

Region of Waterloo
Planning, Development, and Legislative Services
Cultural Services

To: Planning and Works Committee
Meeting Date: June 6, 2023
Report Title: Doon Heritage Village Utilities Project Update

1. Recommendation

For Information

2. Purpose / Issue:

To provide an update on actions planned by Regional staff to implement the Doon Heritage Village (Doon) Utilities Project and on the implications for the operations and interpretation at the site.

3. Strategic Plan:

Focus Area 3: Environment and Climate Action. This project will upgrade and repair utilities to the Doon site, providing more reliable power and water capacity as well as enabling the replacement of propane-fueled heating.

4. Report Highlights:

- The Doon Utility Project will replace failing water main infrastructure, increase the electric supply to allow replacement of propane heating with heat pumps, bury electrical wires and supply conduit for a high speed fibre network throughout the village.
- Construction is planned in a 2-year phased approach to allow summer camps, courses, special events and weddings to continue in both years.
- The Phase 1 construction tender went out in late May and construction is expected to begin in late summer for this initial work. Phase 2 construction activities will be tendered in spring 2024 for summer 2024 implementation.
- Areas of the Village will be inaccessible to the public during construction – the areas below the covered bridge in 2023, and areas above the covered bridge in 2024
- During the construction period, there will be no living history animation of the site. However, museum programming will continue in outdoor spaces that are unaffected by construction.

- This pause in operations is allowing staff to reconsider how underused spaces can be used differently. Leading heritage architectural firm +VG has been retained to review and assess the practicality of changing the use of barns and out buildings to increase the flexibility of programming and rentals onsite. This will in form a capital master plan for the village to strategically develop the site.
- Staff are planning a variety of community engagement opportunities over the summer and throughout the construction period. This feedback will shape of spaces are used and how the site is interpreted.
- Doon Heritage Village will be reopened in 2025.
- The 2023-2032 Cultural Services capital program includes a budget allocation of \$600,000 in 2023 and 2024 in project #42043, funded from the Cultural Services Capital Reserve to complete the work outlined in this report. Staff will refine the workplan for this work and provide updates on the sufficiency of budget provisions as required.

5. Background:

Having been first installed in 1957, many of the utilities, including water mains, power lines and heating systems, are in need of replacement or repair. Updating utility services in the Village will enable more flexible use of the site, and the use of cleaner technologies. This project was originally identified in 2015.

A major utility replacement project was tendered in May, 2023. This two-year project will begin in the summer of 2023, and will bring some key upgrades to one of the Region's most-visited attractions. During the project there will be a pause on living history animation.

The project will be completed through a two-phased approach to allow for planned rentals, such as existing wedding bookings and programming, like museum summer camps, to continue using Doon outdoor spaces.

The pause on the traditional living history programming means Regional staff are able to take an opportunity to engage with community to imagine future programming and new uses of this unique space.

Slated to begin in June 2023, members of the community will be invited to participate in a variety of engagement activities to share memories, hopes, and new ideas for Doon to help inform program planning and space usage.

Currently staff are planning for self-directed exploration and small-scale programming activations of the outdoor areas around the Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum. As construction progresses, different areas will be available to activate and explore. Anticipated feedback may include:

- Memories of the village/things they loved
- Ideas about what they would like to see
- Ideas about how we could use spaces

- Ideas about stories that we could/should be telling

Part of that exercise will be to collect reactions and impressions from people who may not currently see themselves reflected in the narratives that have traditionally been told in the village, as well as long-standing visitors.

Staff will also work with historians/experts from the community to explore how we integrate different stories, bringing along our traditional audiences and staff with new stories

Staff will also reach out to schools to support the revision of school programs, to ensure they are meeting the needs of educators.

Staff will collect input about how spaces can be used differently for all aspects of our business (weddings, corporate events, school programs, summer camps, casual visits etc.)

6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public

Area Municipalities:

The project team, facilities and the successful contractor will consult with and complete all necessary compliance and permit requirements for the City of Kitchener and the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Public:

Friends of the Waterloo Region museum have been kept updated with plans and continue to provide input. Staff are planning multiple community engagement initiatives throughout the construction period to get community feedback.

7. Financial Implications:

The approved 2023-2032 Doon Heritage Village Capital Program includes a budget of \$300,000 in 2023 and \$300,000 in 2024 for Upgrade / Replace Utility Services - Project #42043 funded from the Region's 2023-2032 Capital Program. Staff will refine the project plan and provide updates on sufficiency of budget provisions as required.

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

The renewed site will facilitate more accessible public programs, more efficient lighting for safer evening and winter events, more reliable and sustainable heating to buildings to support year-round programming, new water mains for washrooms and fire response, and more reliable connectivity. Community and expert consultation will inform the re-opening and renewed programming and operating model of the site. This project will ensure that the village can grow into the future and provide even better innovative, relevant and immersive experiences.

9. Attachments:

Appendix A: Doon Heritage Village Site Power Upgrades

Prepared By: Julian Kingston, Manager, Region of Waterloo Museums and Archives

Reviewed By: Helen Chimirri-Russell, Director, Cultural Services

Approved By: Rod Regier, Commissioner, Planning, Development and Legislative Services