

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leisure and Arts Services Committee - 19 January 2004

REPORT ON: Development Proposals for Camperdown Wildlife Centre

REPORT BY: Director of Leisure and Arts

REPORT NO: 51-2004

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline development proposals of the Wildlife Centre at Camperdown and to present options on the way forward for the facility and seek approval for the preferred option.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that members:

- 2.1 Agree to progress the development plan for the Wildlife Centre outlined in Section 7.0
- 2.2 Remit the Director of Leisure and Arts to progress the initiatives outlined in Section 8.0

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The initial phases of the development plan can be contained within the Leisure and Arts Department 3 year Capital Plan. External funding will be sought for future phases in conjunction with appropriate allowances being sought in future Capital Plans.
- 3.2 It is anticipated that the improved visitor experience will lead to increased income levels which should cover any increased revenue expenditure.
- 3.3 Full revenue and capital implications will be the subject of a report to a future Leisure and Arts Services Committee.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The development of Camperdown Wildlife Centre will ensure that the diversity of nature is valued and protected and that places, spaces and objects combine meaning with beauty and utility. Local needs will be met locally. The development will ensure that resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised. It will also make sure that opportunities for culture, leisure and recreation are readily available to all.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 All communities throughout Dundee will have access to this high quality development. The development of facilities will be of interest to all ages.

6.0 MAIN TEXT

6.1 Introduction

Camperdown Wildlife Centre is an important and unique visitor attraction facility in the City and is an essential part of the leisure mix within Camperdown Park. In recent years there has been a lack of investment both financially and in terms of staff development. During the past year the Leisure & Arts Department have been formulating a Facility Management and Development Plan and initial investment has been identified to ensure that the Zoo meets the conditions outlined as part of the facility obtaining a Zoo Licence. A follow up inspection and submission to the Licensing Committee is programmed for March 2004.

6.2 Current Situation

In financial years 2002/03 and 2003/04 there has been significant progress in respect of the Wildlife Centre. In addition to the acknowledgement of the staff development needs and the implementation of this a number of key improvements have been made. These include the enhancements to the entrance, improvements to the events programme, both with a focus on customer experience and income generation, general décor and improvements within the facility and the creation of a new otter feature and lemur cage.

The staffing structure has been reviewed and the Agriculture and Wildlife Centre sections have been merged to focus resources at the Wildlife Centre and to further utilise carthorses in Camperdown in the longer term. This has also realised the potential of additional staff for the Wildlife Centre.

The additional staffing will assist in improving the housekeeping over the next year and go some way to meeting the conditions outlined in the Zoo Licence submission which was considered on 4 September 2003 by the Licensing Committee. Following this report additional works are underway including the improvements to the feedroom facilities and interpretation signage with a new Bear enclosure planned for 2004/05.

- 6.3 A review of the recent history of the Wildlife Centre and the possible options in terms of moving forward has been undertaken. The options appraisal considerations included; The role of the facility as a visitor attraction and as part of the overall Camperdown Country Park visitor attraction; Visitor experience; Educational value of the facilities for schools, institutions and general public; Conservation value of the facility; Animal welfare; Zoo Licence requirements and legislation; Animal collection issues; Cost benefit analysis. This has resulted in the development proposals outlined below being brought forward.

7.0 **Wildlife Centre Development Plan**

- 7.1 Given both the requirements of the Zoo Licence and a recognition of available capital funding, it is proposed to pursue an incremental but still aspirational development of the existing facility. This has the benefit of building upon the significant historical investment in infrastructure while re-branding and re-focussing the presentation of the animal collection.

At the core of this concept is the presentation of the Wildlife Centre as three distinct but interconnected zones (A plan is attached at Appendix I):

- Danger Zone;

All the animals in this area can kill or eat you. They are all dangerous European carnivores. There is a significant thrill element to this area. Exhibits would include brown bears, wolves, lynx, wolverine, golden eagle and European vultures.

- Kids Zone;

This area will focus on fun with an emphasis on interaction. All animals are normally thought of as being cute, cuddly, friendly etc. Extensive use of paths through enclosures will give the feeling of being close to the animals. Exhibits would include lemurs, guinea pigs, rabbits, arctic fox, donkey, pony, pygmy goats and pigs.

- Adventure Zone;

This will provide an exciting activity adventure area, over time providing a tree-top walkway with views down through the tree on to the animals below. Open paddocks of mixed animals in a more natural environment. The existing round houses would be used to exhibit tree climbing marmosets and tamarins. Other exhibits would include otters, European bison, przewalskis horse, roe deer, highland cattle, mouflon sheep and wallabies.

- 7.2 In addition a development of the existing entrance, retail and possibly catering area would be brought forward. The existing indoor facility (currently used seasonally) would be developed as a year round education centre.

- 7.3 This outline is proposed as it best meets the visitor expectation while being deliverable within a finite resource. The main benefits are seen to be;

- It will provide a far clearer story by re-interpreting large elements of the existing collection into the three defined zones. Educational and conservation interpretation can be built around each of the zones and animal species.
- It builds upon an existing collection rather than requiring significant investment in divesting large parts of the collection or augmenting (at considerable expense) major new elements of the animal collection. At the same time the proposals will still allow for the reduction of species and individual animals numbers to increase the keeper/animal ratio in line with the Zoo Licence requirements. This will provide more focussed collection management, in line with zoo best practice. A number of species have already been earmarked for re-location such as the reindeer.
- It is a pragmatic approach. It recognises the existing investment in infrastructure and builds upon this. For example the danger zone is the area defined within the existing walled garden. With the completion of the new bear enclosure the majority of investment in this zone will be complete. A re-branding and re-interpretation at this point can then be carried out at modest cost to capitalise on the existing investment. This is similarly true of the kids zone and the adventure zone.
- The visitor survey feedback over a number of years supports the assertion that the “wild” animals are a major draw, with the bear regularly being identified as the favourite attraction at the Wildlife Centre. At the same time visitors also comment positively about the opportunity for closer interaction with certain of the small domestic animals. The clear conclusion is that a mixed collection most accurately provides what our current visitors expect.
- In re-telling the collection story there will also be a conscious shift towards visitor experience with a higher focus on educational content and interactive demonstrations with the animal collection. Visitor experience will become paramount.

A more detailed synopsis of this development plan is included at Appendix 2.

It is recommended that the Director of Leisure and Arts be remitted to further develop and bring forward detailed proposals.

8.0 Other Considerations and Options

In addition to development proposals it is proposed to progress a number of areas in parallel which may actively improve the existing facility.

8.1 Friends Association of the Wildlife Centre

It is envisaged that there would be merit in establishing a Friends Association who could have a positive interaction with the Council in terms of the development and management of the facility and also be able to tap into external funding opportunities.

8.2 Sponsorship/External Funding

The area of sponsorship is one which has not been developed to any great extent in the past with the exception of certain animals who are sponsored by individuals at the moment. It is proposed that the Director of Leisure & Arts be remitted to review this situation and to identify whether there are any external sponsorship/funding/trusts which can be approached to support the development proposals.

8.3 Greater Links and Opportunities with Education, Conservation and Research

At the present moment the Wildlife Centre is used for regular school visits. There are opportunities to link up with educational establishments both in terms of research on animals and further maximise the educational and conservation opportunities within the Centre. It is recommended that the Director of Leisure & Arts is remitted to develop the Educational and Conservation potential of the Wildlife Centre to ensure this is at the core of the development plan.

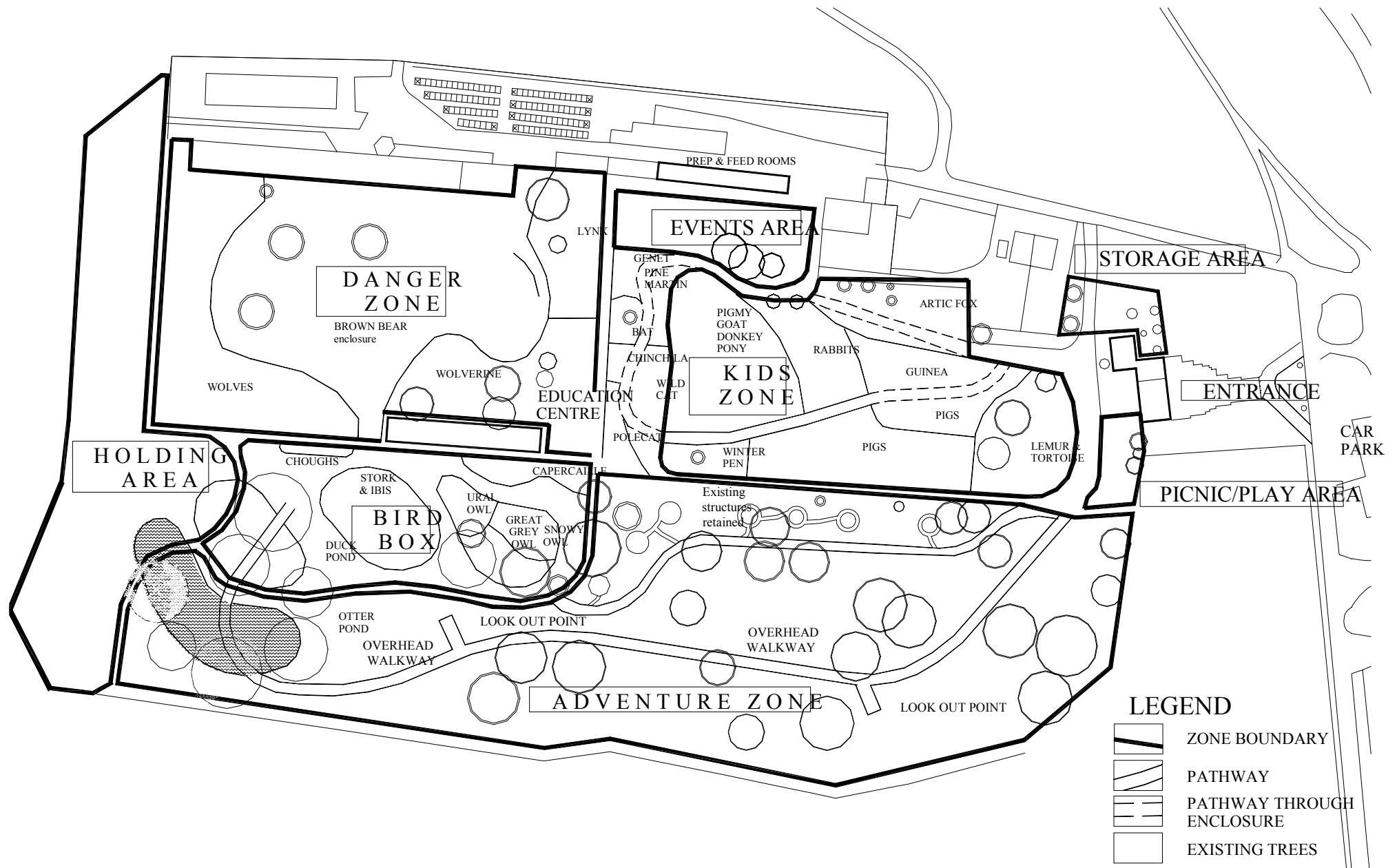
9.0 CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) have been consulted on this report and are in agreement with its contents.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1: Plan of the Wildlife Centre Development Proposal
Appendix 2: Detailed Developed Plan

STEVE GRIMMOND
DIRECTOR OF LEISURE AND ARTS
17 December 2003



APPENDIX 2 WILDLIFE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Development Plan Focus:

The Development Plan has 3 main guiding principles. They include the requirements of:-

- Animals
- Visitors
- Staff

The changing Zoo environment, legislation and health and safety will have a controlling effect on how these principles are interpreted and implemented. However, the interaction between the individual requirements of these 3 groups will shape the overall layout of the Centre and the specific enclosures.

Interaction between visitors and animals will be exploited, where possible, by paths through enclosures either raised or tunnelled, web cams, one way glass etc., with the overriding aim of bringing the animals closer to the public.

The following specific elements will influence the plan:

Animals:

- Feeding
- Breeding
- Interaction with visitors
- Enclosure
 - Shape
 - Size
 - Layout
 - Planting/Landscaping
 - Housing/Shelter
 - Surface
 - Environmental Conditions (wet/dry/light/dark)
- Selection
 - Rarity
 - Visitor appeal
 - Interaction with visitors and other animals
 - Maintenance/housing/feeding requirements
 - Enclosure size

Visitors:

- Fun
- Education/Conservation
- Information
- Interaction
- Safety
- Visit satisfaction

Staff:

- Maintenance
- Safety
- Feeding
- Access
- Health care
- Segregation/holding areas
- Storage

Development Proposals:

The Centre will be split into zones which will have their identity reinforced by the use of colours used in the new leaflet.

The path network will be greatly reduced and simplified. This will give a more controlled and interactive trip through the assorted areas, offering visitors a better choice of routes depending on their circumstances.

3 New Zones:

Danger Zone:

Zone Principle: Danger – all the animals in this area can kill or eat you. They are all dangerous European carnivores. Thrill area.

Target: Everyone

Colour: Red

Possible Exhibits: Brown Bears
Wolves
Lynx
Wolverine
Golden Eagle or European Vulture

Kidz Zone:

Zone Principle: Fun, lots of interaction, close up to the animals. All animals are normally thought of as being cute, cuddly, friendly etc.
Extensive use of paths through and over enclosures, giving the feeling of being close to the animals

Target: Younger visitors (3 – 11)

Colour: Blue

Possible Exhibits: Lemurs
Guinea Pigs
Rabbits
Arctic Fox
Donkey/Pony
Pygmy Goats
Pigs

Adventure Zone:

Zone Principle: An exciting activity/adventure area, tree top walkways, aerial walks and views through the tree tops. Animals brought up to and into the trees. Wide open paddock of mixed animals, in a more natural environment as they would have been many years ago.
Roundhouses used to house tree climbing Marmosets and Tamarins.

Target: All, but possibly more appealing to the 8 to 16 market

Colour: Orange/Yellow

Exhibits: Otter
European Bison
Przewalskis Horse
Roe Deer
Highland Cattle
Mouflon Sheep
Marmoset
Tamarins
Wallabies

Redesigned Public Areas:

Bird Box:

Area Principle:

Birds housed in aviaries better suited to their environmental requirements, more opportunity to display animals to the best advantage.

Exhibits:

Duck Pond
Stork
Ibis
Choughs
Snowy Owl
Ural Owl
Capercaillie
Great Grey Owl

Education Centre:

Area Principle:

Develop the Study Centre into an all year round, wet weather Education/classroom. Incorporate the well established Creepy Crawly event into a programme of publicised displays and talks. Extensive use of web cam and video. Develop the Education and Conservation potential. Area could also be used for an events base, e.g. Santa, parties to generate additional income.

Exhibits:

To be assessed after completion of brief.

Small Carnivore Area:

Area Principle:

Cute Chompers or Furry Friends
Attractive/cute animals shown in a highly interactive area of walkways through the enclosures and extensive use of web cams to maintain interest if the animals are in their housing areas. Bats and Chinchillas shown in buildings with viewing windows.

Exhibits:

Chinchillas
Polecats
Pine Martins
Wildcats
Genets
Bats

Events Area:

Fenced area to hold public events, animal handling, Santa, demonstrations. Private hire – Birthday parties etc.

Area Principle:

Add to the existing summerhouse to create a "village" atmosphere and explore the income generating opportunities of private hire. Upgrade electric supply to enhance the Christmas Lights display.

Picnic Area:

Small play area with picnic tables and seats

Area Principle:

Resite next to shop to increase the purchase opportunities with a view to increasing income through shop sales. Site has additional natural light and the existing area can be better utilised. Art projects and Chainsaw sculptures can be incorporated.

Entrance:

There are a number of options and different approaches to this area.

Option 1

Redevelopment to include a shop and small café. Ensure all visitors enter and exit through the shop to maximise purchase potential. Extend the visual entrance out to the road by the use of an entrance arch, architecture and landscaping.

Option 2

As above but include additional office space to create the operational base for the Country Parks Team, including offices for the Country Park Manager, Assistant Manager, Wildlife Centre Officer, 2 Duty Officers, Maintenance Officer and the Admin Assistant, meeting room and kitchen.

- Option 3 As above but incorporates space for the Countryside Rangers and Training/ Teaching facilities.
- Option 4 As above but incorporation of a new Golf Club House.
- Maintenance Areas:**
Holding/Quarantine: Non public area shielded from view to be used as an emergency holding area in the event of an enclosure failure or for the treatment or isolation of sick animals.