

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

20 APRIL 2006

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Regeneration & Transport – Lead Cabinet Member-Cllr Cook

PRIORITISATION OF HERITAGE PROJECTS

1. Summary

The Council and its partners have been preparing a number of bids for Heritage Lottery Fund. The two most advanced projects are Preston Hall Winter Gardens and Thornaby Town Hall. The regional office of Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), based in Newcastle, has approached the Local Authorities in the North East of England, requesting projects submitted for their support to be taken from a list of heritage priorities as a result of regional budget reductions being imposed on HLF. The impact of this is that HLF is now unable to fund a greater than £250,000 contribution to any project through the main grants programme and will only be able to support one project from each Local Authority Area at any given time.

This report outlines the programmes operated by HLF and gives a suggested way forward for the schemes.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:-

1. The attached list of projects is agreed as priority order for applications for Heritage Lottery Funding subject to consultation with members and subsequent agreement with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Transport and Corporate Director, Development and Neighbourhood Services.
2. That Council Officers continue to pursue alternative funding for the remaining projects.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

This recommendation has been put forward as the most effective method of securing funding for the Borough that will ensure improved access to heritage and the conservation of the borough's assets.

4. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (paragraph 8) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the

Member's judgement of the public interest (paragraph 10 of the code of conduct).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held, whilst the matter is being considered; not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (paragraph 12 of the Code).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc.; whether or not they are a member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting, and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room during consideration of the relevant item.

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SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The attached list of projects is agreed as priority order for applications for Heritage Lottery Funding subject to consultation with members and subsequent agreement with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Transport and Corporate Director, Development and Neighbourhood Services.
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DETAIL

1. All Local Authorities have been asked to provide HLF with a list, prioritising projects for support.
2. There are four main programmes operated by HLF, three of these, (National Grants, Your Heritage and Townscape Heritage Initiative) are currently not subject to any restrictions. Within these, proposals for Preston Hall and Park, Stockton Town Centre Conservation Area and small community grants are not at risk and being encouraged by HLF. The Regional Main Grants Programme is subject to budget pressures and where

prioritisation is necessary. A full list in the proposed priority order is given as an annex to this report at **Appendix 1**.

Heritage Lottery Fund Main Grants Programme

3. This programme supports projects through a contribution between £50,000 and £2m. The recent changes to the HLF budgets have had a major impact with HLF now recommending that they are only able to provide a maximum contribution of £250,000 with only one project being delivered by any given local authority at any one time. There are currently two project applications lodged with HLF for Preston Hall Winter Gardens and Thornaby Town Hall, both of which are Grade II listed.

Preston Hall Winter Gardens

4. As a forerunner to the main restoration work at Preston Hall and Park, this early piece of work will restore and reopen the Winter Gardens at Preston Hall. The fabric of the Winter Gardens is seriously damaged with significant concern over how the weather will affect the stability if nothing is done in the short term. If we are to attract the £3-4 million in the next few years, which we expect to need to revitalise the Park and Hall as our most important visitor attraction, we must begin the process now, improving the very visible Winter Garden and showing that we value the Park and Hall.
5. The proposal being put forward will see the Winter Gardens made safe and reopened for a structured programme of activities that centre on Victorian planting and horticulture. A friends group of local representatives are supporting the proposal for this popular site for weddings and other ceremonial events and detailed historic planting schedules having been worked out by horticultural specialists.
6. The total project cost is £308,771, made up of HLF contribution £208,957, volunteer labour £12,500, Stockton Council £87,314.
7. Contingency arrangements if the bid is unsuccessful could result in the Council Capital Programme being approached to fund the work in its entirety.

Thornaby Town Hall

8. The fabric of Thornaby Town Hall has been deteriorating since it fell into disuse in the late 1980's. The loss of the lead from the roof is a significant contributor to this with the temporary repair work reducing the damage rather than removing the source entirely. The only current use for the building is Thornaby Town Council who occupy a single room on the ground floor, the deteriorating condition of the building may put that use at risk.
9. A project has been developed that will see the disused building and four extensions that make up the building group of Thornaby Town Hall being fully restored and refurbished to provide business incubator workspace for the creative industries and a community heritage centre for local activities and displays. This link between community and business support activity is in line with the recommendations being proposed by the Government backed Local Enterprise Growth Initiative.
10. The total project cost is £2.5m, the total HLF contribution required is £585,000.
11. Contingency arrangements without the HLF contribution could see a two-phased approach brought forward. This would deliver the business space in the extensions in the first phase along with securing the fabric of the original town hall through a new roof and disabled access, at a cost of approximately £1.6M that could be primarily funded from Single Programme and European Regional Development Funds. The heritage

restoration work for the community heritage centre within original building would form a future second phase of work. Discussions are taking place with community organisations (Thornaby Five Lamps) for increased involvement and delivery of this approach. Thornaby Town Council have recently written to confirm their full support for this phased approach to securing the refurbishment of the buildings.

Cultural Considerations

12. Both projects have a unique cultural value.
13. The museums strategy for the Borough prioritises Preston Hall as the primary museum facility, providing formal and informal learning and leisure opportunities for schools and community groups across the Borough and beyond. The identity and history of Stockton, borne of river based trading and boosted by the invention of railways, is embodied by Preston Hall and Park, built by a shipping magnate and bounded by the Tees on one side and the Stockton Darlington Railway line on the other.
14. Thornaby's old town centre played an important part in the area's growth, and its identity is still a source of local pride. The Town Hall and adjoining buildings represent a last vestige of the old townscape that English Heritage has recommended be conserved.

Priority Process

15. The recommendation for Preston Hall Winter Gardens to be the priority has been based on the agreed museums strategy, future benefits, contingency arrangements and the level of support possible from Heritage Lottery Fund.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

16. As both of these properties are Grade II listed, Stockton Council has a legal requirement for their upkeep.

RISK ASSESSMENT

17. Failure to agree a priority for heritage funding in Borough will result in neither application being appraised by Heritage Lottery Fund.
18. As Victorian buildings in under or no use, there are risks associated with no action being taken. Further deterioration may result in the complete collapse in both cases with recommendations from Council Surveyors noting that they buildings are in an unstable state.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

19. The recommendation noted will contribute to the delivery of the Community Strategy. Thornaby Town Hall business units will improve the support structures available to new business and increase employment levels in the borough while the facilities at Preston hall Winter Gardens will contribute to the top ten improvement priorities through providing better leisure facilities.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

20. A briefing note on Thornaby Town Hall has been circulated to all Thornaby Members, Eastern Area Board has been advised and a presentation given to Thornaby Town Council. As a result, Thornaby Town Council have recently written to confirm their full support for this phased approach to securing the refurbishment of the buildings as set out in paragraph 11 above.

21. All members are to be consulted on the full list of priority projects

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Background Papers

Thornaby Town Hall Business Plan and associated applications to Heritage Lottery Fund
Preston Hall Winter Gardens and associated applications to Heritage Lottery Fund
Stockton Council Museums Strategy

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Mandale and Victoria - Cllrs. Walmsley, Trainer and Norton

Eaglescliffe – Cllrs. Cherrett, Fletcher (J) and Rigg

Property

Both of these projects will address the property needs identified for the Borough. Better and more business space has been identified through survey and consultation work and the specific incubator space is identified as a priority for Stockton Middlesbrough Initiative and One Northeast Regional Economic Strategy.

The Museums Strategy brings together the needs of the borough to invest in cultural heritage and identifies Preston Hall Winter Gardens as intrinsic to the future priority at Preston Hall and Park.