

The Highland Council
Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee

18 February 2015

Agenda Item	16
Report No	PDI 13/15

Inverness Townscape Heritage Project

Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure

Summary

This report outlines progress that has been made during the development phase of the Inverness Townscape Heritage project and also the proposed governance and management arrangements for the project.

The proposed Inverness Townscape Heritage project supports the Council's programme of support for the Highland economy, more specifically helping make the Highlands an attractive environment for business, and supports the development of the Highlands' urban centres.

1. Background

- 1.1 Early in 2014 the Highland Council received a £1.67m Stage 1 pass from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Townscape Heritage programme. The HLF awarded the Council a development grant of £109k to be used alongside a £35k Council contribution to develop the Stage 2 application. A Stage 2 pass is required before the HLF finance is formally committed to the project. In accordance with the terms of development grant offer from the HLF, the development grant has been used to employ dedicated staff (0.6fte Townscape Heritage Strategic Project Officer, 1fte Heritage Engagement Officer and 0.5fte Employment Support Officer) and external technical advisers.

2. Progress

- 2.1 The Townscape Heritage (TH) Team and its external technical advisers are actively developing the following work packages as part of the Stage 2 application:
- strengthen and crystallise the vision and concepts raised in the documents submitted in support of the Stage 1 TH application;
 - an assessment of all elements of the TH project, including buildings and public realm and to set out a robust programme for the successful delivery of projects over the 5 year delivery phase (2015-2020) within defined budget constraints;
 - undertake stakeholder and public consultation. A consultation event was held on the 29 January 2014 at the Ironworks, Academy Street and a further event is scheduled for the 19 February 2015;

- prepare eligibility criteria and appropriate weighting against which future TH grant applications will be assessed;
- prepare the necessary TH “Action Plan” documentation;
- prepare detailed proposals for public realm improvements to Station Square including budget costs; and
- develop a place-making proposal for the Academy Street area to improve the urban public realm of Academy Street and its surroundings, including links between Inverness rail and bus stations.

2. Stage 2 Timeline and Estimated Project Start

- 2.1 Significant work is currently underway in the preparation of the Stage 2 application. All work is programmed to be complete by end March 2015, when aspects of the draft Stage 2 bid will be informally submitted and discussed with HLF. The formal deadline for the Stage 2 submission is end May 2015, with an anticipated decision mid/end September 2015. Assuming a formal pass is secured, the project will then be able to commence activity immediately.

3. Project Fund

- 3.1 The Council is expected to provide confirmation of its own, and partners’, funding at the time of submitting the Stage 2 TH application to the HLF. The estimated project costs are expected to be in the region of £4m, with an anticipated project fund of £3.3m being required to run a third party grant scheme, activity plan implementation, and staff costs/overheads. This is in line with what was estimated in a report to the Planning, Environment and Development Committee on the 19 September 2012.
- 3.2 It is expected that the Inverness City Heritage Trust will be in a position to confirm funding of £946k (Historic Scotland allocation) for the project by the end of March 2015. In order to complete the funding package, Members are asked to agree £550k from the Capital Programme, which will augment £200k revenue already earmarked for the project from existing Service budgets.

4. Management & Governance

- 4.1 The Council is expected to provide robust and transparent management, and governance procedures at the time of submitting the Stage 2 application to the HLF. Consequently, it is proposed that an annual report is provided to the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee. It is also proposed that the City of Inverness Area Committee approve the detail of the TH project and receive progress reports as appropriate. The Council, and its partners, continue to develop procedures for the assessment of third party grants, and this will be developed further in collaboration with the HLF and Historic Scotland.

5. Implications

- 5.1 Resource
To complete its funding contribution to this project, the Council needs to formally agree funding of £550k from its Capital Programme for the period 2015/16 – 2017/18.

5.2 Legal

There are currently no legal implications. In moving forward to the delivery phase of the project, the Council will need to obtain a Standard Security for grants over £25k. A 'legal fees' budget will be included in the detailed breakdown of project costs to the HLF.

5.3 Equality

Equality issues are considered for each project as an integral part of the project planning process.

5.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever

Opportunities and constraints are considered as an integral part of the project planning process.

5.5 Risk

The Council is required to submit a detailed risk assessment as part of the Stage 2 application along with appropriate mitigation measures.

5.6 Gaelic

Opportunities for the inclusion of Gaelic are considered as an integral part of the project planning process.

5.7 Rural

There are no rural implications.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to

- note progress with the preparation of the Heritage Lottery Fund Stage 2 Townscape Heritage bid; and
- agree an allocation of £550k from the Town and Countryside Regeneration, and Inverness City Developments allocations within the approved Development and Infrastructure Capital Programme 2014/15 – 2017/18, for the Inverness Townscape Heritage project.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 02 February 2015

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