

Briefing Note
Operational Services
Development of Arden Craig Nursery
23 October 2003

Introduction

On the 18th February 1993 the Tourism, Leisure and Recreation Committee recommended that a sum of £62,500 be placed in the Capital Rolling Programme to carry out essential repair work to the timber-framed glasshouses. Whilst the preferred method was to replace the timber frames with aluminium, the repair work was carried out using timber due to planning constraints.

It was recognised that this type of repair work would have only a limited life span and as noted above the structure is already showing signs of serious decay.

In 1994 architectural drawings were prepared detailing the existing profiles in timber and the proposed matching replacement profiles in aluminium, all in accordance with the original design. The cost was estimated at £100,000.

As a result of Listed Building consent not being granted in 1994, the repairs were carried out using timber.

It is clear that significant further repair works are now needed some ten years after the earlier repairs.

The primary need for the greenhouses is to secure the long-term survival of the structure. Whilst the use of timber in the original style is to be commended as an ideal, it does not reflect best practice in any of the major horticultural facilities nationally.

For example, during the early 1990s the main span of the Glasgow Botanic Gardens was converted to aluminium. Hence there are examples where Listed Buildings have been converted from timber to aluminium structures.

The use of aluminium in any replacement programme would ensure years of minimal maintenance costs for the main structure. Allowing for inflation since the time of the original estimate suggests a cost in the region of £160,000. However, it should be noted that whilst tender documents were produced in 1994, they were not issued and therefore the original estimate of £100,000 was not subjected to market testing at that time Arden Craig Nursery fails to match the criteria for support funding from a number of potential sources. For example, the Heritage Lottery Fund requires as a condition of grant that any facility must not be closed for more than five days per annum, whilst the Nursery is primarily open to the public for the Summer period only. Alternative sources of funding therefore need to be identified and obtained. The only way to guarantee decades of minimal maintenance costs would be to use aluminium as the preferred replacement to timber. Since there are related Planning issues Members may wish to consider requesting a report from the Director of Development Services to advise whether Historic Scotland would approve the use of aluminium frames rather than timber at Arden Craig Nursery.

Action to Date

As a result of a routine inspection at Arden Craig Nursery the building was closed to both staff and public during the first week of May 2003. As a result of temporary supports being placed within the structure, the building was re-opened to the public on 15th July 2003. An inspection, dated 15th July 2003, at Arden Craig Nursery examining the condition of the timber options recommended a number of remedial actions.

The Bute and Cowal Area Committee allocated £8,955 this year for the renewal of the

cedar house at Arden Craig. This has now been postponed pending the reallocation of these funds for remedial work to the main Nursery area.

Several suppliers of commercial aluminium greenhouse have been contacted and will shortly be invited to submit quotations to complete replacement works.

It is not envisaged that a contract will be awarded at this point, rather that this information will be used to secure funding from both internal sources and externally.

Summary

Members are advised this project will take some time to complete and will require the closure, at some point, of the existing facility. This will require the temporary transfer of plant production to another Argyll and Bute Council operated site.

Sources of external funding are now being explored.

Further briefing notes will update members on progress.

Alison M McIlroy

Technical Officer Horticultural Services.