

	subsequent contractor procurement will be undertaken in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023.
	Signed off by the Interim Monitoring Officer: Yes
Staffing and Corporate Implications	The project will be delivered using existing Economic Regeneration Team and Property Services Team staff resources.
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes
Purpose of Report	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To present phase two of the Moira Furnace Visitor Experience Programme. 2) To seek approval to allocate funding from the Business Rates Reserve to the Council's Capital Programme. 3) To seek approval to progress phase two of the Moira Furnace Visitor Experience Programme.
Reason for Decision	Cabinet approval required to enable the progression of phase two Moira Furnace Visitor Experience Programme in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and procurement legislation.
Recommendations	<p>1) CONSIDERS THE COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 23 APRIL 2026</p> <p>2) RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL THAT £2.455M BE ALLOCATED TO THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL PROGRAMME</p> <p>3) APPROVES THE USE OF AN APPROPRIATE PROCUREMENT FRAMEWORK TO COMMISSION THE PROFESSIONAL DESIGN TEAM</p> <p>4) DELEGATE AUTHORITY TO THE DIRECTOR OF PLACE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDERTO:</p> <p>A) NEGOTIATE, AGREE & FINALISE THE TERMS OF THE CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT WITHIN THE BUDGET.</p> <p>B) COMPLETE SUCH OTHER AGREEMENTS AS SHALL BE NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT, WITHIN THE APPROVED BUDGET</p>

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The regeneration of sites within North West Leicestershire is a key priority within the Council Delivery Plan and the Moira Furnace project is one of the flagship schemes highlighted in the Districtwide Regeneration Framework 2024.

- 1.2 The continued development of Moira Furnace Museum and Country Park will contribute to the Council's long held ambition to transform the former coalfield area of Moira and Donisthorpe as part of the National Forest's transformation of the Heart of the National Forest.
- 1.3 Moira Furnace is owned by the Council and is listed as a scheduled monument dating back to 1806. It is considered one of the most well-preserved blast furnaces in the country. The Furnace and site are operated by the Moira Furnace Museum Trust (the "Trust") on behalf of the Council, and the Trust receives an annual grant of £45,000 from the Council towards the running costs. The grant contributes towards operational staffing costs. All other day-to-day running costs and expenses (e.g. utility costs) are funded by the Trust, with annual operational costs currently being approximately £140,000 per annum.
- 1.4 Whilst the Trust is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Furnace, liability for structural repairs remains with the Council as freeholder. It is the Council that has legal responsibility for protecting the building as a scheduled monument and Historic England ensures the Council meets its obligations.
- 1.5 The Moira Furnace "Phase One" restoration and refurbishment works concluded in March 2026, following the investment of Council and UKSPF funding, with the launch event on 16 April 2026.
- 1.6 The Phase One improvements were never intended to be the full extent of the overall improvement works, but more a discreet phase delivered against committed funding, bringing the monument up to a good standard of repair. There is a further opportunity to invest in the wider site, developing the site to improve and enhance facilities, in order to improve the visitor experience and increase visitor numbers.
- 1.7 Further development and investment will secure the site as a visitor attraction in the Heart of the Forest, aligned with the North West Leicestershire Council Delivery Plan 2023 – 2028, the North West Leicestershire Districtwide Regeneration Framework and Heart of the Forest Vision.
- 1.8 The Council's Community Scrutiny Committee reviewed the proposed phase two project. Their comments and recommendations are contained in Section 10.0 of the report.

2.0 NEXT STEPS – INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

- 2.1 Investment in the attraction supports the longer-term sustainability and viability of the site, specifically the investment in improved infrastructure that gives commercial return. This accords with the 2021 Options Appraisal Report findings. The options appraisal was officer commissioned work and used as an evidence base for the "Conserving and Enhancing our Heritage" key project within the North West Leicestershire District Regeneration Framework 2024.
- 2.2 Phase Two investment proposes the following improvements:
 - a) A fit for purpose on site operational and storage facility for the Trust
 - b) A new visitor centre (café/restaurant, interpretation and toilet provision)
 - c) Improved site access (inc. bridge loft), roadways, and parking upgrade (inc. EV charging), play facilities and canal structural and safety works.
- 2.3 A further phase - Phase Three is also being planned (presently uncosted) and could focus on the following:

- a) basement entrance area and retaining walls
- b) monument interpretation and illumination

2.4 Both Phase Two and Phase Three improvements were identified as opportunities in the Future Options Appraisal 2021: Moira Furnace Museum and Country Park and follow up Moira Furnace Café Development Study 2021.

3.0 PROJECT BENEFITS

3.1 The proposed Phase Two improvements accord with the 2021 Options Appraisal.

3.2 The following benefits are expected to be achieved as a result of the Phase Two improvements:

- Increased footfall and visitor numbers
- Longer dwell time on site (more site attractions)
- Visitor experience upgrade (café, visitor hub)
- Reputation and status as a visitor attraction
- Increased footfall to associated businesses on site
- Opportunity to improve the financial stability of the Trust

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This report outlines a recommendation for Phase Two (fees and works) for the Council to allocate £2,455,000, comprising £446,000 of consultancy fees and £2,009,000 for construction over the next two years 2026-2028 to invest in improvements at Moira Furnace. In order to proceed, this will require a further allocation to the Council's Capital Programme from the Business Rates Reserve.

TOTAL - £2,455,000

(comprising fees and works, see below)

Fees

RIBA 2-3 £204,650

RIBA 4 Total - £102,280 (budget figures)

RIBA 5-7 Total - £139,000 (budget figures)

TOTAL (rounded) - £446,000

Works

Construction cost estimates (inclusive of inflation and contingency)

1. Operational and Storage Facility - £465,000

2. A new visitor hub - £990,000

3. Improved site access (inc. bridge loft), parking and play facilities - £554,000

TOTAL - £2,009,000

4.2 Phase Three is currently uncosted, a full report will be presented to Cabinet for consideration prior to proceeding.

5.0 PROCUREMENT

5.1 The professional design team will be procured via a call off contract from the Scape Framework.

- 5.2 The method of procurement for the construction contract will be determined at a later date but is likely to be mini-competition using a national framework of contractors and Cabinet approval will be required to appoint that contractor due to value.

6.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Trust is a charitable organisation part-funded by the Council through an annual Service Level Agreement. The annual grant from the Council represents around 30% of the funding required by the Trust to operate the site. The Trust leases the Furnace building and associated land from the Council.
- 6.2 The Trust has a track record of delivering services on the site, supported by the Council. Since the announcement of Local Government Reorganisation in December 2024, the Trust is keen to explore options to support their own financial sustainability. The Trust continues to work with the Council on site improvements that accord with that objective.
- 6.3 The site operations team comprises a Site Manager, Site Assistant/Volunteer Coordinator and seasonal Events Coordinator. The introduction of the seasonal Events Coordinator role in 2026 acknowledges the importance of event delivery on the site which significantly increases visitor numbers and extends visitor dwell time.
- 6.4 The Moira Furnace Museum Trust Limited (charity number: 702783) has seven active trustees and over 80 volunteers currently registered.
- 6.5 The main objects of the charity are to provide, establish and preserve facilities in the village of Moira in the District of North West Leicestershire for the purposes of the study of and research into its industry, archaeology, architecture, transportation, social history, natural history and the conservation of its flora and fauna for the benefit and education of the public.
- 6.6 Moira Furnace Museum is an accredited museum; the accreditation is currently being renewed and should be confirmed in May 2026.
- 6.7 The Council has legal responsibility for protecting the building as a scheduled monument and Historic England ensures the Council meets its obligations.
- 6.8 The Council and Moira Furnace Museum Trust Limited are the two landowners at Moira Furnace Museum Country Park. The park adjoins land owned by Leicestershire County Council, The National Forest Company and private landowners.

7.0 PROJECT RISKS

- 7.1 Detailed project risks are identified in the RAID Risk Register and include materials availability, contractor pricing, required permission, Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), inflation etc.
- 7.2 The project timetable has been assessed in the context of the anticipated LGR timeline, and a delivery plan will be maintained to ensure continuity should governance arrangements change.

8.0 PROJECT TIMEFRAME

8.1 The following timeframe is proposed for project commencement, implementation and conclusion.

Date	Process
July 2026 to October 2026	RIBA 2-3 (Concept Design and Spatial Coordination) of: Item 1. Operational building Item 2. Visitor centre / café Item 3. Improved site access (inc. bridge loft), parking and play facilities
October 2026 to February 2027	Planning consent for: Item 1. Operational building Item 2. Visitor centre / café Item 3. Improved site access (inc. bridge loft), parking and play facilities
March 2027 to August 2027	RIBA 4 (Technical Design and Tendering): Item 1. Operational building Item 2. Visitor centre / café Item 3. Improved site access (inc. bridge loft), parking and play facilities
September 2027	Installation of: Item 1. Operational building
October 2027 to February 2028	RIBA 5,6,7 progression of: Item 2. Visitor centre / café
February 2028 to May 2028	RIBA 5,6,7 progression of: Item 3. Improved site access (inc. bridge loft), parking and play facilities

9.0 CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

- 9.1 The Future Options Appraisal 2021: Moira Furnace Museum and Country Park involved background research including a review of the 'then' current position, consultation with trustees, volunteers, staff and a range of stakeholders along with market assessment, a review of case examples and a module of primary research.
- 9.2 Before and during the Phase One works there was significant engagement with interested parties, ranging from trustees, tenants, ward councillors (District and County), neighbouring landowners and the wider community and residents.
- 9.3 Project communication was supported by a robust communication, delivered by officers of the Economic Regeneration Team and Communications Team, using a wide range of techniques (social media, press releases and on site information).
- 9.4 It is proposed that Phase Two will adopt the same approach as Phase One for consultation, engagement and communication.

10.0 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY FEEDBACK

- 10.1 A report was considered at the Community Scrutiny meeting on 23 April 2026. Members comments and officers' responses to these are attached as Appendix Four.

11.0 APPENDICES

Appendix one – Phase One photos

Appendix two – Phase Two – Visitor Centre artist’s impression and site map

Appendix three – Site map taken from the Options Appraisal 2021 Report

Appendix four – Community Scrutiny Committee Meeting 23 April 2026 – members comments and officers’ responses

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	Planning and regeneration
Policy Considerations:	North West Leicestershire Districtwide Regeneration Framework
Safeguarding:	Principles of safeguarding will be taken into account through the design and planning process.
Equalities/Diversity:	Phase Two will be designed for all users.
Customer Impact:	Creation of new visitor economy facilities for economic and social regeneration, enjoyment, education, and leisure/recreation (wellbeing/quality of life).
Economic and Social Impact:	Creation of new visitor economy facilities for economic and social regeneration, enjoyment, education, and leisure/recreation (wellbeing/quality of life).
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	Tree planting Provision of EV charging points Bio diversity improvements
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	Refer section 9.0.
Risks:	Refer section 7.0.
Officer Contact	Paul Wheatley Head of Property and Regeneration paul.wheatley@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

APPENDIX ONE – Phase One photos

Moira Furnace in scaffold March to August 2025, to allow for Phase One works



Moira Furnace post Phase One works including new site signage and Interpretation



APPENDIX TWO – Phase Two

Artist's impression taken from the Moira Furnace Café Development Study – Final Report 2021

NOTE: this is for illustration purposes only and may not be representative of the final design and location.



APPENDIX THREE – Site map taken from the Options Appraisal Report 2021



Moira Furnace & Country Park

KEY

Proposals Short-term: Completed within 12 months

1. Sense of welcome and new car parking signage
 2. Woodland adventure trail (specific location to be identified)
 3. Dog agility area
 4. Lime Kilns Interpretation
 5. Watersports shipping container
 6. Improve condition of existing trails
- Youth shelter (location to be identified)
CCTV (location to be identified)

Proposals Medium-term: Completed within 12 to 30 months

7. New car parking (location to be identified)
 8. Car parking payment system
 9. Tensile structure over part of the courtyard
 10. New catering offer (extending Unit 8)
 11. Changing Places facility
 12. High quality self catering accommodation within Blast Furnace
 13. Introduce digital technology within Furnace Museum
 14. Introduction of visitor accommodation (pods, camping pitches and service block)
 15. Extend play area with accessible play
- Allowance for events service infrastructure and improvements to the public realm (locations to be identified)

Proposals Long-term: Completed 30+ months

- Outdoor shelter (location to be identified)

APPENDIX FOUR – Community Scrutiny Committee Meeting 23 April 2026 – members comments and officers’ responses

Comments on the Moira Furnace Visitor Experience Improvement Programme (Phase 2) made by Community Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 23 April 2026

Date considered by Cabinet: 19 May 2026

	Comments/recommendations from scrutiny	Advice provided by officers at the Scrutiny meeting	Cabinet response
C1	Improvements to date: Members welcomed the improvements made to the site and praised the quality of the refurbishment works. The Furnace was described as one of the district’s key heritage and tourism assets, and members highlighted the importance of continuing to promote the positive work undertaken by the Council.	-	
C2	Potential parking charges: Members raised concerns regarding potential parking charges, stressing the need to avoid excessive charges that could deter visitors or local residents. Suggestions included consideration of local resident concessions and ensuring a balance between income generation and accessibility.	-	
C3	Historic building: Questions were raised about the Council’s responsibilities as custodian of a historic building.	Officers confirmed that all necessary consents had been obtained and that Historic England requirements had been met.	
C4	Delivery timetable: Members discussed the tight delivery timetable in the context of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).	Officers acknowledged the challenging timescales but advised that delaying approval would significantly increase the risk of the project not proceeding. Arrangements were being made to support continuity, including risk management and handover planning.	

C5	Community impact: Members commented on the positive impact the site had on the area including reducing anti-social behaviour, volunteer engagement, opportunities for younger people and work experience placements. Planned future activities as well as possible ideas for the future were also acknowledged.	-	
C6	Project support: The committee was in full support of the project and the allocation of funds required to complete the phase 2 improvements.	-	
R1	Recommendation: That Cabinet allocate the £2.455,000 over the two year period 2026-2028 to the Council's Capital Programme from the Business Rates Reserve for Improvements at Moira Furnace.		