

## **HAIG / COASTAL FRINGE PROJECT**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Councillor M Ashbrook  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Michael Tichford, Head of Regeneration  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** Michael Tichford, Head of Regeneration

### **Summary and Recommendation:**

It is recommended that members:

- Agree to the transfer of the Haig project lead consultant contract to the Land Restoration Trust.
- Agree to the transfer of accountable body function for the Haig project to the Land Restoration Trust, subject to VAT being recoverable.
- Agree in principle to the transfer of the freehold of the Haig / Coastal Fringe project area to the Land Restoration Trust and delegate officers to negotiate acceptable terms.
- Agree that the present revenue cost of maintenance of the Haig site is identified and set aside to invest in the cliff and coast zone, which would be retained by the Council.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Haig project has been reported to previous Executive meetings. This phase of the project, funded by English Partnerships (EP), seeks to undertake the two following major items of work:
- Improvements to the cliff top environment and candlestick area, therefore creating better access to the site from the harbour and town centre
  - Improvements to the Haig Mining Museum
- 1.2 The total project budget is £4.08m, of which £1.6 million is allocated to improvements to the cliff top area, and this element must be completed by the end of March 2008. This report relates to this element of the project only. The project is one of the four strands of activity within the Whitehaven Regeneration Programme, a Corporate Plan objective.
- 1.3 The Council is currently the accountable body for the EP funding and is the client for the works, carried out through a design and lead consultant arrangement with Entec. The Land Restoration Trust (LRT), working locally with the National Trust (NT), will maintain the site in perpetuity

using the income from an endowment to be funded by EP and held by LRT (the endowment fund covers all LRT sites under management) .

- 1.4 The Haig site is owned by the Borough Council and a lease is in preparation with the LRT.
- 1.5 Since the fatal accident on South Beach EP has decided that the project boundary should remain as contained within the Economic Appraisal and as approved by EP in 2005, to exclude any works being undertaken to the seaward side of the cliff top. An offer was also made to forward fund fencing along the entire cliff top. The Council rejected this and is currently working up alternative proposals to ensure visitor safety in the area.

## **2. ARGUMENT**

- 2.1 It was proposed in 2006 that the LRT take a stronger role in project delivery and potentially act as client to the works, as well as taking on responsibility for future maintenance of the site. EP has now approved the principle to examine in detail with all partners the potential for LRT to act as delivery agent to the Haig project.
- 2.2 Officers are still of the view that LRT acting as delivery agent for the site will give the best chance of successfully completing to the tight timescale of the end of March 2008. However, there are still issues to be resolved around transfer of the contract with the lead design consultant and the accountable body role. The biggest stumbling block at present is the issue of VAT, which must be recoverable for the proposal to proceed.
- 2.3 In conjunction with the proposal for an enhanced role for the LRT is a request that the Council consider transferring the freehold to them, not just the leasehold which is currently being negotiated. However, this would only be the revised project area that does not include the cliff.
- 2.4 The investment on the Haig site and the arrangements for safeguarding its future would benefit from there being resource available to invest in the cliff area, outside of EP's project scope. There is potential, therefore, for the Council to identify money that is currently used to maintain the Haig site which could be used to maintain the cliff area outside of EP's investment boundary.

### **3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED**

- 3.1 In regard to the managing the project the options are to continue with the current arrangement with the Council acting as client for the main contract and accountable body on the Haig or for the LRT taking on this role.
- 3.2 With regard to the ownership of the site the Council could decide to retain the entire site, agree to releasing the freehold on the cliff top area or require the LRT to take on the whole of the area, including the cliffs. LRT have already indicated their unwillingness to take the cliffs because of the liability that they would inherit and there is no endowment from EP that would cover this area.

### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The transfer of responsibility for delivery of the Haig project to the LRT is the preferred option as it will bring greater expertise and resource than the Council can currently give to ensure the successful completion of the project. It will also give the LRT as the agency with responsibility for maintenance of the site the best opportunity to ensure continuity through the process of design and implementation to meet their, and the partners, future needs.
- 4.2 Should this proposal be agreed a suitable transfer point from the Council to LRT would be once the design phase is signed off and the delivery phase commences if the issues surrounding recoverable VAT can be resolved. Due to the project timescales and the forthcoming elections agreement is required in April to give time for the necessary arrangements to be put in place for this to be achieved.
- 4.3 The transfer of the freehold of the Haig project site to LRT is recommended as this will assist in ensuring that the Council's objectives for the area are met whilst freeing the Council from the responsibilities of ownership of the site.

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

- 5.1 The direct financial implications of this proposal should be minimal, the project being externally funded. The indirect implications are that potential liabilities will be the responsibility of the LRT rather than the Council.
- 5.2 The project will continue to require considerable input from Council officers should the recommendation be agreed.

## **6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1 Responsibility for project management will transfer to the LRT. Risks will lessen with the proposal.

## **7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN**

- 7.1 This project is an objective within the Corporate Plan.

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Map of Haig Project Site Area – Indicative Boundary only.

### **List of Background Documents:**

BDP master plan  
Contract between CBC and Entec  
Draft lease agreement between CBC and LRT for the Haig open space area

### **List of Consultees:**

Executive members, Corporate Team

### **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	None
Impact on Sustainability	Could assist in safeguarding the site as open space
Impact on Rural Proofing	None
Health and Safety Implications	None
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	None
Children and Young Persons Implications	None
Human Rights Act Implications	None

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