

CABINET

Wednesday, 11 April 2018

LOWESTOFT HERITAGE ACTION ZONE (REP1830)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In 2017 following a bid submitted by Waveney District Council, North Lowestoft was awarded Heritage Action Zone status by Historic England. The award was granted on an 'in-principal' basis, subject to the submission of an agreed Delivery Plan and signed Memorandum of Understanding by May 2018. This report requests Cabinet delegated authority to the Head of Service, in consultation with the relevant cabinet member, and Heads of Finance and Legal to sign off the Heritage Action Zone Delivery Plan. The Delivery Plan sets out: the project management and governance structure in which the outputs will be managed and monitored; the resources required both financial and staff time; and the projects and timetable for the five year programme.
2. The Delivery Plan also includes details of proposed grant funding from Historic England, however individual funding applications will still be required, so this report also sets out the request to give delegated authority to the Head of Service, in consultation with the relevant cabinet member, and Heads of Finance and Legal, for individual project bids made within the Heritage Action Zone over the project period.
3. This report also outlines the details of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), a non legally binding agreement, which details how the project partners (Historic England, Waveney District Council, Lowestoft Town Council, Lowestoft Vision and East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust) will work together to deliver the Plan.
4. As part of the Delivery Plan a funding application will be made to Historic England for a "Partnership in Conservation Repairs Scheme (PSiCA)" for £150 000. Match funding will be required from Waveney District Council, over a three year period, once the project has started (estimated 2019/20). The match required from WDC is £25k year 1, £50k year 2 and £75k in year, making a total of £150 000. The report requests that this match funding is approved

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
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Wards Affected:	Harbour Ward
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Cabinet Member:	Councillor Michael Ladd Cabinet Member for Tourism and Economic Development Heritage Champion
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Supporting Officer:	Paul Wood Head of Economic Development and Regeneration 01394 444249 paul.wood@eastsuffolk.gov.uk
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2017 Waveney District Council, on behalf of a wider partnership, submitted a bid for an area in North Lowestoft to become a Heritage Action Zone, an initiative created by Historic England in 2016. The purpose of this initiative is to designate historic places that have the potential to become focal points for sustainable economic development and community life, e.g. using the historic environment as a catalyst for economic growth. To be considered for designation the area needed to be of historic interest and to be able to contribute to the social, economic and environmental needs of a place. The scheme enables the grouping of projects within an area, with a single overall vision, and harnesses Historic England's expertise and resources to help deliver that vision.
- 1.2 The proposal for North Lowestoft covers some of the oldest parts of the town including the historic High Street, Scores, the former Beach Village and the Victorian parks including Belle Vue and Sparrow's Nest. The ultimate aim of the scheme is to regenerate the area, and to ensure the removal of the North Lowestoft Conservation Area from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.
- 1.3 The key objectives set out in the Heritage Action Zone Delivery Plan are to:
- Enhance the vitality and viability of the historic High Street as part of the Lowestoft Town Centre
 - Improve the natural, historic and built environmental quality of the area
 - Bring back under utilised and derelict land and property into positive use
 - Enhance the tourism offer of the area
 - Improve connections and permeability within the area
 - Enhance the quality of design and the public realm, providing quality spaces that meet the needs of the community
 - Deliver new housing bringing a better mix of tenures and types of housing to the area
 - Engender pride in place and engage the local community in the history of the area

This will be achieved by Waveney District Council working in partnership with Historic England, Lowestoft Town Council, Lowestoft Vision and East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust to deliver a five year programme of connected projects including: baseline information to better understand the issues, and create a bench mark to measure the success of the scheme; research and listing support to carry out further investigation to increase understanding of the area; a partnership grant scheme available to the owners of individual properties who want to carry out repairs or other appropriate work which will enhance the area; a community heritage programme to engage residents in becoming more involved in protecting the historic environment; support (including feasibility studies, surveys and underwriting of urgent repairs) to bring some of the 22 vacant buildings back into use (including the Town Hall) and to reinstate the old score improving access to the East of

England Park. It will also re-introduce a market and improve the Triangle Market area; and subject to further research and feasibility studies, improvements to the parks, and pedestrian access; and delivery of new housing and encouraging more open market housing developments.

- 1.4 In addition, in 2017 the Council were successful in bidding under the Coastal Communities Fund, to regenerate the area of the East of England Park to Ness Point. The Private Sector Housing Team are also engaged in improving housing standards in the private rented sector in the Harbour ward with targeted grants for properties to ensure they meet the Decent Homes Standards. Furthermore, the 'Great Places' Making Waves Together scheme, supported by Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic England, aims to improve the culture, heritage and arts offer in Lowestoft (including a project in the Scores). The HAZ is therefore a timely opportunity to also bring together existing schemes with the new proposed projects in the area into a single vision and plan.

2 THE BENEFITS OF HERITAGE ACTION ZONE DESIGNATION

- 2.1 Designating part of north Lowestoft as a "Heritage Action Zone" will help to strengthen the regeneration plans for this area. Historic England will work in partnership with the Council and the project partnership to provide resources such as surveys, advice, research, training and grant aid for repairs to buildings or grants for capacity building.
- 2.2 The Delivery Plan has set out a funding request from Historic England for £507,380. The HAZ designation does not provide automatic access to funding and further applications would need to be made for different Historic England grants within the scheme, although as a HAZ these will be considered favourably.
- 2.3 In addition being designated as a HAZ will help to attract other funding. Historic England have indicated that it would help with obtaining funding from other national grant schemes such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Architectural Heritage Fund.

3. HAZ BOUNDARY AND RATIONALE

- 3.1 The boundary has been consulted on and agreed with the HAZ Partners and includes:
- the historic High Street area
 - Scores (historic paths which connected the High Street with the Denes)
 - North Denes and Whapload Road (showing evidence of Lowestoft's maritime history, in the presence of warehouses and net stores, and the open land of the Denes leading to the sea)
 - Victorian parks (Belle Vue, Sparrow's Nest and Arnold's Bequest) and Denes Oval

- 3.2 In recent years the economic down turn and national changes in retail have had a negative impact on Lowestoft town centre. In particular they have left the historic High Street with significantly reduced footfall and a lack of purpose. This coupled with high numbers of vacant premises and heritage assets at risk, poor quality alterations to buildings, inappropriate modern development, and lack of investment in public areas, has led to the North Lowestoft Conservation Area being included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register (2017).
- 3.3 The new Draft Local Plan, the Area Action Plan, and the Coastal Community Team Economic Plan identify this area as a regeneration priority, which is critical for the inclusive growth of Lowestoft. The objectives for this area are for heritage led-regeneration which enhances the heritage experience of this area and supports the existing shops, cafes and restaurants. The Council aims for the area to have a strong heritage narrative with improved connectivity between the town centre, the High Street and the East of England Parks including Ness Point.
- 3.4 The creation of the Heritage Action Zone is therefore timely and the scheme will help revive the town's historic heart by maximising the potential of historic assets and kick start regeneration. It will bring buildings back into use as housing or retail spaces, and enhance the quality and connections of the historic streets and public spaces. It will improve the overall natural, historic and built environmental quality, making the area more attractive to residents, businesses, tourists and investors.

4. THE DELIVERY PLAN AND MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

4.1 Delivery Plan

The Delivery Plan sets out:

- the vision and aims of the project and the planned activities and outputs that will take place;
- the project management and governance structure in which the outputs of the HAZ will be managed and monitored;
- the resources required, both financial and staff time;
- the timetable for the overall programme for the HAZ and key stages within it;
- any grant funding from Historic England;
- Monitoring and evaluation requirements.

4.2 Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), is a non legally binding agreement, which details how the project partners (Historic England, Waveney District Council, Lowestoft Town Council, Lowestoft Vision and East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust) will work together to deliver the Plan. The MOU does not cover any conditions regarding funding terms and conditions, all grant funding applications will be made separately, with each grant having a contract with its own terms and conditions.

4 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?

- 4.1 The Council's overall Vision, as set out in East Suffolk Business Plan is to 'Maintain and substantially improve the quality of life for everyone growing up in, living in, working in and visiting East Suffolk.' The proposed HAZ programme will contribute substantially to this goal and to the specific challenges identified in the East Suffolk Business Plan by: enabling communities to feel included and proud of where they live; by investing in a strong heritage and culture offer which helps to attract and retain businesses to the area promoting economic growth; and by bringing buildings back into use and creating new businesses and new homes therefore increasing income through business rates, new homes bonus and council tax to help make the council more self-sufficient.
- 4.2 The 'critical success factors' for delivery of the Business Plan that relate to the HAZ include:
- Economic Development & Tourism - A strong, sustainable, and dynamic local economy offering our communities more stable, high quality and high value jobs, with increased opportunities for all.
 - Planning - Well managed development of sustainable, thriving communities, with the quality facilities and services needed for a growing economy, whilst preserving the historic and natural environment.
 - Housing- Improved access to appropriate housing to meet existing and future needs, including more affordable homes for local people.
 - Communities - A diverse mix of resilient and supportive communities that value their rural and coastal heritage; which feel engaged, valued and empowered; and where people's needs are met and where they can make a difference to their community.

5. FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As part of the delivery plan individual funding applications will be made and the full terms and conditions of those schemes will be available from Historic England. These applications include funding for: Programme Manager, Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas (PSiCA), and grants for feasibility studies and building repairs.
- 5.2 During the period of the Delivery Plan a funding application will be made to Historic England for a "Partnership in Conservation Repairs Scheme (PSiCA)" for £ 150 000. Match funding will be required from Waveney District Council, over a three year period, during the project (currently projected for 2019/20). The match required is £25k year 1, £50k year 2 and £75k in year, making a total of £150 000. The report requests that this match funding by Waveney District Council is approved.
- 5.3 Match funding for the wider programme has come from other recent external grant funds including other grants such as Great Places (Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council) and East of England Park (Coastal Community Fund). The designation of the HAZ gives projects within the HAZ a priority for other potential funding from Historic England as well as highlighting its recognised importance, at a national level, to other external funders. It is envisaged that having HAZ status will help to secure external funding from these external funding bodies.

- 5.4 Additional funding to acquire and bring individual vacant buildings back into use could also access Housing Revenue Account funds, but would be subject to a separate business case and cabinet approval.
- 5.5 Waveney District Council will be the Accountable Body for the funding and therefore will own and manage the risks associated with the project. A process of Governance is established through a Partnership Team (Board) and a Project Delivery Group (this is detailed in the Delivery Plan).
- 5.6 The Partnership Team will include the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development & Tourism/Heritage Champion, Historic England HAZ Lead, WDC Head of Economic Development and Regeneration, Chair of East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust, Planning and Town Hall lead for Lowestoft Town Council, and Chair of Lowestoft Vision, The Board will be responsible for the overall direction and delivery of the programme.
- 5.7 A Project Delivery Group will be responsible for managing the programme and reporting to the Partnership Team. This will include the HAZ Programme Manager, Historic England Manager, Lowestoft Vision BID Manager & Lowestoft Town Council Asset Manager, plus officers from Economic Regeneration, Conservation and Planning, Housing, and Funding, and advisory support from East Suffolk building Preservation Trust.
- 5.8 Reporting to the Steering Group will be a number of Project Delivery Leads who will be responsible for the day to day delivery of the individual schemes as overseen by the HAZ Programme Manager.
- 5.9 Historic England funding includes the costs of a Programme Manager to oversee the delivery of the Programme; however Council resource will be required for overall management of the project, financial, legal, communications and human resource support. The Funding Team will be responsible for the administration of the conservation area grant scheme. The relevant internal departments have been engaged in the development of the Delivery Plan.
- 5.10 The project is also being supported through additional resource from Waveney District Council's graduate apprentices, with the housing apprentices being assigned to the project for six months, and a dedicated HAZ apprentice being in post to help plan the community engagement element and education programmes.

6. OTHER KEY ISSUES

- 6.1 This report has been prepared having taken into account the results of an Equality Impact Assessment, a Sustainability Impact Assessment and a Partnership Impact Assessment.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The development of the project and bid is a result of initial consultation events undertaken by the Lowestoft Coastal Community Team in 2015. The surveys and consultations included face to face interviews with visitors, online surveys for businesses and young people, and group consultations with the local residents, businesses and community groups. All groups were asked questions about the seafront and the town

centre, and in particular what they liked and what could be improved to support the growth of the town.

- 7.2 A key theme from the consultations and a subsequent aim in the Coastal Community Team's Economic Plan is to find sustainable uses for heritage and cultural assets and to make more of the maritime history. The consultations identified the opportunity to use the local character and heritage of the area (Scores, High Street, Arnolds Bequest, Bellevue Park, Sparrows Nest and East of England Park) to create a cohesive high quality heritage quarter. The rationale being that this would support the retail sector, encourage tourism, make the area safer, and create employment opportunities for the residents of Harbour ward.
- 7.3 In 2016 the project team consulted with key partners to gauge interest in putting in a joint bid to Historic England under the original pilot round. These included the East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust, Lowestoft Vision/Suffolk Chamber, and the Coastal Community Team (including Lowestoft Rising, Community Action Suffolk, Lowestoft Tourism Group). In 2017 this has been extended to include the new Lowestoft Town Council. The project is also supported by New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP).
- 7.4 Further community consultation, engagement and participation will take place as part of the project, as community ownership is essential to the success of the scheme.
- 7.5 Cabinet were briefed on the scheme originally in 2016, and again in July 2017 when a new Heritage Champion was appointed, and in September 2017 when approval was given to submit the application and business case.

8. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Two alternative options have been considered:

Option 1 - Do nothing: The end of the town centre forms some of the oldest part of Lowestoft, however the quality of the historic environment is under threat from insensitive development, poorly maintained buildings and a lack of investment. There is a higher than average shop vacancy rate at this end of town, lower footfall and it is within one of the 10% most deprived areas in the country. To do nothing will mean further deterioration in a conservation area that is already on the national At Risk Register.

Option 2 - Do not proceed with the HAZ, but consider individual grant applications to Historic England funding for each project: The disadvantages of this option is that whilst we may receive funding support from Historic England it would not bring them to the table as a partner where we could take advantage of their full range of support services - planning, research, listing, training & enabling. In addition it would require match funding and resources for each individual scheme which may not offer the same value for money. There is also a higher risk of us not receiving funding for all the applications without having the HAZ designation, which offers greater weight both to Historic England, but also to other funders such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.

8.2 The preferred option of the HAZ scheme would have allow for a more holistic approach to the regeneration of the conservation area, including community engagement activity to ensure pride in the area and long term sustainability of the projects. The partnership working the scheme promotes should help with further delivery and sharing of ideas and resources beyond the HAZ Delivery Plan, giving us additional value.

9. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 It was identified in 2017 that there was an opportunity to group existing and proposed projects together into an overall single vision which will help enhance the vitality and viability of the northern end of Lowestoft Town Centre. It will enable the Council to work with the local community to engender pride in the area, reduce the number of vacant shops, bring buildings back into use, remove the conservation area from the At Risk Register, and to deliver housing that is sensitive in the conservation area.
- 9.2 The Delivery Plan and MOU set out a robust way of working in partnership to deliver the five year programme. It will also allow the Council to harness Historic England's expertise and resources in order to deliver the vision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- This report requests the Cabinet give delegated authority to the Head of Service, in consultation with the relevant cabinet member, and Heads of Finance and Legal to sign off the Heritage Action Zone Delivery Plan.
- This report requests the Cabinet give delegated authority to the Head of Service, in consultation with the relevant cabinet member, and Heads of Finance and Legal, for individual project bids made within the Heritage Action Zone over the project period.
- Within the Delivery Plan a funding application will be made to Historic England for a "Partnership in Conservation Repairs Scheme (PSiCA)" for £150 000. Match funding will be required from Waveney District Council, over a three year period, during the project (currently projected for 2019/20). The match required is £25k year 1, £50k year 2 and £75k in year, making a total of £150 000. The report requests that this match funding by Waveney District Council is approved.

APPENDICES

Appendix A	HAZ Delivery Plan (including the Memorandum of Understanding as an Appendix to the Plan) Please note that due to the size of this document, it has not been printed with the Agenda Pack. However, copies are available to view on the East Suffolk Website, in the Members Room and upon request.
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BACKGROUND PAPERS – None