

BUILDING GRANTS – EGREMONT AND CLEATOR MOOR

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Cllr Catherine Geil

LEAD OFFICER: Mike Tichford

REPORT AUTHOR: Simon Walker

Summary: The report recommends that the Council be the Accountable Body for programmes of Building Grants in Cleator Moor and Egremont

Recommendation:	That members agree to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Support the programme of building grants in Egremont to be run by Egremont and Area Regeneration Partnership, by being the Accountable Body2. Support the programme of building grants in Cleator Moor to be run by Regeneration North East Copeland, by being the Accountable Body3. Support the Cleator Moor programme of grants through the provision of administration services for bankrolling of the programme4. Seek full cost recovery for the provision of these services by the Council, decisions on the exact amount of which, and its recovery, to be delegated to the Portfolio Holder, the Head of Finance and Business Services and the Head of Regeneration to agree with the respective groups
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Impact on delivering the Corporate Plan: The Market Town Initiative is a Regional Programme focusing on the Regeneration of Market Towns. The principle aim of the programme is to stimulate Economic Regeneration principally focusing on Creating Jobs, Enterprise Development, Business Growth, Built Environment Improvements and Skills Development, all of which complement the Council's Regeneration Strategies.

Impact on other statutory objectives (e.g. crime & disorder, LA21): The project meets objectives within the Local Plan, in particular: 2.8.24. Efforts will continue to defend the vitality and viability of the town centres aided by the SRB programme at Cleator Moor and the Market Towns Initiative at Egremont and Millom. The Project also helps to deliver to key Action Areas within the Economic Strategy, Gearing Up for Change, including promoting the area's tourism potential, diversifying the local economy and refreshing and renewing the built environment, providing attractive town centres and residential areas. Within the draft Corporate Plan the grants support actions 2.2.13 "to enhance the architectural and historic environment in our towns" and 3.1.6 to "Increase tourism, culture and leisure spend by: delivering the tourism product elements for Egremont...and Cleator Moor"

Financial and human resource implications: The programmes will be managed by the MTI office in Egremont and the Regeneration Officer in Cleator Moor respectively. The project will be fully funded by West Lakes Renaissance and will lever in further investment from the private sector. There will be some

financial and human resource implications for the Council in acting as accountable body. These are particularly for administering claims and payments and for audit. These costs are estimated at around £3,000 over two years for each and will be claimed from the £16,000 fee included in each of the applications for grant funding form West Lakes Renaissance.

The costs of administering the bank rolling of grants for Cleator Moor will be recovered in full. As this is difficult to forecast it is recommended that the portfolio holder be delegated with officers to make a decision on the cost to be recovered as the project is delivered, to achieve as close as possible a zero net effect on the Council's budget and other resources.

The Council's costs have to be built in broadly to the overall programme costs and effectively comprise an additional 'top slice' of the project budget from the funder. Therefore the funder's agreement will be required.

Project & Risk Management:

- Building grants are awarded only to schemes that have been specified by suitably qualified professionals, with two prices being obtained for shop front grants and three for building renovation grants.
- The building grants are paid only on certification of works by a qualified professional and being completed and on evidence of defrayal of expenditure.
- In exceptional circumstances, payments will be made on completion (certification and payment) of stages of work. In these cases an assessment of the risks will be carried out.
- There is some risk that owners will not be found to take up the grants, however, the intervention rate has been set at a level that should minimise this risk. The programme operating in Egremont is currently attracting good take up.

The scheme will be initially administered by the MTI office in Egremont and the Regeneration Team in Cleator Moor. Should succession funding for these posts not be found, there is a chance that the grants programmes will not have been completed within the current planned periods for these posts (end March 2008).

Full cost recovery of the Council's costs in providing support services are an additional cost to the programme and will have to be considered by the applicants and their funders to assess the impact of the reduced funding available and targets achieved. As there is no viable alternative to the Council to provide the services requested if there is not agreement on cost recovery the programmes may not go ahead.

Key Decision Status

- Financial: N/A
- Ward: N/A

Other Ward Implications: None

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Egremont and Area Regeneration Partnership is currently implementing a programme of grants to bring disused buildings in the conservation area back into use. These grants are being administered as part of the Market Town Initiative Programme, for which the Council is the Accountable Body.
- 1.2 Three of the four grants budgeted for within the Market Town Initiative have been committed, with the first building having been successfully brought back into use (at No50 South Street) creating five new jobs in the town centre.
- 1.3 Three further building owners are in discussion with the MTI office and are expected to make applications in the New Year. A minimum of four further properties are eligible for the grants.
- 1.4 The project is helping to remedy the most debilitating factor in bringing Egremont's flagging town centre back to economic viability, by restoring these blight buildings creating attractive premises for town centre businesses.
- 1.5 The programme in Cleator Moor follows the model established in the Council run Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme and the MTI model running in Egremont.
- 1.6 The larger grants are supplemented by a programme of smaller shop front facelift grants for windows, signage and decoration, in order to get best value from the larger programme.

2. ARGUMENT

- 2.1 Mini-Master Plans for Cleator Moor and Egremont were commissioned by the Council and published in autumn 2004. These identified the need for reuse of buildings in both town centres as part of wider regeneration work.
- 2.2 The buildings grants aim to:
 - Upgrade commercial and business premises, bringing up to four properties back into use;
 - Improve retail and commercial shop fronts to improve the image of the town and village centres;
 - Support the creation of new business and jobs in the area through providing upgraded business accommodation, and
 - Help to improve the image of the area by tackling dilapidated and derelict buildings as part of an overarching area strategy.
- 2.3 Target Outputs have been set for each programme, to create eight jobs and two businesses, through provision of upgraded premises.
- 2.4 Applications have been submitted to West Lakes Renaissance for programmes of four larger grants of up to £35,000 (at 60% intervention rate on eligible expenditure) and for ten smaller shop front grants of up to £2,000 (at 60% intervention rate).
- 2.5 In each case fees for administering the programmes have been applied for at 10%. This will allow professional advice to be taken as required and for officers' time in promoting, developing and monitoring the programmes.

- 2.6 The application for Egremont has been approved and the one for Cleator Moor is pending.
- 2.7 The Market Town Initiative in Egremont, for which the Council is the Accountable Body, runs until March 31st 2008.
- 2.8 A regeneration officer and support officer were appointed in Cleator Moor and are funded in post until December 2008.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 Supporting the grants in Egremont will allow the continuation of a programme of grants that has so far brought one building back into use after over a decade in semi-dereliction and will bring two further premises back into use in the next six months. Three further buildings are in various stages of development towards reuse and applications for grants. Only one of these will be able to be developed without the programme of grants agreed by West Lakes Renaissance. The Council's support of the continuing grants programme will enable this work to continue in Egremont.
- 3.2 Supporting the grants in Cleator Moor will allow that town to take up potential grant funding from West Lakes Renaissance and to continue work begun there under the Heritage Lottery Fund scheme.
- 3.3 There is no current alternative to Copeland Borough Council providing the services required in order for these proposals to progress.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Supporting these programmes as Accountable Body will enable vital work to proceed in the town centres of Egremont and Cleator Moor, leveraging West Lakes Renaissance and private investment and helping to fulfil several Corporate Plan goals.
- 4.2 Supporting these programmes will also help to support other Council programmes, such as the Gateways projects.
- 4.3 Supporting this project will allow the building blocks to be put in place to move Egremont and Cleator Moor forward through diversification of the economy, in line with the Council's regeneration and economic strategies.

List of Appendices

None

List of Background Documents:

Mini-Master Plans for Egremont and Cleator Moor
 Programme bid documents to West Lakes Renaissance
 Regeneration North East Copeland and Egremont MTI
 Board approval for projects to proceed

List of Consultees:

Cllr Geil
 Corporate Team, Paul Robson