

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
COMMITTEE

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| Agenda Item | 13 |
| Report No | PDI 30/14 |

20 AUGUST 2014

CONSERVATION AREA REGENERATION SCHEME

Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure

Summary

This report advises that Historic Scotland has launched its 6th Round of the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme – seeking applications by end August. The report recommends that a bid be submitted to secure Historic Scotland match funding for the Regenerating Inverness City Centre project.

1 Background

- 1.1 Historic Scotland has launched a sixth CARS funding round, making available a further £10 million for schemes which will commence in April 2015 for a period of 5 years. Applications for this round are now open with a submission date of 31 August 2014.
- 1.2 The Council has previously secured CARS funding for Wick (£1.5m in Round 1, 2007-12) and Dingwall (£420k in Round 4 2011-16). The Wick scheme is now complete and the Dingwall scheme is currently underway, finishing March 2016. In any CARS application made there is an expectation that the Council will provide financial support towards the costs of the dedicated project officer and towards the works undertaken. In both previous CARS the Council has contributed 50% project officer wage costs and has provided project funding on an ad hoc basis linked to specific projects, for example, £110k towards the current Dingwall Townhouse project.

2 Round 6: Application

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the Council is progressing a Regenerating Inverness City Centre (RICC) project – focused on Academy Street, and has to date secured a Stage 1 pass from the Heritage Lottery Fund for £1.67m and a Stage 1 pass from the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (£325k) for one of the priority buildings (96 Academy Street). In addition, match funding from the Council of £726k has also been committed to this project. The remaining core funding (£917k) is to be secured from Historic Scotland. Historic Scotland is very positive and supportive of the Academy Street/Regenerating Inverness City Centre project, and is keen to financially support it either directly through CARS or via its annual grant to Inverness City

Heritage Trust (ICHT).

- 2.2 While initially it was envisaged that the Historic Scotland funding would be secured via the annual grant to ICHT, uncertainty arose because ICHT (alongside the other City Heritage Trusts) had to apply for continued funding post March 2015. Up until recently it appeared that continued funding at the level and timescale requested was not going to take place and in the interim Historic Scotland advised the Council to apply for CARS funding as its match towards the RICC project.
- 2.3 However, on 27 June 2014 Historic Scotland wrote to ICHT indicating that they were to receive continued funding post March 2015 but that the funding was dependent upon ICHT becoming a partner in the delivery of the proposed RICC project. If however, the Council proceeds and is successful with a CARS application, then Historic Scotland will review the level of funding proposed for ICHT and where it will be directed to within the Conservation Area.
- 2.4 It appears therefore that the Council has two options open to it:
- to apply for CARS funding, and assuming it is successful, ensure it has full control over the Historic Scotland funds; or
 - to work with ICHT, as originally conceived, to determine how best to manage and pull down the Historic Scotland funds.

Either option will work but given the uncertainty which has arisen with the apparent change of approach by Historic Scotland, and the need for the Council to ensure it has some control over the application for and access to the Historic Scotland funds for the RICC project, it is considered prudent for the Council to put in an application for CARS funding. If, as is anticipated, details are agreed over the coming months to secure Historic Scotland grant via ICHT, then the CARS application will be withdrawn.

- 2.5 There are a number of other Conservation Areas in Highland where undoubtedly a CARS scheme could be a useful regeneration tool. However, at this time there are insufficient resources available to the Council to progress the current Dingwall CARS project, the emerging RICC project and another CARS project.

3 Summary

- 3.1 If the RICC project is to proceed it will amongst other things require Historic Scotland match funding. Historic Scotland has advised the Council to apply for CARS funding to secure this match yet have also in principle agreed to direct the requested funds via ICHT. Given this ambiguity, it is considered prudent for the Council to apply itself for CARS funding for the RICC project. If, as is anticipated, details are agreed to secure Historic Scotland grant via ICHT, then the CARS application will be withdrawn.

4 Implications

- 4.1 Resource: Council funding is already secured as match towards the RICC project and it is known that Historic Scotland CARS funding will be targeted towards Conservation Areas where its financial support can be demonstrated to be adding value to any wider package of public and private investment - as is the case with the RICC project.
- 4.2 Legal; Equalities; Climate Change/Carbon Clever; Risk and Gaelic and Rural: There are no direct implications arising as result of this report to apply for Historic Scotland CARS funding.

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree that a CARS application be submitted for the Regenerating Inverness City Centre project.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 5th August 2014

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