

Item: 5

Development and Infrastructure Committee: 26 September 2018

St Margaret's Hope Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme.

Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider progressing with a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme within St Margaret's Hope.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, to date, two Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes have taken place in Orkney, in Stromness and Kirkwall.

2.2.

That, since 2007, Historic Environment Scotland has administered and awarded funding from the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme, to provide financial assistance for area-based regeneration and conservation initiatives to the historic environment.

2.3.

That Round 8 of the funding programme, referred to at paragraph 2.2 above, will run from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024, and local authorities have been invited to submit notes of interest for potential projects to be delivered within their area.

2.4.

That, following informal discussions with Historic Environment Scotland regarding the potential for St Margaret's Hope as a project, the Council has been encouraged to submit an initial application for funding.

2.5.

That the online application system will open shortly, with an anticipated closing date for applications of mid November 2018.

2.6.

That, should an application for funding be submitted, it would be necessary to defer any start date until April 2020, in order that an up to date Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for St Margaret's Hope could be produced, and to fully develop the details of any priority projects or any public realm improvements.

2.7.

That a temporary post of Assistant Planner (Historic Environment) would be required to develop the project, at an estimated cost of £30,100.

It is recommended:

2.8.

That the Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure should submit a note of interest to Historic Environment Scotland, confirming that the Council is interested in operating a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme project within St Margaret's Hope between 2020 and 2024.

2.9.

That the Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure should submit a report, to the next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, regarding funding required to progress the application to Historic Environment Scotland's Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme in respect of a project for St Margaret's Hope.

3. Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes

3.1.

The Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme funding programme, administered and awarded by Historic Environment Scotland, has been in operation since 2007 to provide financial assistance for area-based regeneration and conservation initiatives to the historic environment.

3.2.

Funding is provided over a five year period and can be used to fund:

- A repairs programme for priority projects.
- A small grants scheme – eg for homeowners or retailers.
- Community engagement through training opportunities in traditional skills and through education programmes.
- Training opportunities for traditional craftspeople.
- Public realm conservation and restoration.
- Administration costs including the appointment of a dedicated project officer.

3.3.

Two Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes have taken place in Orkney, as part of the Townscape Heritage Initiatives with direct grants of £857,583 and £1,200,000 being made by Historic Environment Scotland toward the projects in Stromness and Kirkwall respectively.

3.4.

Since 2005 there have been seven application rounds, awarding a total of just over £40,000,000 of funding. Round 8 of the scheme will run from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024, although there is the potential to delay the start of any project until 1 April 2020 to fit with certain circumstances including aligning with funders or developing the detail of the scheme.

3.5.

The online application system will open shortly with an anticipated closing date for applications in mid November 2018. Officers have been in contact with Historic Environment Scotland to informally discuss the potential for St Margaret's Hope as a project and have been encouraged to submit an initial application for funding.

3.6.

If an application for funding in respect of St Margaret's Hope was to be submitted, it would be necessary to defer any start date until April 2020 in order that an up to date Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan could be produced, and to fully develop the details of any priority projects or any public realm improvements.

3.7.

Following the departure of the Council's Assistant Planner (Historic Environment) in 2017, and the disestablishment of the post in favour of making the Access Officer position permanent, no capacity currently exists within the Planning Service to undertake this work. As such, it would be necessary to recruit an officer on a temporary basis to produce the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, to undertake community engagement and to identify additional sources of external funding.

3.8.

Whilst it is not possible at this time to determine the exact costs of the scheme, it is recommended that a note of interest be submitted to confirm to Historic Environment Scotland that the Council is interested in operating a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme project within St Margaret's Hope between 2020 and 2024. This would allow a full application, the details of which will be subject to its own report, to be developed when the scheme opens.

4. Human Resource Implications

There is an existing job description for the Assistant Planner post. As the position relies on particular qualifications and skills, it would be necessary to recruit externally.

5. Links to Council Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priorities of Thriving Communities, Enterprising Communities and Quality of Life.

6. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities of Strong Communities and A Vibrant Economy.

7. Financial Implications

7.1.

The cost of employing an Assistant Planner has been estimated at a cost of £30,100 per annum for a G6 grade post. On the basis that the Service is not able to identify any surplus capacity within existing Service revenue budgets, if the Committee wishes to proceed, a report would be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee for a dedicated project budget to cover these costs.

7.2.

The actual costs to the Council of delivering the scheme will not be known until specific projects are identified. However, Historic Environment Scotland has provided the following advice:

- Priority projects and small grants where the Local Authority is the owner cannot ordinarily seek more than 25% funding from HES contributions without there being a strong case for why this might be more. Typically, we would expect that grants would be offered at around 60% to 75% of eligible costs with the remainder coming from the grantee.
- Education and awareness activities can be requested at any level although as normal we would expect to see a contribution from the Local Authority.
- Traditional skills training again can be requested at any level, with Local Authority contributions, but the total request to HES under this must be at least 5% of the total funding requested.
- Public realm works are the same again with requests at any level with Local Authority contributions to make up the required funding although the total request to HES must be no more than 20% of the total ask and there must be strong evidence that the works are appropriate.

- CARS officer and other admin funding can be requested again at any level with Local Authority contribution to match fund but typically we see these at around 10% to 15% of the total HES funding requested.

7.3.

All efforts will be made to identify funding partners during the development stage of the project to minimise the contribution that the Council must make directly and to maximise investment within the Conservation Area. However, no present budget exists for the project and a source of funding will need to be identified if the scheme is to be delivered.

7.4.

Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme projects were previously developed by the Planning Service in-house team with match funding contributions committed through the Council's Renewables Regeneration and Redevelopment Fund.

8. Legal Aspects

Section 64(1) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 obliges the Council to appoint such officers as they think necessary for the proper discharge of their function.

9. Contact Officers

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