

Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda
Item:
A.5

Meeting Date: 19th January 2014
Portfolio: Environment and Transport
Key Decision: No
Within Policy and
Budget Framework YES
Public / Private Public

Title: TALKIN TARN TASK & FINISH GROUP
Report of: Nicola Edwards
Report Number: OS 04/14

Purpose / Summary:

This report updates Members of the Environment & Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel of the implementation of the recommendation of the Talkin Tarn Task and Finish Group.

Recommendations:

1. That the Panel comment on the update of the implementation of the recommendations of the Talkin Tarn Task and Finish Group.
2. That the Panel decide whether they wish to keep this topic on their work programme for further monitoring.

Tracking

Executive:	31 st May 2013
Overview and Scrutiny:	25 th July 2013 & 19 th January 2014
Council:	N/A

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A Task Group of Members (Cllrs Watson, Prest, Nedved, Allison and Sherriff) undertook a Scrutiny Review of Talkin Tarn during 2012/13 and their report was presented to the Executive on 31st May 2013.
- 1.2 The Terms of Reference for the Task Group were agreed as:
- To gain an understanding of the budgetary position of Talkin Tarn County Park, by examining income, expenditure and central charges.
 - To look at the existing service provision at the Talkin Tarn Country Park and make any recommendations for change and/or improvement.
 - To look at other potential income streams which could be pursued in order to enhance the visitor experience and increase visitor number to the Tarn whilst keeping sympathetic to the natural surroundings of the Country Park.
- 1.3 The Task Group made 6 recommendations which are outlined at Appendix 1 of this report. All of which were accepted by the Executive.
- 1.4 The Panel received a formal response and initial update on the implementation to the recommendations at their meeting on 25th July 2013. It was agreed at this meeting that a follow up report should be brought to the Panel in six months time.
- 1.5 An update of the implementations of the recommendations is attached at Appendix 1. Members of the Panel are requested to scrutinise the response and decide whether they wish to keep the topic on their work programme for further monitoring.

2. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The report has been prepared in order for Members of the Environment & Economy O&S Panel to monitor the implementation of the recommendation of the Task Group.

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**Appendices
attached to report:**

1. Monitoring of Recommendations form

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- [OS 12/13 Talkin Tarn Task & Finish Group Final Report](#)

Overview & Scrutiny - Monitoring Recommendations

Review Title:	Talkin Tarn	Date of report to Executive	31st May 2013
Panel:	Environment & Economy	Date(s) of follow up	25th July 2013 & 19th January 2014
	Recommendation	Executive Response & Officer follow up	
1	That the Executive support the Officers in pursuing potential franchise initiatives which could be accommodated at Talkin Tarn. This should would attract a wider customer base whilst remaining sensitive to the natural surroundings of the Country Park.	<p>A new franchise for watersports was signed up in June 2013. The franchisee will offer a range of activities in addition to the traditional rowing boat hire. Canadian canoes and kayaks will be available and formal training sessions will be on offer. Officers are considering an approach from a camp-site operator who has expressed an interest in running the camping facilities. This would attract a new range of visitors including people walking Hadrian's Wall and cycling the Hadrian's Cycleway.</p> <p>Update 19th January 2014 The licence for the watersports franchisee licence will be extended for a three year period (subject to procurement) to allow the franchisee to development the business. The new licence will allow him to run the business as an 'outdoor activity centre' using the tarn facilities for changing etc then running various activities on and offsite – while bringing business for the tearoom and through car parking. The development of the camp site area is also currently being explored, with interest shown from parties wanting to erect wooden camping 'pods' and seasonal yurts.</p>	
2	Members recommend that details of the scheme are finalised and marketed as soon as possible in order to attract users of the Tarn to the scheme. Consideration should be given to advertising within Brampton Parish Council's BIG newsletter.	<p>Agreed. We will want to emphasise the benefits of membership, primarily the annual carparking pass that is part of the deal. Local advertising would produce the greatest benefit as the majority of users are likely to live within a short distance of the Tarn.</p> <p>Update 19th January 2014 The Talkin Tarn membership scheme can be accessed directly from the menu bar of the Talkin Tarn website. All newsletters are sent to the BIG magazine.</p>	
3	Members of the Task Group recommend that the vacant Green Spaces Officer post is recruited to as soon as possible.	<p>The post is being held vacant while budget pressures are addressed. The Green Spaces team is looking at ways of deploying existing staff to make sure the Tarn receives sufficient attention.</p> <p>Update 19th January 2014 The post has been advertised internally – however the advertising of the post externally is currently on hold awaiting the impact of voluntary redundancy on the department.</p>	

	Recommendation	Executive Response & Officer follow up
4	That the whole offer of the Tea Room and Gift Shop should be reviewed in order to attract more custom. This review should include consideration to the option of franchising the Tea Room. This review should include consideration to the option of franchising the Tea Room.	<p>Preliminary discussions have been held with potential partners but the tea-room and kiosk are actually performing ahead of targets for the current year assisted by better weather encouraging more visitors.</p> <p>Update 19th January 2014 So far the menu has been reviewed concentrating on selling only high return items. The staff has been retrained to deliver consistent portion control, and the opening times of the tearoom have also been changed to reduce the money spent on casual wages. The selling of gifts in the downstairs tearoom has also been reduced to give more space for customer seating. Other options as recommended by the working group are still under consideration.</p>
5	That a strategy for the marketing and promotion of Talkin Tarn is undertaken with support from officers within the Communications Section	<p>Agreed. Carlisle Focus carries information on seasonal events and activities at the Tarn. Similar details are posted on the Council's website.</p> <p>Update 19th January 2014 As mentioned above there are various opportunities to expand what Talkin Tarn has to offer in terms of franchisees. Therefore once the future of the outdoor pursuits and the camping is finalised a marketing plan will then be built around these new activities. In the meantime all events happening at the tarn are advertised through the Focus magazine.</p>
6	Those officers continue to pursue enquiries with local public transport providers to promote Talkin Tarn Country Park in order to attract more visitors and provide adequate transport links.	<p>Agreed. The Carlisle-Newcastle train stops at Brampton Junction which is about a mile from Talkin Tarn. An irregular bus services serves Castle Carrock and goes past the entrance road-end. It may be possible to agree with the bus company for the bus to drop off and pick up on request.</p> <p>Update 19th January 2014 Advertising on the back of the local buses was investigated – but not pursued due to the high cost and the limited period of advertising on offer. Advertising on the rail network encouraging visitors to visit by train is still under investigation.</p>