

## Agenda Item 25

Executive Board

6 June 2007

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### Appointment of a part time Axe Wetlands Project Development Co-ordinator

#### Summary

This report outlines the need to appoint a two year part time Project Development Co-ordinator to help progress the development of a funding applications to a variety of funding sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, Landfill Tax and Devon Renaissance as well as pursue other sources of funding which would match the project objectives. The Axe Wetlands project has secured the support of the Executive Board (November 2006) within the context of plans for regenerating Seaton and providing a regionally important nature based tourism attraction. The District's Countryside Service has managed to secure funding from the Environment Agency and Natural England (to be confirmed) to enable the appointment of a part time two year Project officer post. The proposal is to appoint the Great Trees Project Co-ordinator into the post from April 2007 which will run unto April 2009. The Great Trees Project Coordinator will continue with the current part time arrangements for the Great Trees work programme until its completion in March 2008.

#### Recommendation

**That Executive Board recommends the internal appointment of a part time two year Project Development Co-ordinator to help deliver the Axe Wetlands project.**

#### a) Reasons for Recommendation

To provide critical support to the Countryside Service in helping to deliver the Axe Wetlands project, without dedicated officer support there is no additional capacity within the Service to progress this work.

#### b) Alternative Options

To pay for an external Consultant to undertake the project development work which is likely to be more expensive.

#### c) Risk Considerations

There is no financial risk to the Council as the funds are already in place.

#### d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

The proposal supports the recommendation made by Executive Board in November 2006 to support the delivery of the Axe Wetlands project as part of the wider regeneration of Seaton. The Countryside Service has secured £20,000 from the Environment Agency, £15,000 from Natural England and an agreed budget allocation of £10,000 from East Devon DC made by Executive Board on 17 January 2007.

#### e) Date for Review of Decision

The Project Officer will be supported by a Project Steering Group made up of the funding partners and will meet regularly to help guide the work programme over the two years.

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## 1 Main Body of the Report

### 1. Background to project

- 1.1 The Axe Wetlands project is a scheme designed to establish a regionally important nature reserve of some 104ha (256 acres) from the outskirts of Seaton to the A3052 a distance of some 2.4km (1.5 miles).
- 1.2 The scale of this new Nature Reserve combined with the quality and quantity of wildlife on offer would make this one of the most important such sites in the South West, comparable with few other nature reserves in the region.
- 1.3 The value of this proposal is enhanced by the proximity of a number of other initiatives. The proposed regeneration scheme for Seaton together with the developing plans for a World Heritage Site Visitor Centre and the terminus for the Wessex Cycle Route (NCN 2) all combine with a new and larger new Nature Reserve along with existing facilities such as Seaton Tramway in such a way that each adds value to the others.
- 1.4 The Axe Wetlands project will bring considerable economic benefits as a major nature based tourism attraction within the region, district and locally. Sites of this scale and type have already shown significant economic benefits to the local economy through research by the RSPB. It is expected that this proposal will generate an additional 30-40,000 visitors per annum providing an anticipated £600-700,000 into the local economy.
- 1.5 The site will also provide an additional 3km of access for all that will link to the Wessex cycleway running along the western corridor of the Wetlands site. The Wetlands scheme will also provide enhanced educational opportunities due the scale and provision of infrastructure that will accommodate larger groups of students.
- 1.6 The profile and benefits that would accrue from such a project will significantly raise the profile of Seaton and East Devon as a destination for high quality nature based tourism and also for East Devon DC as an authority that manages a regionally important nature Reserve.

### 2. Role of post

- 2.1 The primary focus for the post will be to prepare a range of funding applications within a 12 to 18 month timeframe that will help unlock around £1 million of funds to help with the “fit out” costs of the project. These include the access for all infrastructure, provision of education facilities, boardwalks and bird hides, interpretation facilities and site based information.
- 2.2 The post will act as the project development co-ordinator working with a broad range of stakeholders and agencies who will assist with the provision of technical information such as the Environment Agency, also informing and liaising with the local community as the project progresses and holding informal events to update on progress. The post will also draw up detailed project briefs for specific tasks that will need to be undertaken to help shape funding applications.
- 2.3 The breadth and scope of the work will be considerable and therefore a Project Steering Group will be set up comprising of key funders and invited “specialists” to help support and guide the work priorities of the Co-ordinator.

2.4 The post will also be actively engaged in working with other potential partners in the project such as Seaton Tramway, the World Heritage Team and Axe Vale & District Conservation Society. These organisations it is hoped will play a significant role in the promotion and marketing of the Wetlands as part of their own organisational priorities for delivery.

### 3. Costs

3.1 The post will be 15 hours a week and salary costs will be pro-rata'd to continue the current salary the Great Trees Co-ordinator post is paid which is SCP 29. The breakdown for the post is :

- 15 hrs per week (SCP29) : £9,395
- On costs (@ 23.5%) : £2,208
- Total salary p.a : £11,603

3.2 The post's costs over two years will be, including cost of living rise, £23,554 which will allow the postholder to manage a small project budget of £3K per annum to enable tasks to be undertaken that will help develop the detail and scope of the project proposal.

3.3 The Project Steering Group will consist of East Devon District Council, Environment Agency, Natural England and Axe Vale & District Conservation Society (to provide local community input). The role of the group will be to help support and guide the work over the two years and provide a "sounding board" for the Project Co-ordinator. The Steering Group will also agree and monitor project expenditure to ensure that costs are allocated to priority areas of the project's development.

3.4 The Project Co-ordinator will report regularly to the Steering Group and will also provide updates to Council Members via appropriate Committee Meetings as and when requested, this will enable that the Council is full engaged in key areas of the project's delivery such as land acquisition, external funding applications and community engagement.

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### **Legal Implications**

No legal implications to report

### **Financial Implications**

The financial implications are stated in the report.

### **Consultation on Reports to the Executive**

N/A

### **Background Papers**

- Project Co-ordinator job description and personal specification
- Axe Wetlands prospectus

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Executive Board  
6 June 2007