



CABINET REPORT

Report Title	Future of Allchin Steamroller
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	8 July 2009
Key Decision:	No
Listed on Forward Plan:	Yes
Within Policy:	Not applicable
Policy Document:	No
Directorate:	Finance & Support
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Cllr D Perkins
Ward(s)	Not applicable

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet support for the transfer (subject to conditions) of ownership from this Council to The Northampton & Lamport Railway Preservation Society of the remaining parts of the Allchin Steam Roller No. 1131.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet supports the transfer of ownership of the remaining parts of the Allchin Steam Roller No. 1131, to the Northampton & Lamport Railway Preservation Society ("NLRPS") on precise terms to be approved by the Director of Finance and Support, provided that they are consistent with the conditions set out in 3.2.2 of this report.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 A steamroller was built to order for the former County Borough Council in 1900. This steamroller was built by Allchins – a Northampton firm. It remained in operational use until the 1950's. It was restored in the 1960's by employees of the Council and, with the permission of the Council, was exhibited by them at Steam Fairs. It was subsequently offered to Northampton Museum, but was considered to fall outside their collecting policy. The Roller was then loaned to the Northamptonshire Ironstone Railway Trust at Hunsbury, where it was kept for a number of years.
- 3.1.2 When repair works were required to it in the early 1990's, an agreement was reached for these to be carried out free of charge by a Northamptonshire based firm – Valentines. The roller remained at their works in Rushden until that firm went into liquidation some years ago. At that point the steamroller was returned to the Council in a disassembled state. It has been stored in that state at Westbridge Depot for a number of years. The remaining parts have deteriorated since that time.
- 3.1.3 In November 2000 a report was brought to the Executive of this Council, which put forward a number of potential options concerning the future of the Roller. The Executive supported the option of this Council retaining ownership of the Roller and procuring its restoration as either a static exhibit or as a working piece of machinery. Officers were not subsequently able to achieve this object. The restoration of the Roller would require significant financial investment in making bespoke parts and large amounts of specialist labour time. Full restoration would therefore take a substantial period to achieve. No organisation was identified that would be willing to make such investment of time and money without them having a long-term interest in the Roller.
- 3.1.4 The Council was approached early in 2009 by the NLRPS, to establish on what basis the Council might agree to them restoring the Roller and having control of it. NLRPS are a registered charity, whose objects include, amongst other things, *"The advancement of education in the techniques and methods for conservation and operation of steam engines and associated equipment... by the provision of training in such areas"*. NLRPS were supported in their approach by the Road Roller Association, a national body affiliated to the National Traction Engine Trust. The latter have confirmed, in writing, that NLRPS includes *"a number of members of the Road Roller Association with good track records in preservation of both steam vehicles and road rollers"*.
- 3.1.5 NLRPS and The Road Roller Association are concerned that the Roller should be under the control of an organisation that will restore it appropriately, i.e. in a way entirely consistent with its original design. They wish to avoid the risk of it being converted into other forms, such as a Showman's Engine, which may make it more commercially attractive for sale. NLRPS are willing to renovate and restore the Roller and keep it in its original livery and specification at their own cost. They have indicated that it will take in excess of five years to fully restore it to 'steaming standard'. They are also prepared to meet all costs of

removal of the Roller parts from Westbridge Depot in accordance with a pre-agreed method statement.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 The Roller in its current condition has effectively no value other than for salvage or scrap. The majority of the remaining parts are stored in the open air and will naturally deteriorate further. NLRPS and the Road Roller Association have indicated that in its fully restored state the Roller may have a value of c. £25,000. However, it is clear that the costs of parts and labour to achieve this would be in excess of this sum.
- 3.2.2 The conditions that are considered applicable to any transfer of ownership should be (a) that the Roller is substantially (but not necessarily completely) restored within a period of five years from the date of transfer (b) that it is restored to its original livery - i.e. to that of the former County Borough (c) that it is made available for public viewing on at least two occasions per annum (d) that all risk and costs of collection, restoration and future maintenance rest with NLRPS (e) that sufficient undertakings are received from NLRPS upon transfer that the Roller will form a permanent part of their collection of exhibits and (f) that the Council reserves rights to inspect the Roller, by prior appointment, to establish whether (a) – (e) are being observed.

3.3 Choices (Options)

- 3.3.1 The Council could choose to retain full ownership of the Roller parts and prioritise resources to restore the Roller. It could then retain it for display or dispose of it in a restored state. This is not a cost effective option, given existing budgetary constraints and corporate priorities.
- 3.3.2 The Council could choose to grant a lease of the Roller to an appropriate charitable body at nil rent. Whilst NLRPS may be prepared to accept a long-term lease of the property with rights of renewal, the resultant cumulative lease periods would in practice be akin to wholesale transfer of ownership.
- 3.3.3 The Council could choose to transfer full ownership of the Roller parts to an appropriate charitable body (NLRPS) for nil value, but subject to the conditions set out at 3.2.2. above to protect the public interest. This is the recommended option.
- 3.3.4 The Council could choose to offer the parts for sale on an open tender basis. This might result in a small receipt, but the Council would not be able to control what might then happen to the Roller parts.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

There are none specifically.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 If the recommended option is pursued, there would be no cost implications for the Council, save for officer time in completing documentary arrangements with NLRPS. If the remaining parts were, alternatively, sold to the highest bidder this may produce a small capital receipt. However, the price achieved may prove to be little more than scrap value.
- 4.2.2 There is the risk that if the property is transferred to NLRPS or any other charitable body, that organisation may not comply with its undertakings to restore the Roller or that organisation may subsequently be wound up. The Council would seek to use appropriate legal mechanisms to protect, as far as it could, against the former risk. In respect of the latter risk, the current constitution of NLRPS has been considered. If the Charity is dissolved, there is sufficient comfort that their net assets would be transferred to an appropriate body (trust, charity, not for profit organisation or transport orientated museum).

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1 The legal position is generally set out in this report. Upon transfer of a chattel, such as is proposed, the legal mechanisms that exist in relation to real estate do not necessarily apply. Consequently, enforcement of obligations could be potentially more complicated post transfer of this asset.

4.4 Equality

There are no specific equalities issues that would arise out of transferring this property.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

Northampton & Lamport Railway Preservation Society; Road Roller Association

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

Not applicable

4.7 Other Implications

None specifically

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 Files: Asset Management; Report to Executive dated 17 November 2003 (prepared by Peter Field – Museum Manager)

Simon Dougall – Corporate Asset Manager