

	AGENDA ITEM 4
	GTP/01/14
Meeting:	GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP BOARD
Date:	12 March 2014
PROPOSAL REGARDING NEW ADVENTURE COURSE AT GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK	
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Purpose of Report

This report provides members with information on a possible new income generating installation at Great Notley Park and seeks support for a joint Business Case between ECC and BDC to be developed. The Business Case will review joint arrangements and make recommendations for the future.

Background / Proposal

Essex County Council is seeking to find ways of making the Country Parks service cost neutral whilst increasing the offer to customers. It is considering a number of changes that together will move the parks closer to this goal. One of the options under consideration is to create an 'Adventure Ropes Course' type attraction within one of the parks that visitors would pay to use. Great Notley has been identified as the most suitable site for this type of attraction because:

- It is already a 'destination park' with good transport links and its existing offer of adventure and sensory play attracts visitors from within a 30 mile radius.
- It is a popular destination for families with children up to the age of 13. The adventure ropes course, whilst designed to be used by all ages and abilities, will increase the offer to families with teenagers.
- It already has a large number of visitors (at least 150,000 a year) and therefore the early success of the new attraction will not have to rely on a specific marketing campaign.
- There are no restrictive covenants on the land and historically local residents have welcomed developments.

Following some soft engagement with the market, our proposal is to investigate procuring a large adventure ropes activity course costing in the region of £390K. Models suggest that a price of £15 per head would be good value for money and that

this should generate a surplus income of 268K in the first year and £342K in subsequent years (this is net of projected running and staffing costs).

The option to go into partnership with an industry provider has been discounted at this stage as it would significantly reduce potential income and not enable targets to be met. However following informal discussions with Braintree District council it has been identified that this is a real opportunity for joint working.

The installation will allow for the development of marketing offers around levels of use and pricing points in line with seasonal variations. This could include potential for refunds on parking with ticket purchases above a certain level and other initiatives. The offers will be used to maintain volumes outside of core times. The course may also be structured to enable reduced separate charges for specific activities i.e. Zip Wire. These are seen to be added value/income opportunities on top of the main income stream and would appeal to a wider range of visitors.

The remaining parks will continue to enhance their offer by developing new activities, concentrating on themed trails, family activities and improved facilities. In addition, a review of parking that introduces variable rates based on length of stay is under consideration. However these do not have the same potential for this level of income generation

Decision: Members are asked to agree to a joint Business Case being developed and brought back to future meeting of the Board.