

**Cuddle Corner Roof Defect Works**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service/Lead Director</b>	Head of Regeneration & Economic Development – John Foster
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Leisure Manager – Mike Evans
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	Boxley

**Executive Summary**

This report provides the Committee with information on a roof defect in the Cuddle Corner building at the Kent Life visitor attraction and seeks approval for budgetary spend to repair the roof, which will protect the structure, neighbouring structures and visitors.

**This report makes the following recommendation to this Committee:**

1. That budgetary spend as set out in Exempt Appendix 1 is approved for repair works to the Cuddle Corner building roof.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee	11 June 2019

# Cuddle Corner Roof Defect Works

## 1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	Accepting the recommendation will materially improve CMET's ability to achieve the following corporate priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage is respected</li> <li>• A vibrant leisure and culture offer, enjoyed by residents and attractive to visitors</li> <li>• People feel safe and are safe</li> </ul>	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	The risks of the preferred option and the not preferred options are covered in sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. Future risks will be mitigated as described at 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
<b>Financial</b>	Not progressing with this option increases the risks of a greater capital spend being required to address structural issues in the future	Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager (Client)
<b>Staffing</b>	Accepting the recommendation will not have an impact on staffing	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
<b>Legal</b>	Failure to accept the recommendation without agreeing suitable alternatives may place CMET in breach of the lease contract with the operator.	Leisure Manager
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	No additional data will be held	Leisure Manager

<b>Equalities</b>	No impact identified.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	Not progressing with the preferred option could leave the site vulnerable to criminal damage and deliberate destruction of property	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
<b>Procurement</b>	On accepting the recommendation, the Council will then follow procurement exercises for the roof works and repairs. We will complete those exercises in line with financial procedure rules.	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Kent Life, the rural farm life attraction on the Cobtree Manor Estate, is operated by Planning Solutions on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council. It has seen increased visitor numbers in recent years. Kent Life features a number of historic and listed buildings, for which the Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee is responsible as set out in the lease agreement.
- 2.2 The Cuddle Corner roof is in the farmyard area of Kent Life. It is a brick farm building with a timber-framed roof and brick tiles. A picture of it is attached as Appendix 2.
- 2.3 The farmyard comprises three outhouse barns arranged in a U-shape. They are in the southern corner of the site and are adjacent to the access road that vehicles use to enter and exit the visitor attraction. See attached map, Appendix 3.
- 2.4 The three buildings house the farmyard animals and also provide visitor access to view the animals, watch daily feeding and grooming sessions and take part in the Cuddle Corner experience. Cuddle Corner enables younger visitors the opportunity to hold and pet the smaller farm animals. It is one of the most popular activities at Kent Life.
- 2.5 The Kent Life team are adding a bespoke Cuddle Corner birthday party to their offer this year and in assessing the suitability of one of the outhouse barns for conversion to a party room they have discovered a roof truss has rotten and collapsed, placing considerable strain on the rest of the roof and risking a large-scale roof collapse. Pictures of the damage are available as Appendix 4.
- 2.6 The section of the barn with the roof defect is used as a store room and not accessed on a regular basis, hence the fact the defect was not discovered sooner.

## **Remedial works**

- 2.7 The situation was reported to Maidstone Borough Council officers on 25 April 2019. Heras fencing was installed around the building to keep people and vehicles away from it.
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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

#### **3.1 Do nothing**

Committee could decide to do nothing and not repair the roof. Doing so would save repair costs and prevent disruptive work from being carried out. Doing nothing is likely to result in the problem worsening which will increase the risk of serious injury to visitors, staff and property. It is likely to lead to irreparable damage to the outhouse barn structure.

**This option is not recommended.**

#### **3.2 Delay the repairs and complete them at a later date**

Committee could decide to complete the treatment works at a later date. This course of action would allow the works to be financed at a more suitable time. Delaying the repairs is likely to lead to injury and further damage to the outhouse barn buildings and the inevitable reputational damage that would arise.

**This option is not recommended.**

#### **3.3 Authorise budgetary spend for the repairs to be carried out immediately**

Repair works can be carried out immediately to provide a safe working environment for staff and a safe visitor attraction for visiting children and families. The risk of injury will be mitigated, the risk of further damage to this building and surrounding buildings will be removed.

**This is the recommended option.**

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### **4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 It is recommended that budgetary spend as set out in Exempt Appendix 1 be approved for the repair works to be carried out in June 2019.
- 4.2 Repair works can be carried out immediately with minimal disruption to the daily operation of the Kent Life site. The building was previously used for storage and is currently not being used because of the roof defects.
- 4.3 Once the foliage is cleared it can be accessed by contractors from the land outside of the farmyard, adjacent to the entrance access road. The road is currently partially closed to provide an exclusion zone around the building. This disruption is already being managed on site and will continue to be managed until the repair works are completed.
- 4.4 This recommendation is made so that:
- Safety of visitors and staff is protected

- Structural damage to the barn can be repaired
- Structural damage to the barn is not exacerbated
- Risk of further damage to neighbouring buildings and property is minimised and addressed

## **Outcomes**

- 4.5 The barn building will be repaired and made safe. The danger to site users will be removed and the building will be able to be brought back in to use by the Kent Life management team.
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## **5. RISK**

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. That consideration is shown in this report at 3.1 – 3.3 and identifies some risks assessed rated as "RED" or "BLACK" should the works not be done and the building continues to be at risk of collapse. However, we are satisfied that the further responses to those risks shown at 4.1 – 4.5 are sufficient to bring their impact and likelihood within acceptable levels. We will continue to monitor these risks as per the Policy and have identified ways to do this as described a 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5.
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## **6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 6.1 No formal consultation with user groups has taken place but conversations with the Kent Life operator's operations manager, Natalie Cox, indicate that the benefit of completing the works immediately outweigh the disruption they will cause in June 2019.
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## **7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 7.1 If Cobtree Manor Estate Charity Committee agrees to proceed with the recommended option the Leisure Manager, in conjunction with Property Services will proceed with this work.
- 7.2 Property Services will oversee the work and its successful completion. The contractor will work with the Kent Life operator to programme the exact start dates and monitor the completion of the works towards the agreed completion date.
- 7.3 Public communications regarding contractors being on site will be co-ordinated by the Kent Life operators.
- 7.4 Monthly contract monitoring processes have been updated. Planning Solutions must visually inspect all buildings on a monthly basis to prevent similar issues from occurring in other buildings. This has been done where

buildings are regularly used, but has been missed in this instance where the building is not regularly used.

- 7.5 At six-monthly intervals council officers will conduct their own visual inspections of the buildings on site.

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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Exempt Appendix 1: Quotation from contractor
  - Appendix 2: Picture of the Kent Life outhouse barn building
  - Appendix 3: Aerial map of Kent Life site showing the location of the farmyard barn buildings
  - Appendix 4: Pictures of the damaged building
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