

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 4TH FEBRUARY 2009

LEASE OF DISUSED WALLED GARDEN AT DEAN CASTLE COUNTRY PARK

Report by the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek authority to lease the disused walled garden at Dean Castle Country Park to the Heal the Earth organisation, for the development of allotments to grow organic vegetables.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The walled garden in Dean Castle Country Park has been derelict for over 100 years. The walls were rebuilt and re-pointed in the early 1980's and in recent years the Ranger service has planted trees and wild flowers to encourage wildlife. The site map attached as Appendix 1 shows the location of the walled garden.
- 2.2 The Heal the Earth Group approached officers with this and other proposals during the Leisure and Cultural Strategy consultation process.
- 2.3 There has also been interest in establishing allotments in the walled garden at Annanhill and the Commonwealth Orchard project is also attracting interest in East Ayrshire.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The Council has been approached by a voluntary group called, Heal the Earth, who would like to lease the walled garden and develop allotments. The group proposes that there would be 30 allotments and anyone will be able to apply for a plot. There would be no membership fees but any group costs would be divided equally among the members.
- 3.2 The group intends to apply to the Climate Challenge Fund for funding to set up the project and has asked if the Council can provide the following materials to help start the project:
- Wood Chip for Paths – The Country Park produces its own woodchip that could be made available.
 - Timber for Raised Beds - The Country Park has a regular supply of timber from the mobile sawmill that could be used.
 - Help with building a disabled parking bay at the entrance to the walled garden. The Country Park has a supply of stone that could be used for bottoming.
- 3.3 The group's long term plans include courses in organic gardening, the creation of a wildlife pond and installation of a composting toilet.

3.4 The group will provide its own insurance in relation to the operation of the allotments, the Council will retain responsibility for the walls of the walled garden, these have recently been inspected and are structurally sound.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications for the Council in initially setting up the allotments other than the supply of materials outlined in 3.2 above.

5. LEGAL AUTHORITY / IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council owns the walled garden and has the authority to lease the land.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The proposed allotments would help to achieve Community Regeneration by enhancing the natural environment and reducing the 'carbon footprint'.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The terms of the lease will ensure that the Council's property interests are protected and the group will be asked by Leisure Services' staff to ensure that no additional risks relating to the Country Park or its visitors are created by the project.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The Heal the Earth project to create allotments for organic fruit and vegetables would be an appropriate use of the walled garden and would bring another attraction to the Country Park.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet: -

- (i) Approve the lease of the walled garden at Dean Castle Country Park to Heal the Earth and, if agreed;
- (ii) Authorise the Executive Head of Finance and Asset Management to set up a lease between the Council and Heal the Earth for an initial period of 5 years;
- (iii) Otherwise note the contents of this report.

William Stafford
Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

WS/JAG/ASM

29th January 2009

BACKGROUND PAPERS – Nil

Implementation Officer: (john.griffiths@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

