

## Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 17 January 2019

## Report of the Executive Director of Growth, Environment, Transport & Community Services

### Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:  
Morecambe Central;  
Morecambe North;  
Morecambe South;

### Eden of the North

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### Executive Summary

Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, Lancaster University and Lancaster City Council, as key local stakeholders, are working with Eden International to explore the development of a new visitor facility of national significance in Lancashire. (Eden International is the global arm of Eden's operations which includes the Eden Project in Cornwall). To make progress, the four local stakeholders have been asked to contribute £250,000 each to advance the business case in support of the "Eden of the North" opportunity in Morecambe, with this total sum of £1m fully matched by Eden International.

The purpose of this report is to secure the £250,000 funding contribution from Lancashire County Council, subject to confirmed contributions from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, Lancaster University and Lancaster City Council, and match funding from Eden International.

### Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Approve the funding contribution of £250,000 to support business case preparation of Eden of the North, subject to confirmed funding contributions from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, Lancaster University and Lancaster City Council, with the total local contribution of £1m matched by Eden International.
- (ii) Request the Executive Director of Growth, Environment, Transport and Community Services to arrange a presentation for Lancashire County Council

members by Eden International on the Eden of the North proposal; and  
(iii) Request a progress report on the findings of the next phase of business case work and on the next steps in securing the delivery of Eden of the North.

## **Background and Advice**

Eden International has identified Morecambe as the potential location for a new visitor facility of national significance with the working title of Eden of the North. (Eden International is the global operating arm of Eden that includes the Eden Project in Cornwall, which is one of the UK's leading visitor attractions with 1m visitors every year).

Eden of the North would draw on the natural beauty of the area and the unique physical and environmental features of Morecambe Bay. It would seek to re-imagine Morecambe as a seaside resort of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and form a catalyst to drive the regeneration and transformation of the local and wider economy of Lancashire. There are also opportunities to link with Lancaster University to leverage its world class reputation in health and environmental sciences. Eden of the North could represent an opportunity to regenerate Morecambe and create an all year visitor attraction capable of receiving up to 1m visitors per year. It would be an attraction that complements and adds value to the visitor offer provided by Blackpool and the Lake District.

Over the last 12 months, key local stakeholders, including the County Council, the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, Lancaster University and Lancaster City Council have worked with Eden International to develop the Eden of the North concept. Stakeholders and Eden International have now agreed that emerging thinking and concepts, though suggesting transformational potential, need to be progressed to assess the deliverability and viability of Eden of the North proposal.

At this stage, it is envisaged that Eden of the North would be managed and operated on a sustainable and commercial basis by Eden International with capital funding secured from private investors and Government.

The proposed Eden of the North scheme could form part of a portfolio of major growth initiatives and a wider place-making strategy designed to realise the regional growth potential of Lancaster, with major initiatives including the Bay Link growth corridor, new city centre developments, the growth of a world class university and the delivery of a new Garden Village in South Lancaster underpinned by new public transport infrastructure.

To progress the development of Eden of the North, Eden International has asked the four key stakeholders to each contribute £250,000. This combined contribution of £1m would be matched by Eden International who would commission and engage the professional planning, design and finance expertise needed to develop the supporting business case.

Subject to Cabinet approval, it is proposed that Eden International present to County Council members the emerging Eden of the North proposal. If agreed, the Executive

Director of Growth, Environment, Transport and Community Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and the Environment, would make the necessary arrangements to deliver this presentation.

It is also proposed that any funding contribution from the County Council is subject to confirmation of similar funding contributions from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, Lancaster University and Lancaster City Council, with confirmed match from Eden International.

The Government indicated in the recent Budget Statement its intention to provide £100,000 to support the development of the supporting business case. Although at the time of writing this report the conditions attached to this funding are unknown, this represents a positive signal of Government's interest in also developing this proposal to the next stage.

Subject to the County Council and local stakeholders confirming their funding support, as outlined above, the next phase of business case development would get underway in early 2019. A further report would be submitted to Cabinet to update on key findings and next steps in securing this potentially transformative initiative.

## **Consultations**

N/A

## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Financial**

The contribution of £250,000 will be funded from the additional funding anticipated as being received from involvement in the 2019/20 Lancashire Business Rate Pilot, with retention by councils of 75%, rather than 50%, of business rate growth. One of the key expectations of the pilot is to target economic growth across Lancashire and investment of some of the additional retained funding in this way will help support this objective.

### **Risk management**

The risks associated with funding are set out in the report.

## List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A