

Report of Head of Operations and Head of Legal Services

12. Proposed Hereford Slipway - Feasibility

Purpose of report

1. To provide context and determine the need to proceed with a feasibility to explore the potential of an additional slipway in Hereford to launch water rescue boats.
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Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that officers be authorised to contribute towards the costs of a feasibility study into the provision of a slipway at Hereford if satisfied that there are sufficient other interested parties willing to contribute for such a scheme to be potentially viable.

Introduction and Background

2. Cllr Kenyon requested that funding be allocated to carrying out a feasibility study into the provision of a slipway to enable the launch of water rescue boats directly onto the river at Hereford.
3. Currently, Fire crews launch water rescue boats from Hereford Rowing Club to access incidents in that vicinity, which does not have a slip-way but does have steps leading to the river, which requires that boats are carried to the river down the steps. Each HWFRS Water Rescue Vehicle and team normally carries two boats to each incident. Both boats can be carried into the water in the absence of slipway, however the larger boat is too heavy to be carried by the boat crew alone, and so the launching of this boat may require either a second crew to be mobilised or assistance from others, such as the Police. The smaller boat carried is also difficult to handle due to its weight but can be launched by the boat crew alone. This is the same as the arrangements at both Worcester and Evesham.
4. From an operational perspective, these arrangements are considered satisfactory and do not compromise the use of the rescue boats. Whilst access to a slipway would be advantageous and provide an improved response, the Service does not need a dedicated slipway for its own exclusive use.

Feasibility

5. To explore potential options to build a new slipway would need an extensive feasibility study. This could be undertaken by Place Partnership at an estimated cost of £8,000 plus disbursements. The feasibility would examine three key elements:
 - identifying an appropriate location with land that was available to purchase or lease;
 - cost of land acquisition; and
 - the cost of construction/engineering works.
6. The search for an appropriate location would need to consider whether the site:
 - is accessible by Fire Service vehicles;
 - is appropriate in terms of resilience (for example, can it be accessed during times of flooding); and
 - is available to purchase/lease and at what cost
7. The specialist nature of the engineering works required for the construction of a slipway are such that an estimate of construction costs cannot be determined until a site is identified but the costs are potentially significant. Given that a slipway is not essential from an operational perspective, your officers do not believe the costs are likely to be viable unless the work was being undertaken in partnership with others, at shared cost and as a joint facility.
8. A meeting is due to take place in Hereford on 8th September with interested parties to explore whether they would be interested in contributing towards the development of a slipway for joint use. The outcome from that meeting will be reported to Members at the Policy and Resources Committee.

Conclusion/Summary

9. The availability of a slipway for use when launching the rescue boats would be an advantage but is not an operational requirement. From an operational perspective there would be no justification for the expense involved in constructing a slipway for our own use, especially if this involved the cost of land acquisition. There is therefore no benefit in undertaking a feasibility study on our own, at this time.
10. However, the construction of a slipway for joint use with others may be viable if other interested parties were willing to contribute to the costs.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	There is currently funding allocated for the provision of a slipway at Hereford. A contribution towards the cost of a feasibility study could be funded from any general underspend within the revenue budget but if the scheme were to proceed, a specific capital allocation would be required.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	Our Strategy is to provide and maintain the right fleet, tools and equipment to ensure our staff can do their jobs effectively
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	None at this stage
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	None at this stage
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	Not applicable at this stage

Supporting Information

Background papers - None

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