

 REPORT TO EXECUTIVE	
PORTFOLIO AREA: CELEBRATING CARLISLE/ECONOMIC PROSPERITY	
Date of Meeting:	1 SEPTEMBER 2003
Public	
Key Decision:	No
Recorded in Forward Plan:	No
Inside Policy Framework	

Title: CARLISLE: THE CHRISTMAS CITY 2003
Report of: Head of Economic and Community Development
 and Head of Commercial and Technical Services
Report reference: ECD.28/03

Summary:

The report updates Members on the plans for Christmas 2003 in the City Centre and highlights issues relating to the proposed spend on lighting. It also requests that standing orders are waived to allow work to continue with specialist companies without the need for further tendering.

Recommendations: Members are requested:

1. To note and endorse the proposals developed for the 2003 Christmas celebrations and to welcome the financial support offered by the NWDA
2. To agree to allocate funds to support the lighting proposals.
3. To waive Contracts Standing Order 4(2)(b) to enable the specialist companies to be appointed.

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2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS ECD.28/03

1.1 Carlisle already promotes itself as a special destination for Christmas shopping and seasonal entertainment. Under the banner of 'Christmas in Carlisle', a programme of events, features and activities – some of which are purposely designed to be exclusive to Carlisle – has succeeded in establishing the City as the sub-region's (Cumbria and SW Scotland) leading Christmas shopping experience.

1.2 The current programme though popular and successful, is very modest in terms of scale and investment involved. There is no doubt, however, that it could be developed to become a much larger and higher profile event and one which could be one of the best seasonal 'tourism offers' in England's Northwest. Its potential has been recognised in the research and recommendations of the recent Cumbria Tourism Market Forecasts Study, whilst the 'Tourism Vision for England's North West' clearly supports the development of high quality and distinctive events for the region. There is also no doubt that such an event in the City could provide the breakthrough Carlisle requires in terms of achieving widespread recognition as a high quality visitor destination, which would then have a knock on effect for attracting visitors during the rest of the year.

1.3 Given that the benefits of expanding Carlisle's Christmas Event are very substantial and the prospect of securing external funding appeared realistic a set of proposals has been developed with City Centre partners to build the foundation for Carlisle becoming the Northwest's 'Capital of Christmas'. The proposal was submitted to the North West Development Agency for their consideration and inclusion in their regional events programme in March of this year^{*}. This has resulted in support of £60,000 from NWDA towards the lighting, sculptures, ChristmasTree Exhibition and market elements of the programme.

1.4 Detailed proposals for the Christmas programme are set out in Appendix 1.

1.5 The sources of funding now secured can potentially support a substantial programme of activity. In respect of the Christmas lights a new layout has been developed, introducing displays which have never been used before in this country. The cost plan prepared to date allocates £27,500 for lighting this year. This includes the purchase of a light tree for approx. £13,000. The balance would fund the hire of the new lights for approx. £15,000.

1.6 The full cost of the new lights is approx. £50,000. The outline agreement negotiated with the proposed supplier is that if we hire the lights for two years

they can be purchased in year 3 with a 20% discount. This represents an advantageous deal to the Council. The funding for this year can be met from grants, however before entering any agreement on the basis outlined, the Council would need to make a budget commitment for years 2 and 3.

1.7 The only other option, which is difficult to support, would be to only hire the lights this year and use the existing lighting in subsequent years. In addition to this being a retrograde step for future years, it prevents some of the existing lights being adapted to be used elsewhere. Should the Council wish to consider the acquisition of these new lights, then the cost profile would be as below. An order needs to be placed within the next two weeks to ensure delivery.

Year	Cost	Comment
2003/4	£7,000	Over and above identified cost to adapt and relocate existing lights elsewhere
2004/5	£20,000	Year 2 rental + 2/3 garlands in Scotch Street omitted this year due to building works
2005/6	£13,000	Purchase at discounted price

1.8 Arrangements are now being made to:

- i) formally initiate the work required for the events/features
- ii) undertake the necessary preliminary marketing activity to the appropriate target markets and
- iii) organise a formal launch involving all key players.

9. The proposals for the lighting, grotto, sculptures and Christmas Tree Exhibition have been developed with the assistance of specialist companies who have been developing the concepts specifically for Carlisle. Indeed no other companies could realistically produce the required elements, particularly within the timescale required. It is therefore considered that in this instance it is appropriate to accept single tenders from the specialist companies involved.

1. CONSULTATION

1. Consultation to Date. There are ongoing discussions with a range of parties,

particularly through the City Centre Marketing Group, and the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Commercial Affinity Group).

2. A comprehensive presentation of the finalised Christmas programme will be made to all interested and involved parties at the beginning of September.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested:

1. To note and endorse the proposals developed for the 2003 Christmas celebrations and to welcome the financial support offered by the NWDA
2. To agree to allocate funds to support the lighting proposals
3. To waive Contracts Standing Order 4(2)(b) to enable the specialist companies to be appointed.

1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To recognise the progress made to date and to enable the use of specialist companies

2. IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing/Resources – The Tourism Manager has been involved in developing the package of activities and has sourced the external funding and will continue to oversee the programme. Staff from Commercial and Technical Services are involved in the lighting and infrastructure issues in the City Centre.
- Financial – The financial implications in para. 1.7 could be met from virement of existing base budgets.
- Legal – N/a
- Corporate – The Executive Director has been involved in the discussions with the City Centre Marketing Group and maintains a watching brief.
- Risk Management – Carlisle could lose out to other centres in terms of visitor numbers and spend if new attractions and updated features are not in place. Health and safety issues during the event will be given high priority.
- Equality Issues – N/a
- Environmental – The proposals will enhance the City Centre and make it more attractive to visitors.
- Crime and Disorder – N/a

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APPENDIX 1: PROPOSALS FOR 2003

1. Festival of Light and Christmas Sculpture

The City Centre lights and features are intended to become a 'must-see' attraction, which would underpin the rest of Carlisle's Christmas Experience. The additions and enhancements will be phased over three years.

- Erection of 35ft. (11m) 'light tree' as central Christmas feature in pedestrianised area. Supported by Story Construction
- Erection of new lighting (Phase 1); for central pedestrianised area, English Street (Bank Street-Devonshire Street), central pedestrianised area.
- Old Town Hall decorated with lights and 'angels'
- Nativity Scene refurbished and in-situ in front of Old Town Hall
- New set of contemporary sculptures depicting 'Christmas Carols' throughout the pedestrian area
- 'Frosted' Christmas Trees (up to 200) (sponsored/provided by Forest Enterprise –Whinlatter Forest Park) to be displayed throughout the city centre. Also to be used in conjunction with 'Christmas Carol' features
- Christmas hanging baskets.
- Father Christmas sculpture outside Boots/ W H Smith
- Special Lighting effects on key features and buildings in the city centre. Detail to be confirmed.

2. Carlisle Christmas Grotto

Special high quality 'grotto' with animated displays and Father Christmas. To be operated and marketed in conjunction with Cadbury's sponsorship. Venue: Old Town Hall Assembly Room. This is seen as a major attraction for families which are seen as an ideal target market for Carlisle's Christmas Product.

3. Special Events/Activities

- Lights Switch On
- Torchlight Procession/Carol Evening:

Commencing at the Cathedral with carols. Torchlight procession through the city centre. Brass band accompaniment. Carols in St Cuthbert's Church. Hog Roast/Refreshments in St. Cuthbert's Churchyard/ Tithe Barn.

- 'Cook's' tour with local chef John Crouch – tour of kitchenware departments of city centre stores and supper and demo in city centre restaurant. Also Christmas recipes cooking demo and supper, Priors Kitchen.
- Demonstrations of Christmas Floral Arranging by TV Celebrity Carl Wilde, assisted by local expert Derek Armstrong. Venue: Crown & Mitre Hotel
- Special high profile exhibition 'The Story of Christmas Trees' unique displays and decorated Christmas Trees telling the story of Christmas trees through

history. Venue: To be confirmed.

- Northern Potters Exhibition and sale at Tullie House – High quality ceramics from all over the north of England.
- Christmas Markets: 3 day craft and food market in Cathedral grounds and Tullie House, Farmers Market, Christmas Tree Market
 - Victorian Christmas in the Market Hall with Traditional Entertainment, period costume, Christmas cooking demos.
- Union of the Crowns – Carlisle Castle: Christmas Guided Tours with costumed guides as Tudor and Stuart characters. Seasonal refreshments.

4. Entertainment

- St Cecilia's Day Concert – Carlisle Cathedral with the Abbey Singers
- Weekend entertainment on the bandstand (22nd November – 21st December)
- Ken Dodd Christmas Show – The Sands Centre
- Dominic Kirwan Christmas Show – The Sands Centre
- Dick Whittington pantomime – The Sands Centre