

## **DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO: Leisure and Arts Services Committee – 21 February 2005**

**REPORT ON: Belmont Estate, Meigle – Proposals for Upgrade and Extension from Scottish Centres**

**REPORT BY: Director of Leisure and Arts**

**REPORT NO: 143-2004**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform the Committee of the proposals received from Scottish Centres both to upgrade and extend their Camp at Belmont Estate, for Members to consider the key issues and to seek agreement on the way forward.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that

- 2.1 The Committee agree to support the refurbishment of the existing blocks together with the change to location car park, footpath and entrance.
- 2.2 The Lease area to be extended to enlarge the existing boundary subject to detailed discussion with the Director of Economic Development and the Director of Leisure and Arts.
- 2.3 That in relation to enhancement of existing Woodland Management Plans that this be supported with final details being agreed by the Director of Leisure and Arts at an operational level.
- 2.4 In relation to proposed new site that this be remitted to the Director of Economic Development and the Director of Leisure and Arts to enter into formal discussion with Scottish Centres and bring back a report for consideration with this Committee.
- 2.5 Director of Economic Development be remitted to review the Lease and bring back any proposed changes to this Committee for consideration.

### **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications from this report. However, should the proposals submitted by Scottish Centres which relate to a second site be accepted, then the Directors of Economic Development and Leisure and Arts will review the lease and determine if the changes in conditions merit a higher lease charge and bring this back to Committee for consideration accordingly.

### **4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None

### **5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The continuing service provided by Scottish Centres will ensure that, in particular, youths will be able to continue to access facilities which provide a positive education and activity resource.

## 6.0 MAIN TEXT

6.1 The Director of Leisure and Arts has received correspondence from Scottish Centres regarding proposals from the organisation to upgrade their Belmont Centre at Meigle with a view to negotiate an extension to their current Lease Agreement.

A summary of the issues possibly affecting the Lease include:

- Refurbishment of buildings – to include 6 accommodation blocks and other buildings including extensions and a photovoltaic energy system on the dining building
- Extend the Lease to include the narrow strip of land from West Lodge to the circular field in front of Belmont Castle – this will allow strengthening of footpath that currently runs along the northern boundary and Scottish Centres may wish to locate educational activities within the area.
- Extend the Lease to include the area to the north east of the Estate – this area includes woodland and an area that is used as part of tree nursery by Dundee Contract Services. Scottish Centres have outlined that this area would be either managed by Scottish Centres or utilised as grounds to erect additional accommodation to enable management of diverse groups.
- Footpath and entrances – Scottish Centres are proposing that some of the footpaths and the key access is altered to both strengthen the entrance to the Centre, guiding visitors to reception and deterring others from entering areas where children are working and playing.
- Relocate the car park at the Centre – Scottish Centres wish to improve the management of vehicles in and around the estate for child safety purposes.
- To work with the Council in relation to wood management for educational purposes.

Annex 1 outlines the excerpt from Scottish Centres Management Committee Paper for Meigle Land 27 August 2004.

Annex 2 outlines a map of Belmont which designates the areas.

## 6.2 Key Issues

### 6.2.1 Summer Use of the Centre

The Department understand that during the Summer period that part of the Camp has been utilised in the past for Seasonal Workers who work on the nearby farms. The Scottish Centres indicated that this assisted with cash flow during periods when the facilities were otherwise empty. They have also indicated that latterly the seasons for such workers are extending due to different agricultural practices and while Scottish Centres have not been able to accommodate this extended season market they have indicated that an opportunity is presented for this and other markets in the future, hence the indication to both refurbish the existing facility and proposal for new accommodation away from the core camp hence reducing the risk related to children.

### 6.2.2 Dundee City Council's Current Commitment

At the present moment due mainly to our restricted budget, there is very little work carried out in the woodlands and there is generally very little use of the site. The Leisure and Arts Department utilises the fields for cattle and horses and areas of ground as a small tree nursery through Dundee Contract Services. Otherwise the timber presents a future asset to

the Council. The Department are happy to work with Scottish Centres in relation to woodlands and education and co-operation on this issue could be undertaken at a local level.

#### 6.2.3 Current Lease Conditions

The current use of the camp is restricted to “the construction, maintenance and management of a camp of a permanent character in terms of The Camps Act 1939 and for no other purpose except with the written consent of the Council”.

#### 6.3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Scottish Centres operations at Belmont contributes in many ways in meeting the social needs of children and provides a valuable resource in terms of environmental education and physical activity. There is an appreciation that maximising the occupation of the Centre during otherwise quiet periods is important to the viability of the operation. The proposals would add value to the current layout and set up and may provide a solution in terms of the sustainability and viability of the Scottish Centres operation at the site.

It is therefore recommended that in terms of the initial refurbishments of the building, in regards to the Lease that consent is given. It is further recommended that the Lease is extended to include the narrow strip of land from the West Lodge to the circular field in front of Belmont Castle together with further improvements to re-locate the car park etc within the existing Centre.

At the same time it is recommended that the existing Lease is reviewed and that further discussions are held with Scottish Camps in order to establish the frequency and programme of lets in relation to Eastern European Seasonal Workers with the objective of determining whether the current Lease is breached re the arrangements regarding seasonal workers and whether a change in the Lease to reflect a more commercial rate is appropriate.

In terms of the proposal to extend the Lease to include the area to the north east of the estate it is proposed that the Director of Economic Development together with the Director of Leisure and Arts are remitted to discuss this proposal and bring back any recommendations for approval to Committee.

### **7.0 CONSULTATION**

7.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) have been consulted on this report and are in agreement with its contents.

### **8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1 None

**STEVE GRIMMOND  
DIRECTOR OF LEISURE and ARTS  
8 FEBRUARY 2005**

## ISSUES POSSIBLY AFFECTING THE LEASE

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Outline</i>	<i>Acceptable within terms of lease (1); requiring amendment to the lease (2); or requiring further discussion (3)</i>
Refurbishment of buildings	To include 6 accommodation blocks and other buildings, including extensions and a photovoltaic energy system on the dining building	
To extend the lease to include the narrow strip of land from the West Lodge to the circular field in front of Belmont Castle	This will allow the strengthening of the footpath that currently runs along the northern boundary as the major public access walk;  Scottish Centres may also wish to locate educational activities within this area, making use of the tarmac track to enable disabled access to these activities.	
To extend the lease to include the area to the north-east of the estate	This area to be managed by Scottish Centres either for the educational purposes.  Considered as either an area for management by Scottish Centres, or the erection of other accommodation facilities to enable the management of diverse groups and enhance Child Protection	
Footpaths and Entrances	To improve management e.g. by strengthening the footpath for public access from the west lodge to the circular lawn to the south of Belmont Castle;  To strengthen the entrance to the Centre, guiding visitors to a reception and deterring other from entering areas where children are working and playing	
To relocate the car park from the middle of the Centre, to the periphery	Scottish Centres wish to improve the management of vehicular access in and around the estate for Child Protection purposes.	
To agree to the enhancement of existing woodland management plans to include educational purposes	This relates to the woodland area to the east of the Centre already included under the terms of the lease.  Also to additional areas suggested above for inclusion under the terms for the lease.	

