



Cabinet report

Date	11 NOVEMBER 2021
Title	REVIEW OF OPTIONS TO IDENTIFY INVESTMENT PROPOSALS FOR REGENERATION OF CULVER PARADE TOURISM OPPORTUNITY AREA
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND WASTE and the CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. As agreed at Cabinet in March 2021, the council has reviewed its approach to bringing forward investment interest to regenerate the area of Culver Parade identified in the Island Plan as a Tourism Opportunity Area (TOA). The previous tender process focussing on the Dinosaur Isle facility has now been terminated as the investment proposals coming forward during dialogue with a potential investment partner were challenging the scope of the tender and putting the council at risk of challenge.
2. The council will not now pursue the development of a dinosaur themed visitor attraction at Dinosaur Isle and the adjoining Browns golf course land.
3. The council is committed to the current Dinosaur Isle visitor facility and curation of the collection but is keen to explore the best and most effective way of securing the future of the museum and the collection in the longer term. This could include consideration of a more suitable alternative site for a new dinosaur led attraction either on council or third party land and premises.
4. The key objectives are (i) to secure the future of the important and internationally renowned palaeontological collection that currently resides at Dinosaur Isle and which provides the Island with an important tourism, educational and scientific asset, and (ii) set out a new investment opportunity for the Culver Parade area which has environment and heritage at its centre.
5. In respect of (i) it is important to note that the requirements for museum accreditation and management of the collection will mean that any facility is run for the public benefit. If the council does not directly run the facility it is likely that “not for profit” organisations such as charitable trusts are best placed to meet these requirements, and this will be taken on board in developing plans for the future of the Museum.

RECOMMENDATION

6. **Option A** to (i) seek to secure an effective and sustainable long term solution to the future of the dinosaur museum (including the collection and Museum Accreditation) either at the current or any alternative site. (ii) To develop an alternative regeneration proposition of the council owned land at Culver Parade which reflects its environment and supports the Island Biosphere designation. (iii) Pursue an alternative site (either council or third party owned) for the development of a new dinosaur themed visitor attraction.

BACKGROUND

7. The council has been actively pursuing a development partner to invest in Dinosaur Isle for a number of years as part of a wider opportunity to “kick start” investment in this area of the Bay, as set out in the council's regeneration strategy.
8. A procurement process using the “competitive dialogue” method had been agreed and as a result of that process the Council had been in discussion with a potential investor. During this dialogue it emerged that the investors proposal, which they required in order to deliver a commercially viable scheme, was in danger of breaching the scope of the ITT and putting both the council and investor at risk of legal challenge.
9. In March 2021 the council's Cabinet resolved to undertake a review of the process with a further report to be considered once this had taken place and the procurement process that had been underway was terminated. The Cabinet report highlighted that a petition containing 3,000 signatures had been received raising concerns about the future use of land in the Culver Parade area and specifically sought to recognise the unique heritage of Browns Golf course and clubhouse and to guarantee its protection as a public asset.
10. Following the local elections in May 2021 the new administration have sought to complete that review taking into account the desire to regenerate the area, find a sustainable solution for Dinosaur Isle and protect its heritage and natural environment.
11. The council intends to assess the opportunity of securing alternative investments for the area surrounding Dinosaur Isle for it to become more accessible to the community and visitors in a way which reflects its open natural environment and heritage. This could include opportunities for “eco tourism” provided it complimented and supported the Island's UNESCO biosphere designation. In the meantime, the council will continue to support the tenancy of the golf course for its management and maintenance.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

12. On 25 October 2021 Cabinet recommended the new Corporate Plan for approval by Full Council in November and it sets out the objectives for the council over the next four years. Of relevance to this paper the plan states the council will:

Secure the future of the Island's geological collection by working with regeneration and investment partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will act to maintain the accreditation status of the collection at all times and work with relevant bodies to enhance its display wherever possible
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CONSULTATION

13. The regeneration of this area of the Bay and the plans for investment in Dinosaur Isle have involved a range of consultation and engagement exercises including with stakeholders, potential investors and the local community. The council are aware of the strong local feeling that exists to maintain the Browns golf course, as highlighted by the recent petition, but is also aware that the Dinosaur Isle facility is well supported by the Friends of Dinosaur Isle who are keen to ensure the Island remains an international renowned location for palaeontology.
14. Whilst there has been no specific consultation as a result of this report which has been to review the position, the council will ensure that the views of the local community and stakeholders are considered in any future processes.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

15. There are no direct financial implications as a result of the recommendations of this paper.

CARBON EMISSIONS

16. Since 2009 Dinosaur Isle has reduced its carbon emissions through both behavioural change and various energy efficiency measures, the most significant of which was reverting to localised heating of essential areas rather than whole site. The result of all these measures resulted in a halving of energy consumption down to approximately 76,000kWh (27tCO₂e).

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

17. There are no specific legal implications as a result of the recommendations of this paper.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

18. The council, as a public body, is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. There are no negative impacts as a result of the recommendation in this report.

OPTIONS

19. The options available are as follows:

Option A to (i) seek to secure an effective and sustainable long term solution to the future of the dinosaur museum (including the collection and Museum Accreditation) either at the current or any alternative site. (ii) To develop an alternative regeneration proposition of the council owned land at Culver Parade which reflects its environment and supports the Island Biosphere designation. (iii) Pursue an alternative site (either council or third party owned) for the development of a new dinosaur themed visitor attraction.

Option B to take no further action and continue to run and manage the existing Dinosaur Isle facility.

RISK MANAGEMENT

20. Alternative sites for a large visitor attraction may be difficult to identify and could be constrained from development but until the potential land is explored the risk is difficult to quantify. The council has limited land for development of this nature at any significant scale but there may well be private landowners who could come forward particularly if they felt the opportunity was complimentary to their own activities
21. The large area of IWC at Culver Parade land may have considerable constraints even for low impact investments such as boardwalks to open up access to the area and could undermine any commercially viable investment interest. This might be mitigated through the availability of grant funding and where the biosphere status could unlock new funding opportunities.
22. The council could decide to continue to run and manage Dinosaur Isle in the longer term, but this would require a significant level of ongoing investment not just to maintain the fabric of the building but to refurbish and upgrade the visitor experience in order that it could generate income for the council and thereby not become a burden on the council's finances. The service is non statutory and would have to compete with many statutory services for the councils limited financial resources at a time when savings and income continually need to be found.
23. There is a risk that the potential commercial opportunity at the existing golf course and clubhouse is not realised due to the short-term nature of the lease.

EVALUATION

24. The process to bring forward the regeneration of the Culver Parade area has presented the council with some complex challenges. As a major landowner and provider of a key tourism and educational facility it recognises the opportunity to take a leadership role in the future of this part of the Bay which has suffered from under investment from the private sector over many years.
25. The key challenges relate to a number of factors including its location in an area at risk of tidal and fluvial flooding and where any new investment may meet significant environmental constraints.

26. The imperative for the new administration is to develop an opportunity for regeneration and investment that will enhance what the local community values as important in this area of Sandown. The basis for a new investment proposition at Culver Parade is therefore to be focussed on public access, maintaining the existing environment and heritage and compliment the UNESCO Biosphere designation of the Island.
27. The impact of the pandemic has seen a major boost to the visitor economy of the Island and the opportunity to reevaluate the best approach to secure the long term future of the museum, the opportunities to invest in the Culver Parade area as well as the possibility of a new visitor attraction on an alternative site, which, if it is to incorporate the Museum, may require the creation of a Charitable Trust to ensure Museum accreditation is maintained.

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