

**FLATHOLM ISLAND PARTNERSHIP**

---

**Purpose of report**

1. To provide Members with background to the Flat Holm Island Partnership and the progress that has been made to deliver a sustainable future for the island.

**Background**

2. Flat Holm Island is a small island, less than ½ a mile wide, in the Bristol Channel. It is approximately 4 miles from Lavernock Point in the Vale of Glamorgan and includes the most southerly point in Wales. Flat Holm Island lies within the City and County of Cardiff
3. Cardiff Council assumed the freehold ownership and management responsibilities of Flat Holm Island in 1996. Since this time, the Council has managed the Island as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserve and Historical Site with a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings and in partnership with the Flat Holm Society.

**Task and Finish Report**

4. As part of the 2012-13 work programme, the Economy and Culture undertook an inquiry titled 'Flat Holm Operations'. The scope of this Inquiry was to scrutinise the operations at Flat Holm Island and examine options to enhance revenue.

5. The inquiry report can be found in full via <http://goo.gl/7UaMbv> . The following are some of the key findings of this inquiry:

- A key issue in improving the tourist offer and footfall to the island is that of transportation. In 2012 45% of the trips planned for Flat Holm were cancelled mainly due to adverse weather conditions.
- The majority of the trips to the island were provided by the Lewis Alexander that has a capacity of approximately 45 passengers. The boat is 25 years old and in need of significant maintenance in the near future.
- Flat Holm boasts two helipads that are utilised for emergency purposes. Commercial helicopter operators are available to transport the public to and from the island and this potential method of transport has not been realised to date.
- Flat Holm does not have its own fresh water supply. There are potential opportunities to gain a water supply via a borehole and this would require significant investment.
- A range of marketing activity has been attempted to increase the number of visitors to the island, ranging from attracting hen and stag do's to corporate events. Flat Holm's strength is however considered by many to be sustainability and environmental.
- The provision of overnight stays has the potential to increase the income of the island significantly.
- The island's provision of environmental/sustainability education is valued by several educational institutions ranging from primary to higher education.
- Flat Holm benefits from active volunteers coordinated through the Flat Holm Society and other charities.

6. Ten recommendations were made to the Cabinet as part of this inquiry, and a Cabinet response was received in November 2013. The recommendations made and associated Cabinet responses can be found attached at **Appendix 1**.

### **Community Asset Transfer of Flat Holm Island**

7. In April 2013 the Council sought expressions of interest from individuals, groups and organisations that could provide a sustainable future for the island. This followed a decision to reduce the Council's budget for Flat Holm Island within the 2013/14 budget. A report taken to Cabinet in November 2013 agreed the following recommendations:

- Approve Consortium A as the preferred future operators of Flat Holm Island and delegate authority to the Director of Sport Leisure and Culture in conjunction with the County Solicitor and the S151 officer to facilitate this transfer.
- Agree that Flat Holm Island remain open and operated by the Council to provide time for the Community Asset Transfer Process to be completed by April 2015.
- Approve the allocation of funds to support the delivery of remedial and conservation work from the Landfill Community Fund is approved if required to facilitate this transfer, subject to the approval of the environmental body holding this budget.
- Agree that should the community asset transfer of Flat Holm Island fail the island be advertised for disposal with a further cabinet report on the outcome of this process presented at that time.

The full Cabinet report can be found via : <http://goo.gl/SCbzNn>

8. It is clear from subsequent Cabinet Reports that 'Consortium A' comprised of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the National Trust.

9. The Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee undertook pre decision scrutiny of this Cabinet report, and wrote to the Cabinet Member for Sport, Leisure and Culture with the following comments:

*“Committee Members would like to commend officers for the work they have done in progressing arrangements for the potential transfer of Flat Holm Island. This Committee is a strong advocate of the benefits of community asset transfer, but we appreciate that it is a new and relatively untried aspect of work for the Council, and feel that the arrangements you have undertaken have been done so with sensitivity and skill.*

*“The preferred partners that you have identified would appear to have the organisational experience and resources required to successfully manage and develop the Island’s ecological, environmental and visitor potential.*

*We were also appreciative that you had sought to take the recommendations of this Committee’s November 2012 task and finish Inquiry report into account when planning arrangements for the asset transfer.*

*“We noted last night that the Council retains a £70,000 revenue contingency to preserve the Island’s operations during the spring and summer should arrangements not proceed as planned, and also your commitment to keep this Committee informed of arrangements as they move forward.*

*“Finally we were pleased to note that you will be seeking to ensure that the Flat Holm Society remain involved in the process. We feel that they are an excellent resource for harnessing community participation in the life of the Island.”*

## **Flat Holm Island Partnership**

10. A further report was taken to Cabinet in February 2015, providing a progress update on the Community Asset Transfer for Flat Holm Island. This report outlined that it was clear the Council would need to contribute a capital endowment to the consortium and to underwrite any revenue shortfall in operating costs in order for a Community Asset Transfer to take place.

11. The report recommended that a four way partnership be established between the RSPB, National Trust, Cardiff Council and the Flat Holm Society. The basis of the partnership would be to share resources, liabilities and assets, opportunities and risk; thereby overall reducing the risk to any one party. The report suggested that the RSPB take the lead in building the partnership through a project management approach.

12. The following recommendations were agreed at the meeting:

- The City of Cardiff Council enters into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the National Trust and the Flat Holm Society to form a partnership for the management of Flat Holm Island.
- Authority is delegated to officers to work with partners to scope the details of the partnership.
- A further report is presented to Cabinet for approval of Head of Terms of the lease, once the partnership arrangements have been agreed in principle.

The full report can be accessed via <http://goo.gl/y4ODOo>.

13. Further changes have occurred with the Flat Holm Island Partnership, with the National Trust withdrawing from the partnership. The Landmark Trust has been identified as a potential new Heritage Partner.

## **Way Forward**

14. Councillor Bob Derbyshire, Cabinet Member for the Environment has been invited to attend and may wish to give a statement. Andrew Gregory (Director, City Operations), Jon Maidment (Operational Manager Parks & Sport) and Natalie Taylor (Team Leader) will also be in attendance to deliver a presentation and to answer Members' questions.
15. Council Officers will be joined by Cellan Michael (RSPB) and Peter Sampson (Flat Holm Society), who will be invited to provide their views on the partnership and vision for the future of Flat Holm Island.

## **Legal Implications**

16. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

## **Financial Implications**

17. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/ Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

## **Recommendations**

18. The Committee is recommended to give consideration to the information attached to this report and received at this meeting and to submit any recommendations, observations or comments to the Cabinet Member.

**Davina Fiore**  
**Director of Governance and Legal Services**  
**30 September 2016**