

Agenda Item 8

Executive Board

3D Laser mapping of Beer Quarry Caves



Request for exemption to standing orders

Summary

The East Devon AONB Partnership is proposing to undertake a pioneering 3D laser mapping exercise of Beer Quarry Caves, an internationally important bat hibernaculum and centre of cultural activity dating back to Roman times. This is a very specialist activity which has been developed by a number of Universities to develop their research interests in mapping mine and underground networks. The work forms part of a broad relationship with the cave management organisation, the landlord and Natural England relating to the management of this habitat of international importance for bats.

The proposed supplier is Exeter University which is offering to undertake the survey using Exeter University students/research staff. This would mean that the work would be carried out at an extremely cost effective rate.. with the public interaction/display component at zero cost.

There are longer term potential benefits that may arise from establishing contacts with our local academic institutions that may prove to be beneficial in the future.

The work is scheduled to take 10 man days at a cost of £650 per day

Recommendation

Executive Board agrees the exemption to standing orders for the expenditure of £6,500 whilst only having received one quote for this project work.

1. Reasons for Recommendation

The work is very specialist and Exeter University have agreed to undertake the work at a non-commercial rate. The specialist nature of the work means there is only one appropriate consultant to quote for the work, thus the requirement for an exemption request from Standing Orders.

b) Alternative Options

1. Do not undertake this important piece of survey work.

2. Look much further a field to other educational establishments who might be able to undertake this work. However, this would inevitably involve increased travel costs which would not be financially or environmentally sustainable.

c) Risk Considerations

Very low. Allocated funds for this project do not originate from District Council budgets. The contractual arrangements are such that payment is made on satisfactory completion of the project and EDDC has no liabilities for the operation of the contract at the Caves.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

This project is supported by the East Devon AONB Management Plan. This expenditure does not originate from District Council budgets

e) Date for Review of Decision

2008

1. Main Body of the Report

- 1.1. The East Devon AONB Partnership has been working with the Historic Environment Team of Devon County Council on a joint project to survey the labyrinth of underground tunnels that make up Beer Quarry Caves. This is an internationally important bat hibernaculum and has been an important cultural centre of human activity since Roman times.
- 1.2. The AONB Partnership has been influential in coordinating improved monitoring systems at the caves and has developed a close working relationship with the cave management organisation, the landlord and Natural England through a range of habitat and tracking programmes. Support from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund has improved understanding of bat activity in the caves and the surrounding countryside which has been helpful evidence in the development of a successful AONB Partnership bid for 3 yrs SITA Landfill Trust funding to support a project entitled "looking out for bats".
- 1.3. Exeter University undertake this type of survey work all over the world and are re-knowned . experts in their field. The survey will produce an accurate 3D laser map of the complex which can then be used as an interpretative and management tool to aid better understanding of the site and can be used to complement on-going activities in the area. Moreover the project will enable the AONB to establish a working relationship with our most immediate large academic institution which we hope will provide long-term benefits to both parties.
- 1.4. The work comprises a detailed 2 dimensional survey of the cave network complimented by the laser mapping which produces a 3 dimensional digital image of the caves. The contract is scheduled to take 10 man days at a cost of £650 per day

Legal Implications

The project parameters will be defined in a contract to be signed by the AONB Manager and Exeter University.

Financial Implications

The financial implications are as stated within the report.

Chris Woodruff
AONB Manager

Executive Board