

WHITEHAVEN OLD TOWN TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Hugh Branney
LEAD OFFICER: Julie Betteridge Head of Regeneration and Community
REPORT AUTHOR: Diane Ward Regeneration Projects Officer

WHAT BENEFITS WILL THESE PROPOSALS BRING TO COPELAND RESIDENTS?

The proposed Whitehaven THI scheme aims to reconnect the fringe to the core of the town centre, strengthening the connection of Albion Square and the harbour with the commercial core and thus increasing footfall into this marginal area of the town. Increasing the economic activity of the area will bring greater choice to residents shopping in the town, increase heritage skills levels amongst the local building sector and local residents, bring historic buildings back into appropriate and sustainable use and improve the public realm within the town.

WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE EXECUTIVE?

(eg Key Decision, Policy recommendation for Full Council, at request of Council,etc.)

To inform executive of the Whitehaven Old Town THI Stage 2 funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive are requested:

To endorse the Whitehaven Old Town THI Stage 2 funding application for £659,300 to the Heritage Lottery Fund and confirm its acceptance to take on the role and function of Accountable Body.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The stage 1 application was approved by Heritage Lottery Fund in May 2012. This released development funding from HLF (up to £48,000, matched with £25,000 CBC funding) to support the development of a stage 2 THI bid
- 1.2 North of England Civic Trust (NECT) were appointed through a procurement process to support the Economic & Community Regeneration Team develop the stage 2 bid.

- 1.3 The Stage 2 development has been supported by a Whitehaven THI Partnership drawing local businesses and agencies together to inform the bid.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The THI scheme, if approved by HLF, will be a five year programme during which grants will be offered to property owners within the THI area (see map) to help with repairs, heritage reinstatements and bringing vacant floor space back into commercial use. The Funding will be spent on staff costs and third-party grants (buildings, public realm, skills training). The majority of the funding will be spent on building grants (£1,081,476). All owners will organise their own works. No grant will be agreed unless they meet the criteria set out by the HLF, meet the conditions of the grant from BEC and meet CBC contract standing orders.

- 2.2 All grants will require property owners to contribute to the total costs of the heritage and repairs work required on each property. Priority buildings, identified from full surveys and heritage assessments as part of the Stage 2 development activity, will be targeted in year's one and two. These are:

- Former YMCA (vacant)
- 32 James Street (vacant)
- 45 Market Place (vacant)
- 10 Market Place (current ground floor use but are in very poor condition)
- 11 Market Place (current ground floor use but are in very poor condition)
- 48-50 Market Place (current ground floor use but are in very poor condition).

A further six properties have been identified which could receive a grant should the priority building owners not take up the offer of grant support.

- 2.3 Alongside the building grants there will also be limited works to the public realm on James Street and a programme of Heritage Skills Training available for contractors, apprentices and the general public.
- 2.4 A THI Officer will be employed to manage the programme, all costs to be covered from within the scheme.
- 2.5 CBC in agreeing to receive Stage 2 development funding have previously agreed to act as Accountable Body for the THI scheme. Match-funding for the bid has been secured from:
- Britain's Energy Coast £394,600
 - Copeland Borough Council £250,000
 - Cumbria County Council £50,000

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 THI schemes are specific to HLF. Without the Stage 2 submission HLF will not support the scheme and the other funding would be lost to Whitehaven Town Centre improvements. Applications to other funders would not secure such a scheme.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Council has been consistent in its approach to maintaining the conservation of Whitehaven's built heritage. This application to HLF for the Old Whitehaven area as a Townscape Heritage Initiative will offer strong complementarity to existing developments including Albion Square office development, the Town Team plans, improvements to Whitehaven Market and Market Hall, the Beacon Partnership, Whitehaven Marina improvements and other regeneration development plans across the Town
- 4.2 Executive endorsement of the bid and confirmation of the Council's acceptance to be Accountable Body would strengthen the Stage 2 approach to HLF.

5. STATUTORY OFFICER COMMENTS

- 5.1 The Monitoring Officer's comments are: Bid requires approval by Executive following approval of Council acting as accountable body.
- 5.2 The Section 151 Officer's comments are: The council is accepting the role of accountable body and as such needs to ensure the money is spent appropriately. This will include ensuring all expenditure is in line with the criteria and conditions in the funding agreements and follows contract standing orders. There are risks associated with accountable body status and the possibility of clawback but this should be mitigated if the scheme design is compliant with the funders requirements. The final VAT position will be established in the next phase of the project.
- 5.3 EIA comment: The THI will enable additional heritage activity including public realm within the Old Town area of Whitehaven increasing access by the public to improved heritage in our key conservation area.
- 5.4 Policy Framework Comment: The proposals outlined in the report support the development of Whitehaven Old Town in the wider context of regeneration around Albion Square and the harbour. It is anticipated that this will strengthen the competitive advantage of the town centre, which will be reflected in the Council's forthcoming Growth Strategy.

5.5 Other consultee comments, if any: There has been strong consultation activity on the Whitehaven Old Town THI issues and proposals with local businesses, residents and groups. A Partnership Board for the THI has been put in place during stage 2 development and has advised and endorsed the stage 2 application to the HLF.

6. HOW WILL THE PROPOSALS BE PROJECT MANAGED AND HOW ARE THE RISKS GOING TO BE MANAGED?

6.1 Once the bid is submitted at the end of May 2013 no further work is required until the application outcome is known. If successful, a report will be taken to Executive and Full Council to authorise receipt and spend of HLF and BEC grant for the five year programme. An early spend action will be to recruit a dedicated THI Officer as soon as possible to deliver the scheme.

6.2 The programme Risk Register will be submitted as part of the HLF bid with mitigation processes identified.

7. WHAT MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OR OUTPUTS WILL ARISE FROM THIS REPORT?

7.1 HLF bid submission with all other match funding in place. The outcome of the bid will be known in September 2013 and is a key part of the Whitehaven regeneration portfolio.

List of Appendices



Appendix A - THI Area

List of Background Documents:

Stage 1 application, Stage 2 working documents including consultation events and activity feedback, Stage 2 final draft bid.



Eligible Buildings within the THI Area

-  THI Boundary
-  Eligible Buildings

Copeland Borough Council
 The Copeland Centre
 Catherine Street
 Whitehaven
 Cumbria CA28 7SJ

