

EXECUTIVE BOARD
1 FEBRUARY 2016

NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDEN OF WALES

Purpose: To consider the Authority's future financial support for the Garden

RECOMMENDATIONS / KEY DECISIONS REQUIRED:

To consider the National Botanical Gardens response which includes the offer of a discounted membership rate for Carmarthenshire residents, and to agree payment of the annual grant for 2015/16.

REASONS:

To support the future management and development of the Gardens linked with the funding support provided by Welsh Assembly Government.

Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted No

Exec Board Decision Required	YES
Council Decision Required	NA

Executive Board Portfolio Holder – Cllr David Jenkins

**Directorate: Corporate Services
Resources**

Name of Director:

N/A

Report Author: Chris Moore

**Designation: Director of Corporate
Services**

Tel Nos. 01267 224120

E Mail Addresses:

CMoore@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
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1 February 2016

NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDEN OF WALES

The Executive Board considered a report earlier this financial year inviting it to consider supporting the future management and development of the National Botanical Gardens, which included extending the interest free loan, extending the lease on the farmhouses, providing ongoing revenue support and also providing support to the Regency Landscape project.

Recognising that Welsh Government were also continuing to support the Garden the Executive Board agreed to the following support:

1. to extend the Authority's interest free loan to the Garden for a further 3 years to 31st March 2018;
2. to allow the Garden continued occupation of the four farmhouses and homesteads on a tenancy basis for a further 3 years to 31st March 2018;
3. to provide £70,000 revenue cash grant to the Garden for 2015/16 subject to 10.5 below;
4. to approve, subject to 10.5 below, a forward commitment of revenue cash grant for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 on a sliding scale basis of £50,000 for 2016/17 and £30,000 for 2017/18 subject to discussions with Welsh Government regarding its funding commitment;
5. that the Garden be requested to consider introducing an all-year round discount on admission charges for Carmarthenshire residents in view of the support provided by the Council;
6. to support the restoration Regency Landscape project to the value of £50,000;
7. that the Garden be requested to liaise with Menter Cwm Gwendraeth Elli on its commitment to the Welsh language;
8. that Councillor D.M. Jenkins, Executive Board Member with responsibility for Resources, be nominated to serve as the Authority's representative on the Garden's Board of Trustees.

The Gardens were subsequently informed of the decision and in particular were asked that they consider point 5 before the revenue grant was released.

The Gardens responded and confirmed that the Trustees were very grateful for the County Council's continued support and have commented as follows in respect of the revenue funding and in particularly on point 5 (discount to Carmarthenshire's residents):

Revenue allocation 2015/16 - the Garden is extremely conscious of the challenges and pressures currently facing the County in respect of its own funding position. In view of this it is especially grateful for confirmation of the current year grant in line with previous indications.

Future revenue support commitments - Trustees noted with natural concern the sliding scale reduction as forward grant projections indicated for the level of contribution for 2016/17 and 2017/18. Notwithstanding the difficulties and uncertainties currently surrounding public finances, the Garden also recognises the linkage between the level of Welsh Government

support for the Garden and the Local Authority's commitment. In view of the serious concerns this presents for the Garden's future viability, the Garden will be seeking to prompt early discussions and strategic planning between WG and CCC on future funding arrangements in respect of the Garden.

Consideration of all-year round discounted admission charges –the proposal that a Carmarthenshire residents' discount on entry fee should be introduced was carefully considered and discussed by the Board at its meetings. In the circumstances the board took the view it would be helpful to draw the Council's attention to the range of benefits and opportunities for discounts and reduced entry already available to residents. At present this includes free entry weekdays and discounted weekend events throughout January, St David's Day, and a range of other days including selective SA postcode days particularly designed to build special relationships with the local community, and events that give free entry such as both Mothers' and Fathers' days. They also offer a 'buy-one,-get-one-free1' ticket arrangement for a number of major local employers including all staff at CCC, Dyfed Powys Police, Hywel Dda Health Board, NHS Wales, Mid and West Wales Fire Service, the Armed Forces.

The Gardens highlighted the benefits of Garden Membership in that it gives good value to local residents enabling them access to enjoy a diverse year-round calendar of events and facilities, not only including entrance to the Garden's 220 hectares of estate and facilities but also offering entertainments such as music and art events as well as engaging family activities

In highlighting the benefits, the Gardens then went on to offer (in response to point 5 above) a special discounted price for Carmarthenshire residents' in respect of the annual membership from April 2016-March 2017, where this is paid by direct debit. It was proposed that a 5% discount on the already discounted direct debit payments is offered to all membership categories: individual, joint, family, membership plus, and single parent. The table below sets out the proposed discounted payments:

Membership Category	Carmarthenshire Resident Membership Special discount for 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017	Ordinary Membership Price	
		<i>Discounted Direct Debit Payments</i>	<i>Usual, not discounted</i>
Individual	£34.20	£36	£38
Joint	£50.35	£53	£58
Family	£66.50	£70	£75
Membership Plus	£57.00	£60	£62
Single Parent	£52.25	£55	£58

Recommendation

To consider the National Botanical Gardens response which includes the offer of a discounted membership rate for Carmarthenshire residents, and to agree payment of the annual grant for 2015/16.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED ?

NO

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: C. Moore

Head of Financial Services

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

The National Botanic Garden of Wales is a facility of potentially global significance that is important to the image, tourism and economy of Carmarthenshire. The viability of the Garden has been under threat in previous years and the County Council has previously joined in a strategic partnership with other public sector organisations to provide funding and support. Despite its previous financial and operational difficulties the National Botanic Garden continues to be one of the most visited attractions in Wales, currently drawing around 147,000 visitors to a facility in Carmarthenshire with potential to increase this number in future years. Closure of the Garden would have a significantly damaging effect on the economy and image of the County and undermine the Council's efforts, together with its partners, to develop the local tourism industry.

2. Legal

Previous reports to Council have established the legal basis of the Authority's direct contributions to NBGW as being the general power of well being conferred by the Local Government Act 2000.

3. Finance

If approved the funding package will require the County Council to make an annual cash contribution to the Garden of £70,000 for 2015/16, £50,000 for 2016/17 and £30,000 for 2017/18, subject to Welsh Government continued funding support. This sum can be accommodated within the Authority's proposed budget.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: C Moore

Head of Financial Services

1. Scrutiny Committee Not Applicable - Strategic issue

2. Local Member(s) Not Applicable – Strategic Issue

3. Community / Town Council Not Applicable – Strategic Issue

4. Relevant Partners Welsh Assembly Government have been kept fully informed of Council's proposals

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations Not Applicable

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Correspondence from NBGW	NBGW	Head of Financial Services
Report and minutes of Executive Board – 19 th September 2005	Executive Board	County Hall
Report and minutes of Executive Board – 20 th February 2007	Executive Board	County Hall
Report and minutes of Executive Board – 3 rd March 2008	Executive Board	County Hall
Report and minutes of Executive Board – 31 st January 2011	Executive Board	County Hall
Report and minutes of Executive Board – 15 June 2015	Executive Board	County Hall