

LISKEARD TOWN COUNCIL – NEW PROJECT PLAN

(To be completed for submission to Council or Committee for consideration of a new project)

Project Title	Nadelik Lyskerrys 2023
Date	July 2023
Committee	C&E
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Project Summary – <i>What will be achieved? What are the options?</i>	
<p>A public celebration of Christmas in Liskeard which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brings together the local community and gives residents the opportunity to participate in fun, free activities.• Encourages people to come into the town centre and visit local shops and eateries.• Has a distinctly local and Cornish flavour. <p>The elements of this will include:</p> <p>A Christmas lights throughout the town B Lantern making and other school and community activities C A large public event on 2 December which will include a lantern parade, switching on the lights, and musical entertainment. D Other activities organised by local groups, including Santa's grotto.</p> <p>It is proposed that, as in previous years, a group is convened of the relevant local organisations to coordinate this work.</p> <p>If the Christmas lights are going to happen, we have looked at two options:</p> <p>Option 1 The preparation and putting up of the lights, with associated safety checks is carried out by the Lights Up group and uses existing lights. For this to happen the group needs the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive risk assessment on all aspects of the process.• Load testing of the attachment points• Electrical testing and certification• Testing the lights to see if they need repair or lights replacing• Hire of a mobile elevated work platform• Storage of lights• Insurance• Location to prepare the small Christmas trees• Refreshment for volunteers <p><i>Pros</i></p>	

- It maximises community involvement
- It is a cheaper option
- It carries on the tradition of how Christmas lights have been done in the past

Cons

- It assumes sufficient volunteers will be available, including some with specific skills.
- It relies heavily on the knowledge of one or two volunteers which can easily be lost
- It puts the burden of safety management and assessment of risk onto volunteers.
- In the past it has relied on the goodwill of local tradespeople who have ended up out of pocket.

Option 2 We pay a specialist lighting company to lease us new lights and they do all the work associated with putting them up and taking them down safely.

Pros

- The company takes responsibility for the whole undertaking.
- It is a sustainable solution, giving certainty about the situation in future years.
- The work, and associated risk and safety management is undertaken by specialist professionals.
- The town gets new lights, which coordinate together.
- No storage is needed.

Cons

- It is more expensive
- It moves the provision of the lights away from community involvement and ownership.

The financial implications associated with the options are set out below under costs.

Benefit to Residents

Being able to participate in a large, free event as part of their Christmas celebrations.

Creating a draw for visitors and supporting the vitality and viability of the town centre and the businesses within it. Many businesses need to do particularly well over the Christmas season to survive all year round.

Providing an enjoyable way for children and adults to discover more about Cornish language and culture.

Relevant Previous Decisions and Actions

Before the pandemic, Lights Up, including the lantern parade, was a key part of Liskeard's events calendar. It always relied on a small band of volunteers and was funded through a mix of contributions from local businesses and grants, including from the Town Council. Over the years the Lights Up group signaled a number of times to the Town Council that it needed more help and guaranteed funding.

In 2017 the town won the opportunity to work with Golden Tree on what became Nadelik Lyskerrys - adding a distinctive Cornish element to the celebrations, with schools workshops, a family trail, Santa's trains to and from Looe, relaxed evening language sessions for adults, performances of Cornish music with local connections and a mummer's play. The Nadelik Lowen lights were produced and the countdown to switching on the lights was done in English and Cornish. An event with food and Cornish music was held in the Public Hall after the lights were switched on. 2019 was a transition year where we prepared for Golden Tree to withdraw and to take on all the organisation locally.

When Covid struck the activities were very much reduced, although the volunteers did manage to get lights put up in 2020 and 2021. In 2022 we started planning late and minus key people who had made it work in the past. Nevertheless, with huge efforts from volunteers, the lights were put up, we and Golden Tree worked with schools, there was a family trail, a small event to switch on the Christmas tree lights and other activities like the Traders Association Santa's grotto and the Lions' Santa's sleigh. The Town Council provided money to enable some new lights to be purchased and funded the work with schools.

The intention was to start planning much earlier in 2023, especially around the arrangements for the Christmas lights. In March, a representative of a specialist lighting company, Blachare Illuminations, visited Liskeard at the request of a councillor and prepared a detailed quotation.

At Communications and Engagement Committee on 13 July this quotation and the overall situation were reported. It was agreed the Town Council would set up a coordination group, chaired by Councillor Brooks, to bring groups in the town together to arrange Christmas lights and events, this would include lights and Christmas trees, a lantern parade, schools workshops, etc.

Councillors Braithwaite, Brooks, Cassidy, Lee-Julian and Taylor would consider options for Town Council support of all these activities and develop a project plan to be considered by Council on 25 July.

The authors of this paper met on 17 July to discuss the draft project plan and agreed to progress both options around Christmas lighting to gather information to enable the Town Council to make a decision on 25 July. As much of that information as possible is contained in this plan.

Other organisations have indicated that they would like to be part of Christmas planning, including the Liskerrett Centre, which is willing to organise lantern making and the parade, and RIO, who could contribute projection mapping of images on the front of the library and activities happening inside the library either before or after the parade.

As usual, we would also want to work other local organisations like the Lions and Liskeard Radio and with local businesses and include representatives of the Traders Association and Chamber of Commerce in the planning group.

Does Liskeard Town Council own or have control of the necessary assets?

The existing lighting assets are owned by the Lights Up group. We would either be funding them to make use of those assets or entering into a contract with a lighting company to lease the new lights.

It's possible that, if option 2 is chosen, the existing lights could be sold and the proceeds could be used to fund future events or to repay the Town Council for some of the cost of the new lights.

Cost – How has this been assessed? Have quotes been obtained? Which budget line will this be funded from? Are there other sources of funding available? Can VAT be reclaimed?

Christmas Lights

Option 1 - lights put up by Lights Up volunteers

The estimated costs are:

Comprehensive risk assessment on all aspects of the process. £400 – 500 per day x 3

Load testing of the attachment points £500 per day (needs doing every 3 – 5 years)

Electrical testing and certification 1 weeks work £1,400 + VAT minimum

Testing the lights to see if they need repair or lights replacing minimal cost for replacements

Hire of a mobile elevated work platform 2 days to put up and 2 days to take down at £750 per day + VAT = £3,000 + VAT

Storage of lights £300

Insurance £500

Location to prepare the small Christmas trees

Refreshment for volunteers £150

Total: around £7,500 (VAT would not be reclaimable by Lights Up)

NB, some of these costs will not be needed in year two, but it is likely that there will be increased costs for repair and replacement of lights in future years.

Option 2 - We contract a specialist lighting company to provide the lights

As we have not yet received quotations from companies it is not possible to be precise about the cost, however from the information we have seen it seems that a maximum of £20,000 would be a reasonable budget to work to for the first year. Future years would be around £6,000 cheaper because they would not include the set-up costs. A commitment to a contract over at least 3 years is usual, and this takes the total contract value to a level where it must be publicly advertised on Contracts Finder. A search of contracts awarded by other Town Councils via Contracts Finder suggests it would be reasonable advertise a contract opportunity for a maximum £50,000 over 3 years.

In either case the cost for 2023 would be met from the general reserve. For 2024 onwards the cost would need to be met by the precept and this would mean an estimated additional £2.21 per band D household per year for option 1 and an additional £5.76 per household per year (based on £20,000 pa) for option 2.

Other Christmas events cost estimates

Entertainment £1,000

Community and schools engagement £1,000

Insurance for the event (paid by Lights Up committee for 2023)

St John's ambulance £150

Publicity £300

NB C&E have already earmarked £2,000 of their events budget for Christmas events and there are small earmarked reserves of £297 and £156 so all these costs could be met

within existing budgets.

Officer Time Required and Timescale

How does this fit with other priorities and the existing work programme?

In the past, the Lights Up group organised the public event, including road closures and entertainment. If the current group can only manage the actual lights, this means the Town Council would need to pick up:

Organising the road closure for the event on 2 December

Organising entertainment for the event

Servicing the planning group

Timescales

Agree contract with specialist lighting company (if relevant) by the end of August.

Set up planning group - August

12 weeks notice are required for a road closure application, which means it would need to be done by 9 September

Timings for putting up lights supplied by the Lights Up group

Bunting Down: 22nd October 2023

Lights Up: 29th & 5th November 2023

Trees Up: 26th November 2023

Main Tree Light Up: 2nd December 2023

How does this meet Liskeard Town Council Aims?

The project will contribute to several of the Town Council's aims:

- Build a strong local community which is proactive, involved, resilient, cohesive and proud of where we live
- Support the growth of good quality local jobs and businesses, strengthen the local food and farming sector and attract new investment
- Protect and enhance the culture and heritage of the town
- Promote and market Liskeard as the commercial and cultural centre for South East Cornwall

Risks considered and possible mitigations

Risk

Demand on officer time

Proposed mitigation

Set up a working group with members to take on some of the tasks

If Lights Up continue to undertake the lights there may be a loss of volunteers which means they don't complete the job, possibly due to a lack of continuity and succession planning

Work closely with Lights Up to minimise this risk.

If we increase the precept to pay for an external company some members of the public may not think this is a good use of their money

Communicate clearly about the decision and why it has been taken
Get feedback from the public about the lights and Christmas events
Get the best value for money

If there are no Christmas lights this could lead to a loss of public confidence and negative perception of the council and town.

Communicate clearly about the decision and why it has been taken.
Emphasise the positive aspects of Christmas events.

How will the project be monitored and success measured?

As with other large town events such as Liskeard Unlocked we will hold a wash up meeting in January to discuss what went well and what needs to be done differently in future years.

We will also launch a consultation in December, immediately after the event, to get public feedback about the lights and the event and get their views on whether the Town Council should be funding the lights through the precept in future years.

Recommendation – including next steps if approved

The Town Council is asked to approve this project plan and specifically:

- For the Christmas lights to agree either **option 1** with a budget of £7,500 (likely to remain similar in subsequent years) or **option 2** with a budget of £20,000 in the first year and £15,000 in subsequent years (maximum £50,000 contract over 3 years), in either case to be taken from the general reserve in 2023 and funded from the precept in future years.
- To authorise a small group including the Mayor, the Chair or vice-chair of C&E and councillors Braithwaite and Brooks to consider the quotations from lighting companies and agree a contractor within the budget allocated if option 2 is approved.