210	35000		35000	(includes 1/2 of Marketing manager costs)
Wages	10250				
Repairs	300	1500		1500	Based on not structural repairs only
Elect	750	750		750	
Water	50	50		50	
Cleaning	250	1000		1000	
Travel	200	200		200	
Publicity	4500	5000		5000	
Tel	740	250		250	
Lessee Insurance	800	350		350	
Bank charges	180	0		0	
Audit fees	550	0		0	
Sec/Trs fees	2870	2700		2700	
General Exp	700	500		500	
Trustees Travel Exp	1750	0		0	
Total Exp	46100	47300		47300	
Balance to subsidise	26730	9281		19750	
Income from Heritage Centre	0	3500		3500	
at nominal 50p entry children fee					
No charge at present					
There would be joint ticketing with					
a reduction for both venues					
Subsidy situation projected	51400	30451		40920	
dib/elingexp-6-11-07					

Eling Experience & Tide Mill Finance spreadsheet					
In 2007/2008 budgets	Existing situation				
Facility		Income	Expenditure	Subsidy by >	Authority
Tide Mill		19370	46100	26730	NFDC
Toll Bridge		Exact costing still awaited but estimate from NFDC as break even		0	
Heritage Centre Staff Café+HC		250	5960		
Café		10500	4810		
Totals		17100	41770	24670	T E T C
Total subsidy				51400	