

Proposal for ‘Home of British Helicopters’ signage.

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Purpose of the Report

To seek an agreement to allow Leonardo to install additional signage to the bottom of the Welcome to Yeovil signs at three points; the A3088 Cartgate Link, A359 Mudford Road and A37 Dorchester Road. The signs would consist of a graphic of a helicopter with the wording ‘Home of British Helicopters’ and would be the same size as the current Yeovil in Bloom signs.

Public Interest

To seek an agreement from the Area South Committee members, in relation to a request from Leonardo, the Yeovil-based helicopter manufacturer, to install small sign plates to three existing ‘Welcome to Yeovil’ signs, the proposed signs would contain the wording ‘Home of British Helicopters’.

Recommendations

That Area South members agree:

1. To support the principle of Leonardo seeking permission to install three small ‘Home of British Helicopter’ signs at the following gateway locations on the approach to Yeovil: A37 Dorchester Road, A 359 Mudford Road and the A3088 Cartgate Link.
2. To note that Leonardo will approach Somerset (currently County) Highways to seek permission to install the signs.

Background

The Economic Development team have been approached by Leonardo to ask if it is possible to install three small signs underneath the current ‘Welcome to Yeovil’ signs. The proposed signs would say ‘The Home of British Helicopters’ with a graphic of a helicopter in flight (see Appendix A).

If the proposal is agreed by members of the Area South Committee, then Leonardo would be responsible for installing the signs. They would initially be temporary in nature and all associated costs would be met by Leonardo. There would be no company branding present on the signage.

The existing gateway signage on the approach to Yeovil was installed by South Somerset District Council in 2017, with the necessary permissions from County Highways and with the support of the Area South Committee and Yeovil Town Council. This request seeks to add an additional sign plate stating 'The Home of British Helicopters' below the existing signs (Appendix A visual attached). If Area South members are supportive of this proposal, Leonardo will seek any necessary permissions from Somerset County Highways/Somerset Council and undertake the installations without cost to the Council.

Reasons for the request

Leonardo is currently bidding for a UK MOD contract worth up to one billion pounds to supply up to 44 helicopters under the 'New Medium Helicopter' competition. Winning the contract would secure thousands of highly skilled, high value jobs in Somerset.

Leonardo state that being recognised as a UK 'onshore' business is more relevant than ever before, when it comes to competing for UK government contracts. The importance of spending on British-based companies has taken on greater significance in the post-pandemic, post-Brexit economic recovery.

In order to strengthen its campaign, highlighting the benefits to the UK, including the local economy, Leonardo has been building community support for Yeovil to be officially recognised as the 'Home of British Helicopters'. By distinguishing itself as such, the town of Yeovil would highlight its heritage and expertise in onshore helicopter production, supporting bids for future MOD programmes. Securing this work would in turn grow high-value, high-skilled employment in the town and the wider local area.

'The Home of British Helicopters' campaign is therefore an effort to boost recognition of Yeovil's position as a centre of world leadership in aerospace. The additional signage is considered integral to demonstrating the importance of the town's association with the helicopter industry over generations.

Leonardo and its community stakeholders are keen to demonstrate that the expertise represented by the company in Yeovil and the skills and infrastructure in the area is something that can only be built up over decades of investment and by forging strong links with local communities.

Leonardo approached the Yeovil Town Council Clerk and then subsequently presented to the Mayor and Councillors who were in full support and agreement with the proposed signs. However, there was an acknowledgement that the signs were installed and owned by South Somerset District Council (SSDC), therefore further support and approval would be needed from SSDC.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report as Leonardo has confirmed in writing that they will cover all the costs and have a budget set aside to carry out the work, including any future maintenance of the signs.

Council Plan Implications

Priority 3: To assist businesses to recover from the Covid -19 pandemic whilst supporting growth within South Somerset economy in partnership with other organisations.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

This proposal will not negatively impact carbon emissions and Climate Change.

Equality and Diversity Implications

<i>An Equality Impact Relevance Check Form has been completed in respect of the Proposal?</i>	Yes
<i>The Impact Relevance Check indicated that a full EIA was required?</i>	No
<i>If an EIA was not required please attach the Impact Relevance Check Form as an Appendix to this report and provide a brief summary of its findings in the comments box below.</i>	
<i>If an EIA was required please attach the completed EIA form as an Appendix to this report and provide a brief summary of the result of your Equality Impact Assessment in the comment box below.</i>	
Additional Comments	
<i>Welcome to Yeovil' signs are currently located at six locations at key entrance points to the town. The request from Leonardo's is to add a further three signs at three of the six locations, the size and style of the proposed signs will be very similar to existing signs which adhere to Highways regulations. The lead officer will ensure the overall design is acceptable. Given the nature of the request, the proposal should not effect people with protected characteristics, therefore a full EIA is not required.</i>	

Background Papers

Area South Committee on 7th September 2016 - Agenda item 9 Report on the replacement and re-design of the 'Welcome to Yeovil' gateway signs' to This can be viewed at:

<https://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=130&MIId=1821&Ver=4>
