

REPORT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 21 JUNE 2018

ADEN COUNTRY PARK – HERITAGE LOTTERY PROJECT BID

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 **Approve the use of the Parks & Open Spaces Capital Plan, if necessary, to underwrite the match funding element (£223K) of the 2nd round HLF application that has been submitted.**

2 Background/Discussion

- 2.1 Members may be aware that a bid was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for funding support for the Restoration and Development of Aden Country Park. Disappointingly the bid was unsuccessful. However, following further meetings and discussions with HLF to seek guidance and advice, it was agreed to re-work and resubmit a revised bid. This was the subject of a report to Committee on 10 November 2015 (Item 7).
- 2.2 Following significant work to the documentation, the natural heritage aspects of the application, such as the biodiversity, were substantially strengthened, ensuring that the correct balance was found between the built, natural and cultural heritage of the park. There was also general agreement that the Aden story needed to be more focussed and interpreted more widely around the Park.
- 2.3 In February 2016 the revised application and supporting documentation was submitted. In June 2016 notification was received from HLF that the Aden Country Park Restoration & Redevelopment Project funding stage 1 (delivery stage) application had been successful.
- 2.4 The 2nd round delivery stage application requires fully detailed and costed proposals, with designs at “ready to tender stage”, as well as other supporting documentation and evidence.
- 2.5 The application for round 2 funding was submitted on 28 February. A significant amount of work has been done to refine and develop the initial proposals both in respect of the range of works to be undertaken and the associated activities, event and audience development proposals.
- 2.6 The Aden Restoration and Regeneration Project if successful will see over £2.1 million invested in major restoration and improvement works with Heritage Lottery funding of around £1.25 million of this total. Below is a breakdown of funding partners;

A.C. Landscape Services	£60,000
A.C. Cultural Services	£20,000
A.C. Archaeology Services	£8,000

A.C. Economic Development	£12,500
A.C. Area Initiative (Buchan)	£30,000
A.C. Developer Obligations	£30,000
A.C. Additional Maintenance	£73,000
Historic Environment Scotland	£44,000
Landfill Trust Organisations	£223,000
Non Cash Contributions	£309,000
Non Cash Volunteer time	£70,500
Heritage Lottery Fund	£1,250,000
TOTAL	£2,130,000

- 2.7 Application for this Landfill Trust funding do not officially open until June/July with awards announced in August & September. Therefore, that contribution is not yet confirmed and will not be before the deadline for the 2nd round HLF bid. However, discussions with these organisations have indicated that our applications meet all of the required criteria to be successful. The Landfill Trust requirements are that an identifiable element of the overall project is used for their funding. For the Aden project, this will be the redesigned and refurbished play park element of the overall project.
- 2.8 At a recent meeting with the HLF Scottish Committee representatives it was stressed that 2nd round (delivery stage) applications will be evaluated in a very competitive environment, as available HLF funding is not sufficient to progress all those applications received. The advice and guidance given at this meeting was that bids need to be as robust as possible, with the minimum of risk to the proposed project delivery. It was clearly pointed out that any proposed funding that was not secured prior to the award panel meeting would be seen as a risk which would weaken an application.
- 2.9 It was suggested that to strengthen our application it would be helpful if the unsecured cash contribution from the Landfill Trust could be underwritten, thereby reducing the risk to the project if the funding is ultimately not forthcoming.
- 2.10 It is proposed that in support of the application and to give it the best chance of success, the sum of £223,000 be underwritten using the Parks & Open Spaces Capital Plan for this purpose.
- 2.11 Each year £740,000 is allocated from the Capital Plan to fund a number of projects within our Parks & Open Spaces. The majority of this funding is allocated annually toward a selected number of the 447 play parks managed and maintained by Landscape Services, which are in need of replacement play equipment and/or a complete refurbishment of the play park. Often these upgrades are in partnership with local communities.
- 2.12 While the signs are very good for successful grant funding from the Landfill Trust, if the funds were required to be drawn down from the existing rolling programme, this would be offset to some extent as the refurbishment of the equipment at Aden would be required from the programme, albeit in later years. If the match funding applications are successful, the result will be an overall

reduction of pressure on the capital programme as the Aden Play Park would be completely refurbished without the need for resources from the Capital Plan.

- 2.13 This HLF application gives a fantastic opportunity to secure significant external funding to further develop what is already Aberdeenshire's most popular visitor attraction, with an all-time high in 2016-17 of around 352,000 visitors. The funding will provide improved infrastructure, facilities, learning and skills opportunities, events and community health and wellbeing. Supporting the bid by underwriting the match funding element may prove to be the deciding factor for the project to be successful.
- 2.14 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

3 Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section F.1.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to resource matters (within agreed budgets) relating to Roads, Landscape Services and Waste Management, which includes Country Parks.

4 Implications and Risk

- 4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the content of this report does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.
- 4.2 A Town Centre Impact Assessment is not required because there will be no significant impact as a result of this Report on Town Centres.
- 4.3 There are no staffing implications arising from this report
- 4.4 The Parks and Open Spaces Budget Rolling Programme is sufficient to cope with the commitment requested in the report, should it be required. However, it will require development of other projects to be reprofiled in future years.
- 4.5 There is a significant risk of the 2nd round application not being awarded the HLF funding (£1.25 million) if all required funding is not either secured or underwritten. In this case the external match funding from the Landfill Trust organisations cannot be confirmed until after the HLF application award committee meeting on 27 June 2018.
- 4.6 Council support for the project, by underwriting the unsecured external funding, will demonstrate the importance and commitment to the overall project which is an essential criteria for HLF when considering many bids from across the UK. Without this there is a much greater risk that the Aden project will fail and other projects will be selected.

4.7 The Council's contributions to the project will be funded from Infrastructure Services and Education and Children's Services Budgets. The increase in revenue expenditure associated with the project will be generally met through the HLF contribution and from within the partners and Service's ongoing revenue budgets during the project. All maintenance requirements following completion of the project will be met from the service's revenue budget and increased income opportunities.

4.8 The following Risk have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate and directorate Level.

ACORP006 – Reputation management (including social media).

ACORP009 - Operational Risk Management (including health & safety).

ACORP007 - Social risk (e.g. population changes, poverty & social inequality, demographic changes, crime, antisocial behaviour).

ISSR002 - Regeneration: The promotion of tourism and community involvement is essential to how effectively the Development Partnerships engage with the local communities and are able to deliver their vision for each area. This project will secure funding to conserve the natural and historic environment by protecting and enhancing landscape, biodiversity and historic assets. It is recognised that there is a heightened risk of the natural environment being damaged or lost.

Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

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