

Submission of Projects Form – National Development Framework

Name

Marvel Limited

Contact details

c/o Mr. Peter Waldren, WYG, 5th Floor, Longcross Court, 47 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0AD

Date

6th March 2017

Interest in site

Freehold owners

Details of landowner

Marvel Limited, c/o Mr. Peter Waldren, WYG, 5th Floor, Longcross Court, 47 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0AD

Title of project

Nationally Significant Leisure Hub and Mixed Development

Summary of project

Provision of a nationally significant leisure offering comprising adventure destination tourism facilities not currently available in Wales (and some unavailable in the UK), along with indoor and outdoor leisure facilities, a range of accommodation offerings, and set within a heritage context. The proposal is anticipated to comprise:

- High quality hotel and spa/wellness centre as well as other forms of accommodation (e.g. budget hotel, hostel, log cabins and glamping opportunities);
- Indoor leisure facilities such as indoor snow dome providing a world class ski complex and national centre of excellence, indoor biking and skating centre to complement and connect to the adjacent nationally significant BikePark Wales, water park/surf park (largest in the UK), visitor centre/history of mining experience;

- Outdoor leisure with facilities such as air walks, zip wires, mountain coaster, heritage trails, nature trails.

The proposal will provide a range of year round all weather activities including nationally important “epic” facilities not currently available in South Wales/Wales/the UK.

Location of project (Please attach location map)

Land west of A470 (“Merthyr West”). The attached plan shows the total Marvel Ltd ownership (c.224 hectares), albeit approximately 50% will remain undeveloped or subject to ecological management.

What consents are required?

Planning Permission

Consents already granted relevant to project

None

Public engagement to date

- Pre-application discussions with representatives of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (principally elected Members, economic development officers and planning officers);
- Discussions with Mr Robin Kellan, Snow Sports Wales;
- Discussions with Visit Wales;
- Correspondence with key Assembly Members with responsibility for local and national matters;
- Meeting with Ms Dawn Bowden AM (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney);
- Meetings with the key local historical groups;
- Meetings with Natural Resources Wales;
- Meetings with Cadw;
- Meetings with Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust;
- Meetings with The Coal Authority regarding the site’s mining legacy.

Has an environmental assessment been prepared? (Yes / No)

Not yet (currently in hand)

Are there any site designations or constraints affecting the site?

- SSSI designations;
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation;
- Ancient woodland;
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments;

- Mining legacy issues.

What is the delivery timescale for the project?

2017 submission for planning permission;
2018/2019 planning application determination;
2019/2020 onwards commencement of development.

How would the project contribute to the delivery of the 7 well-being goals?

A prosperous Wales

A nationally significant leisure hub in Merthyr West will generate 1000+ jobs in an economically challenged area. Merthyr Tydfil has 28.1% of its residents recorded as economically inactive compared with a Wales average of 25.2% and records 32.3% of those people as wanting a job (NOMIS data Oct 2015-Sept 2016).

The Welsh Government's Partnership for Growth strategy confirms that the Wales Tourism Satellite Account estimates total tourism spending in 2011 of £4.5bn, representing a Tourism Gross Value Added (GVA) of £1.8bn – around 4.4% of total direct GVA for the Welsh economy. Emerging research suggests that when indirect impacts are added, the Tourism GVA increases to £2.5bn, which represents 6% of the whole economy.

While tourism is already an important part of the South Wales economy, it is considered there is capacity for additional iconic, reputation-changing facilities in the South Wales area. The provision of such facilities on the subject site, proximate and accessible via the A470 to the M4 corridor and the Heads of the Valleys Road (A465), will assist in ensuring tourism expenditure from South Wales, the south west of England and the Midlands will be maximised, providing employment opportunities in an area of economic need.

The site's proximity to BikePark Wales will create a synergy whereby existing visitors to this location will be given greater reason to stay in the local area and visit other attractions, both on site (the proposed development) but also in the wider locality (Brecon Beacons National Park, Cyfarthfa Castle etc). The provision of a variety of accommodation offerings as part of the development will provide opportunities to stay overnight and for longer periods, which is currently lacking in the local area. The existing lack of such facilities means that significant tourist revenue (on the accommodation itself and associated expenditure) will be able to be captured.

The ability to provide a critical mass of such development on the subject site and adjacent to BikePark Wales will assist in reducing the need to travel between adventure tourism destinations. This, coupled with energy efficient design/technology, will assist in the Government's tourism agenda being delivered in an environmentally responsible way, utilising resources efficiently and proportionately.

A resilient Wales

The ecology on site, combined with the proposed development, provides an opportunity for the three pillars of sustainability (social, economic and environment) to be pursued in tandem. The development will provide an economic and community asset as described above while also providing a workable structure for the ecological management of the natural environment in which it sits. Accordingly, the healthy ecosystem at the site will assist in supporting social and economic resilience which will flow from the development.

A Healthier Wales

The anticipated leisure line-up will include facilities such as an indoor Olympic training size ski dome, indoor biking facility (to complement the adjacent BikePark Wales), a nationally important skate boarding facility (soon to be an Olympic sport), heritage/nature trails exploiting the area's mining past and associated ancient monuments, an indoor water park, as well as hotels and spa. The site also provides extensive opportunities for walking and biking. This combination of physical activity and the natural beauty of the site will provide many opportunities to improve physical and mental wellbeing.

A more equal Wales

The provision of high quality tourism related jobs and reputation changing tourist facilities in Merthyr West will assist in local people fulfilling their potential. The boost to local earnings and skills training associated with the employment opportunities, including retraining for those entering the tourism and hospitality industries from other employment backgrounds will help improve local life chances. Furthermore, the provision of high quality leisure facilities, historically associated with more affluent areas, will further improve quality of life and local pride for residents. Adults and children from all socio-economic backgrounds, including those who rarely have the chance to participate in the types of leisure proposed, will be provided with the opportunity for new experiences.

However, it is perhaps the influx of tourists from further afield and from different socio-economic backgrounds, and the perception-changing nature of the development that will have the greatest effect on the local area and Wales as a whole, increasing confidence and improving the resilience of the area and its people.

A Wales of cohesive communities

The development of a leisure hub will provide an attractive, viable, safe and well connected facility for the community and visitors alike. It will complement and dovetail with the adjacent nationally important BikePark Wales (135,000 visitors from across the UK and Europe to 2015) and will provide a facility for the adventure sport community of Wales and the UK. The unique attributes of the site, chosen by Snow Sports Wales as the best location for a national centre of excellence, includes its strategic location between the M4 and the A465 on A470 corridor, providing excellent transport links in all directions. Accordingly, the site is extremely well connected to communities in South

Wales and beyond.

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

The cultural and heritage attributes of the site are significant, with it playing an important role in Merthyr becoming the largest town in Wales in the 19th Century and its coal, iron and steel manufacture fuelling the early industrial revolution and the growth of Empire. This heritage is currently inaccessible and effectively lost to the world. The development of a nationally important leisure hub will ensure this cultural storey is celebrated through heritage trails and visitor sites. Furthermore, the leisure development itself will encourage participation in sports and recreation, including facilities of national importance and Olympic training significance, adding to the sporting culture and increasing sports participation in Wales. Welsh language facilities and signage will, of course, be incorporated into the development, further promoting Welsh culture.

A globally responsible Wales

The provision of a nationally important leisure hub on the site in question will assist in reducing the need to travel by providing accessible facilities. By improving the wellbeing of local residents and visitors from elsewhere in Wales and further afield the proposal will make a contribution to global wellbeing. A physically and mentally healthier and wealthier population will have increased resilience and capacity to adapt to change, including economic and climate change. The inclusion of energy efficient solutions will further pursue globally responsible development goals.

Why is the project of national significance?

Visit Wales has drawn up a strategy, Partnership for Growth (2013-2020), for the development of the tourism industry in Wales. This strategy sets out an ambitious vision for the tourism sector in Wales and identifies a product-led approach to developing and marketing tourism in Wales. The Welsh Government's stated aim is to work with iconic, high quality, reputation-changing products and events, focussing on:

- more luxury and branded hotels;
- more well-being facilities, such as spas;
- more heritage hotels that utilise historic and distinctive buildings;
- more all year round attractions, activities and cultural experiences; and
- more innovative, unusual and distinctive 'products'.

We consider that it is appropriate to give spacial expression to this strategy by including reference to its aims and allocation of a specific site in the NDF. While there will be other unique areas of Wales that will play an important role in delivering the Government's tourism agenda, the allocation of a nationally important leisure hub in South Wales should be included.

Allocation of the Merthyr West site for this purpose will enable a critical mass of facilities to be developed, facilitating the reputational change desired. The site has been chosen by Snow Sports Wales as the best location for a

national centre of excellence, partly due to its strategic location between the M4 and the A465 on A470 corridor. The resultant excellent accessibility to a wide market/catchment makes this site an appropriate location for a leisure allocation in the NDF.

Failure to plan for a South Wales leisure 'hub' in this way will not prevent disparate tourism facilities being planned for and developed at the local level, but this will miss the opportunity for a nationally significant step change in provision.

Do you agree for your project and any supporting information to be made public? (Only projects and information that can be made public will inform the development of the NDF.)

Yes

