

Regeneration - Briefing Note

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“A Million People – Black Country as Urban Park” - Green Bridge Project

Overall Project – ‘A Million People: Black Country as Urban Park’

The Black Country Consortium (BCC) is coordinating a bid entitled ‘A Million People: Black Country as Urban Park’ for funding from the Big Lottery Living Landmarks programme.

3 Flagship projects that form the ‘Black Country as Urban Park’ bid are:

- ‘Green Bridge’ linking Walsall Town Centre via Walsall’s Arboretum to West Bromwich’s Town Centre and Dartmouth Park
- Dudley’s Wren’s Nest National Nature Reserve and Seven Sisters Mines
- Wolverhampton’s Canals and Waterways

The Big Lottery have awarded the ‘Black Country as Urban Park’ project £500,000 in development funding. The development funding must be used to fund the detailed development of the project to prepare a stage two bid.

If successful at stage 2 the projects will be considered for funding via a televised public vote in Autumn 2007. If successful at this stage the project will be awarded up to £50 million.

Green Bridge Project

The ‘Green Bridge’ project is the creation of a 12 mile long, linear park between Walsall Town Centre and West Bromwich Town Centre.

Key elements of the Green Bridge project are:

- Restoration of Walsall Arboretum
- Creation of a 12 mile long linear park, from Walsall’s New Art Gallery through the Arboretum to meet Rushall Canal. It then follows the canal to meet the borough boundary with Sandwell, close to Moat Bridge and the Tame Valley Canal. A longer and more challenging route takes in the Barr Beacon and Great Barr village then through the Sandwell Valley to Dartmouth Park in West Bromwich.
- Provision of a visitor centre around Barr Beacon
- Improvements to Rushall Canal
- Restoration of Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich
- A new iconic ‘green bridge’ in West Bromwich connecting Dartmouth park to West Bromwich Town Centre.

Barr Beacon Visitor Centre

The Green Bridge project includes the provision of a visitor centre along the route. The concept for the centre is:

- Innovative Design with suitable insulation and timber use minimising the use of concrete.
- Carbon Neutral development including the possibility of a green roof.
- Inspirational Visitor Centre experience / Educational facilities encompassing indoor & outdoor features.

The creation of a visitor centre at Barr Beacon presents a great opportunity to recognise the importance of the Barr Beacon as landmark, to view the natural beauty of the vast area of green belt and the amazing 360 degree views of the Black Country. The visitor centre will also increase the tourism potential for the area and offer an educational facility for visitors to the Borough and to provide wider knowledge of the Black Country and its history in the landscape.

There are 5 suggested locations for the Visitor Centre.

- Barr Beacon (Top)
- The Lodge at Barr Beacon
- Doe Bank Park
- Aldridge Airport at Top Hanger
- Aldridge Airport at outdoor pursuits centre

Architects have been appointed to consider the suitability of each of the sites and to develop a concept of how the visitor centre could look at each location and how it could function.

Consultation

Views are welcome on the sites for the centre, and what facilities would be appropriate. A consultation event open to the public is also planned for Saturday 10 February at Walsall's New Art Gallery 10:30 – 3:30.

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