

WHITEHAVEN TOWN CENTRE TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE BID

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Cath Giel

LEAD OFFICER: Julie Betteridge, Head of Development Strategy

REPORT AUTHOR: Tony Pomfret, Development Control Manager

SUMMARY: This report notes the decision on the Council's Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) application and suggests an alternative approach to take this initiative forward.

Members are requested to note the contents of this report. A further report will be presented following further discussions with potential funding partners.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Paul Butler Associates, conservation consultants, were appointed to prepare a First Stage Application for a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI), for Whitehaven Town Centre. The work was partly funded by West Lakes Renaissance and partly by the Council. The submission was submitted in November 2008 and a decision was made in April this year, but this was subject to an embargo due to the impending elections on 4th June.

2. DECISION

2.1 Disappointingly, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) decided not to offer a first round pass for the THI application. The HLF pointed out that demand for the funds meant that they could not support every application that meets their criteria. There were 23 bids nationally seeking over £30 million, whereas only £10 million was available. The HLF Board therefore had to take decisions on more projects than the available budget could cope with.

2.2 Board members recognised the significant heritage needs of the conservation area and the contribution that a THI scheme would make to the regeneration of Whitehaven. However, there were concerns about the capacity of the Council to deliver and maintain the benefits of a THI scheme in the long term. In particular, this relates to the lack of dedicated and full time conservation and enforcement officers.

3. THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

3.1 The Council has already put in place a number of measures to address the issues raised by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

- 3.2 Instead of appointing a Conservation Officer the Council has recently engaged the North of England Civic Trust (NECT) to provide conservation and design advice for the next 3 years. This contract has the advantage of providing high quality advice from three senior consultants with expertise in architecture, urban design and heritage planning. The trust provides assistance in pre-application discussions and in assessing the design and heritage merits of planning applications.
- 3.3 The Council has also agreed to the filling of the vacant post of Enforcement Officer in the Development Control Section. This post has been released through the vacancy management process following a significant increase in the number of planning applications currently be submitted, hence reducing the capacity of our planning staff to undertake additional enforcement activity. This post is currently being advertised. This post is currently for two years.
- 3.4 The Council has commenced work on a dilapidated buildings strategy and a notice has been served under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, to seek improvements to the front of a property in Market Place.
- 3.5 Action has also been taken under Section 77 of the Dangerous Structures provisions of the Building Act, to deal with derelict buildings in the town centre.
- 3.6 The Council has also agreed to use its Compulsory Purchase powers to assemble brown field sites for the regeneration of town centre sites, working with West Lakes Renaissance.
- 3.7 It is hoped that these commitments, together with those set out in the complimentary report regarding the Conservation Areas Studies and Management Plan will serve to demonstrate commitment to our town's heritage, and that future funding bids will be considered more favorably as a result.

4. THE WAY FORWARD

- 4.1 An alternative approach is being developed to deliver the proposed programme of conservation works included in the THI bid. This will involve discussions with English Heritage and West Lakes Renaissance to devise a programme of funding for heritage improvements which could be funded over a number of years commencing in 2010/2011.
- 4.2 A list of potential projects is included in Appendix 1.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

- 5.1 Much of the actions already taken as set out above are from within recognised budgets and already accounted for. It is likely, as was envisaged should the THI bid had been successful that it will be necessary

for Copeland to contribute to the implementation of some of the projects as detailed in Appendix, the detail of which will follow as the projects are developed.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

6.1 This initiative delivers to our prosperity agenda in the borough through enabling physical improvements to the town centre and contributing a heritage led approach to regeneration of key opportunity sites.

List of Appendices:

List of potential conservation projects

List of Background Documents:

Planning Policy Guidance Note: PPG15 Historic Environment

List of Consultees:

Corporate Team
Cllr Cath Giel
Cllr Geoff Blackwell
Cllr Bill Southward
Len Cockcroft

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed. This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	Supports
Impact on Sustainability	Supports
Impact on Rural Proofing	No direct impacts
Health and Safety Implications	No direct impacts
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	No direct impacts
Children and Young Persons Implications	No direct impacts
Human Rights Act Implications	No direct impacts
Monitoring Officer Comments	Report notes action being taken; legal advice will be required on specific actions arising from 3.4 to 3.6
S151 Officer Comments	No comment at this stage

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision NO

APPENDIX 1 LIST OF POTENTIAL CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Programme	Priority project repair and reuse	Public realm works – links between harbour and town centre	Shop front repairs	Grants to restore architectural features	Bring vacant historic floorspace back into use	Gap sites
Year 1	YMCA building Irish Street	Adjacent to Albion Square	Market Place/ James Street	Market Place/ James Street	King Street/Lowther Street	
Year 2	53 Market Place	Breakthrough King Street to Strand Street	Swingpump Lane/ Strand Street	Swingpump Lane/ Strand Street	Market Place/ James Street/ Lowther Street	
Year 3	Feasibility Study former Pier Master's House, Old Quay	Links adjacent to bus depot, Duke Street	King Street/ Tangier Street	Tangier Street/ Strand Street, King Street	Throughout town centre	Swingpump Lane
Year 4	Former Pier Master's House, Old Quay	Other links to harbour	Throughout town centre	Duke Street, New Town	Throughout town centre	Throughout town centre
Year 5	6 Market Place	Other links to harbour	Throughout town centre	Throughout town centre	Throughout town centre	Throughout town centre