

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

11 MARCH 2010

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Arts, Leisure & Culture – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mrs Womphrey

TEES HERITAGE PARK

1. Summary

There is evidence of strong local community support for the development of a Tees Heritage Park and the concept is now firmly embedded within the Borough's Local Development Framework Core Strategy and draft Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Through the Stockton River Corridors Project and the River Users Group, and in liaison with the Friends of Tees Heritage Park, Phase 1 project proposals for the Heritage Park have been developed. These proposals include a series of projects to improve public access, create attractive 'gateway features' and 'rest areas', and interpret the landscape and heritage of the park. These projects would be delivered largely on Council-owned sites which comprise a 'core area' within the wider park boundary. These include existing greenspaces such as Preston Park, Black Bobbies Field, The Holmes, Bassleton Wood, Bassleton Beck / Thornaby Woods and land adjacent to Queen Elizabeth Way.

With the support of Stockton Borough Council and Groundwork North East, the Friends of Tees Heritage Park have submitted a funding application to the BIG Lottery Community Spaces Programme, seeking a 'Flagship Grant' of £450,000 to fund delivery of these projects. The outcome of this funding application will be known in April 2010. If successful, the grant would be paid to Groundwork North East, who in turn would be responsible for delivering the projects between June 2010 and October 2011, with a high level of local community involvement.

2. Recommendations

1. That Members note and support the Phase 1 project proposals for the Tees Heritage Park and the funding application to the BIG Lottery Community Spaces programme.
2. That delegation is given to the Principal Solicitor, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Arts, Leisure and Culture, to enter into any legal agreements required to ensure successful delivery of the Phase 1 project proposals outlined in this report.
3. That subject to funding and further local consultation the Phase 1 project proposals for the Heritage Park are implemented.
4. That plans are developed for future phases of the Heritage Park and these are brought to Cabinet for consideration at a later stage, as and when funding is identified.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To ensure that should funding be secured through the BIG Lottery, the project partners are in a position to deliver the Phase 1 project proposals for the Tees Heritage Park as outlined in this report, subject to local consultation on individual schemes where required.

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 (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must 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 (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SUMMARY

There is evidence of strong local community support for the development of a Tees Heritage Park and the concept is now firmly embedded within the Borough's Local Development Framework Core Strategy and draft Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Through the Stockton River Corridors Project and the River Users Group, and in liaison with the Friends of Tees Heritage Park, Phase 1 project proposals for the Heritage Park have been developed. These proposals include a series of projects to improve public access, create attractive 'gateway features' and 'rest areas', and interpret the landscape and heritage of the park. These projects would be delivered largely on Council-owned sites which comprise a 'core area' within the wider park boundary. These include existing greenspaces such as Preston Park, Black Bobbies Field, The Holmes, Bassleton Wood, Bassleton Beck / Thornaby Woods and land adjacent to Queen Elizabeth Way.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members note and support the Phase 1 project proposals for the Tees Heritage Park and the funding application to the BIG Lottery Community Spaces programme.
2. That delegation is given to the Principal Solicitor, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Arts, Leisure and Culture, to enter into any legal agreements required to ensure successful delivery of the Phase 1 project proposals outlined in this report.
3. That subject to funding and further local consultation the Phase 1 project proposals for the Heritage Park are implemented.
4. That plans are developed for future phases of the Heritage Park and these are brought to Cabinet for consideration at a later stage, as and when funding is identified.

DETAIL

Background

1. The concept of a Heritage Park, incorporating the countryside within the River Tees corridor between Stockton and Yarm, is firmly embedded within the Borough's emerging Local Development Framework Core Strategy and draft Green Infrastructure Strategy.
2. The plan in the **Appendix** shows the indicative boundary for the Tees Heritage Park. However, in the longer term it may be appropriate to extend this boundary to include other sections of the river corridor; for example, downstream towards the Tees Barrage and upstream towards Aislaby.
3. The broad objectives for the park include:
 - Conserving and enhancing the landscape, biodiversity and cultural assets of the river corridor.
 - Increasing opportunities for sport and recreation, and contributing to the local and Tees Valley tourism offer.
 - Developing the infrastructure for sustainable travel; for example, via footpaths, cycle routes, on the river itself, and providing links to the public transport network.
 - Providing attractive, high quality green settings for planned regeneration projects.
 - Promoting understanding and community involvement.
4. In April 2008 Cabinet approved the recommendations from the Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee review of River Based Activities. This included a recommendation to develop 'the River Tees Park proposals to an action plan stage' and over the subsequent two years this work has been progressing, largely through two newly established partnerships:
 - The River Users Group: a broad partnership established to ensure a more coordinated approach to the development and access issues, promotion and marketing, land and river management, and recreational use of the river.
 - The Stockton River Corridors Project: a partnership between Stockton Borough Council, Environment Agency, Groundwork North East and British Waterways.
5. The Friends of Tees Heritage Park, a community group with a large local membership, have also played a key role in shaping the Heritage Park proposals and seeking wider community support for the initiative.

Phase 1 project proposals

6. Outline project proposals for developing the first phase of the Heritage Park are set out below. These have been developed through the above partnerships and comprise a wide range of community-based projects. Locations are identified on the plan in the **Appendix**:
 - Artist designed gateway features – defining the boundaries of the park, interpreting the area's heritage and creating an enhanced 'sense of place'. Local organisations and schools would be invited to work alongside the artist(s) in helping to create these unique features, which are likely to be constructed in natural materials to reflect the landscape and heritage of the park (*locations B, C, D, H, I, J*).
 - Rest and informal play areas - specially designed places where visitors to the park can meet, relax and enjoy the park's landscapes (*locations A, B, F, G, I and J*).

- A network of new and improved footpaths and cycleways with associated signage – to be developed as part of a wider access network, making it easier for local people and visitors to enjoy this special area (*locations A, E, F, H, I, J*).
 - Environmental improvements, including tree planting and provision of bird boxes and otter holts.
 - Interpretation projects – using a range of innovative approaches and new technologies to tell the special story of the park; its wildlife, history and landscapes. This would include the use of ‘bluetooth’ technology to provide information at the key gateways and provision of web-based information. The project would also utilise information derived from a proposed oral history project, to be coordinated by the Council’s Museums staff and the Teesside City Learning Centre.
7. The project will help to bring about a more integrated approach to the development, management and promotion of all the greenspaces and path networks in this area. This includes sites managed by Stockton Borough Council (Preston Park, Queen Elizabeth Way cycle corridor, Black Bobbies Field, The Holmes, Bassleton Wood, Bassleton Beck and Thornaby Wood) and Tees Valley Wildlife Trust (Bowesfield Nature Reserve and Preston Farm Nature Reserve – the latter site being developed during 2010).
8. As well as delivering environmental improvements on the ground the project will provide opportunities for local people of all ages to get involved in a range of exciting activities. and shape their local environment. Through the project children, young people and adults will learn new skills, develop their understanding of the local area and play an active role in shaping their local environment. Building on the existing work of the Friends of Tees Heritage Park, the project will foster a sense of local pride and ‘community ownership’ of the Heritage Park.

Community Spaces grant application

9. Initial consultations with key partners and via Area Partnership Boards and Town/Parish Councils demonstrated strong local support for the Phase 1 project proposals and on that basis a funding application has been submitted to BIG Lottery’s Community Spaces programme, seeking a ‘Flagship Grant’ of £450,000. In order to undertake the necessary community consultation work and meet the deadline for the grant application it was not possible to secure Cabinet approval in advance of that submission.
10. Local authorities and other statutory bodies are not eligible to apply for funding through this grant programme. Therefore the Friends of Tees Heritage Park have submitted the application, and if successful Groundwork North East would act as the ‘accountable body’ and be responsible for project delivery.
11. The outcome of the funding application will be known in April 2010. If successful the Phase 1 projects would be delivered between June 2010 and October 2011.

Longer term development of the Tees Heritage Park

12. The project proposals set out in this report represent only the first phase in the longer-term development of the Heritage Park. For example, it is proposed that in the future additional gateway features would be installed at other sites beyond the Phase 1 project area, and there would also be significant benefits to achieving improved public access to other sections of the river corridor; on land and via the river itself.
13. Realigning some sections of the Teesdale Way to run parallel to the river and deliver full linear access to the whole river corridor remains a future aspiration. There is also great potential to make greater use of the river for sport and recreation; to enhance the

landscape and biodiversity of the river corridor; and interpret the heritage of the remainder of the park area.

14. It is suggested, therefore, that plans for future phases of the Heritage Park project are developed through the Stockton River Corridors Project and the River Users Group and presented to Cabinet at a later stage.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15. If the current funding application is successful the Community Spaces grant would cover the costs of the Phase 1 capital works to be delivered by Groundwork North East, plus the associated revenue costs associated with project delivery (for example, landscape design fees, project management costs and promotional materials). These revenue costs would be capped at 25% of the total grant award of £450,000.
16. An element of match funding must be secured for any Community Spaces Flagship Grant. In this case it is proposed that all or some of the £150,000 Local Transport Plan funds earmarked for the development of a new cycleway (to be constructed within corridor E on the plan in the **Appendix** and extending to Preston Park) will provide the required match funding. In addition the involvement of Stockton Council officers has been identified as an 'in-kind' contribution to the project.
17. All works are to be implemented on Stockton Council-owned land or adopted highway, which is currently accessible to the public and where existing arrangements are in place to maintain paths and open space. However it is recognised that some additional resources would need to be allocated for the additional inspection and maintenance costs associated with the new features. It is anticipated that these costs can be met from existing revenue budgets, but careful consideration needs to be given to the revenue implications of any future capital projects under the Heritage Park initiative.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

18. Stockton Council is not itself eligible to submit the grant application or to be the direct recipient of the BIG Lottery funding under the Community Spaces programme. Therefore the Council would be required to enter into a Tripartite Deed of Dedication with the Friends of Tees Heritage Park (the grant applicant) and Groundwork North East (the 'accountable body'). This Deed would apply to the land where works are to be undertaken (i.e. the indicative areas shaded black in the plan on the **Appendix**) and would in effect mean that the Council was dedicating these areas to the project for the 20-year asset monitoring period stipulated by BIG Lottery.
19. In addition the Council would be required to enter into a Partnership Agreement with the Friends of Tees Heritage Park and Groundwork North East to formalise the arrangements by which the project would be delivered and monitored.

RISK ASSESSMENT

20. The development and delivery of this project is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

21. The project will contribute towards delivery of all the key themes within the Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-2021):

Economic Regeneration and Transport, e.g.

- Stimulating inward investment by creating attractive environments and improving image

- Promoting nature and activity-based tourism
- Providing improved cycle and footpath networks to encourage sustainable transport
- Encouraging better use of the River Tees

Environment and Housing, e.g.

- Creating improved and more accessible open spaces
- Improving design quality
- Conserving our natural resources including biodiversity

Community Safety, e.g.

- Reducing crime and the fear of crime through well-designed and well-used greenspaces

Children and Young People, e.g.

- Involving children and young people in shaping their environment
- Providing safe and stimulating spaces to play

Healthier Communities and Adults, e.g.

- Promoting healthy lifestyles, including walking, cycling and active recreation

Stronger Communities, e.g.

- Providing opportunities for community involvement in the management and development of the Heritage Park, increasing pride in the local area

Older Adults. e.g.

- Providing leisure and recreational opportunities
- Providing opportunities for older people to get involved in environment and heritage projects

Arts, Leisure and Culture, e.g.

- Conserving and celebrating local heritage
- Promoting public involvement in environmental arts projects, including provision of artist-designed gateway features

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

22. The project will be covered by actions already identified under the existing Equality Impact Assessment for the Council's Park Regeneration Programme. This has been judged to have a positive impact. An action plan for further improvements has been developed.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

23. Through the consultation processes for the Stockton-on-Tees Local Development Framework Core Strategy and draft Green Infrastructure Strategy there have been opportunities for stakeholders to comment on the Heritage Park, as a concept and an outline project proposal.
24. Other more detailed consultation has included:
- A workshop event for key partners and local councillors held at Preston Park (October 2008).
 - A briefing to ward councillors as part of a wider briefing on proposals for Connect2 and the regeneration of Preston Hall and Park (September 2007).
 - A staffed information stand at the 'Take To The Tees' event (August 2009) and 'Greener Living Roadshow' at Preston Park (July 2009).

- Two rounds of presentations to the Eastern, Western and Central Area Partnership Boards (winter 2008/09 and winter 2009/10).
- Presentations to the Borough's BME Network, Over 50s Forum and Disability Advisory Group (autumn 2009).
- Presentations to parish and town councils (autumn / winter 2009).

25. If funding is secured through the BIG Lottery Community Spaces programme then further consultation will be undertaken on detailed project proposals as appropriate. For example, with regard to the design of gateway features and rest areas.

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Background Papers

- Report to Cabinet – Review of River Based Leisure Facilities (24 April 2008)
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Local Development Framework - Submission Draft Core Strategy (May 2009)
- Stockton-on-Tees Local Transport Plan 2: 2006-2011 (March 2006)
- Community Spaces - Stage 2 funding application for Tees Heritage Park

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Councillors with wards lying within or adjacent to the Tees Heritage Park boundary are as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Stockton Town Centre: | Cllr Coleman, Cllr Kirton |
| Mandale & Victoria: | Cllr Miss Large, Cllr Mrs Trainer, Cllr Walmsley |
| Parkfield & Oxbridge: | Cllr Javed, Cllr Rix |
| Village: | Cllr Dalgarno, Cllr Eddy |
| Stainsby Hill: | Cllr Mrs Craggs, Cllr Mrs Walmsley |
| Ingleby Barwick West: | Cllr Dixon, Cllr Kirby, Cllr Patterson |
| Ingleby Barwick East: | Cllr Faulks, Cllr Harrington, Cllr Larkin |
| Eaglescliffe: | Cllr Fletcher, Cllr Lewis, Cllr Mrs Rigg |
| Yarm: | Cllr Mrs Beaumont, Cllr Earl, Cllr Sherris |

Property

All Phase 1 works would be implemented on Stockton Borough Council land, within the indicative areas shaded black on the plan in the **Appendix**. The majority of this land is managed as Public Open Space, while those areas of land at Queen Elizabeth Way and Bassleton Beck / Thornaby Woods are held by Highways.

The exclusion of the footpath link between areas I and J (Bassleton Beck / Thornaby Wood) will safeguard the route for Stage 4 of the Thornaby By-Pass, should it be required within the 20 year dedication period of the tripartite agreement (see Paragraph 18). As part of the project the Council would seek to identify funds to carry out improvement works to this footpath corridor, to compliment the proposed works in areas H and I.

The proposals outlined in this report are broadly in accordance with the Council's Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan (September 2007) which states that that Council resources will be used to lever in grants and other external funding for parks. In this case the project will also

contribute towards other priorities such as the regeneration of Preston Hall and Park, and the development of new and improved cycle networks as included within the Stockton-on-Tees Local Transport Plan 2: 2006-2011.