

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
28th JUNE 2007

Bridge Street, Stourport-on-Severn: English Heritage “Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas”.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:	A Better Environment
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	Enhancing Cultural Life
KEY PRIORITY:	Local Heritage
CANINET MEMBER:	Councillor Stephen Clee, Planning, Regeneration and Prosperity
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Head of Planning, Health & Environment
CONTACT OFFICER	Simon Roper-Pressdee, Ext. 2536
APPENDICES	Appendix 1 – Protocol for the award of grant funding under the PSiCA

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 For Cabinet to note the result of a bid to English Heritage for grant funding under the “Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas” (PSiCA), and to consider the proposals for administration of the scheme, for the protocol of approval of grants under the scheme; and for the funding arrangements.

2.0 Recommendation

The Cabinet is asked to **DECIDE**:

- 2.1 To give delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Prosperity to approve the award of grants under the Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas in accordance with the Capital Programme and following consideration by the Community and Regeneration Committee in accordance with the protocol at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.2 To agree the proposals for the administration of the PSiCA using Bewdley Development Trust
- 2.3 To make the necessary adjustments to the Capital Programme for 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10
- 2.4 As part of the budget process in 2007/08 to consider committing an additional £24,000 in the Capital Programme for the 2009/10 year.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Conservation Areas are designated by Local Authorities under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and comprise “areas of special architectural and/or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.”
- 3.2 The Heritage objectives contained within the Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan are to preserve and enhance conservation areas, and the District’s Listed Buildings, to safeguard the particular characteristics of the District’s urban and rural environments and to promote appropriate development which secures the beneficial re-use of historic buildings and environments. Further to this, the Adopted Local Plan states that the District and County Councils will undertake such schemes as resources permit.
- 3.3 An initial report to Cabinet in July 2005 informed Members of a proposed two-stage bid to English Heritage under the then entitled ‘Partnership in Conservation Areas Scheme’ (PiCAS), and sought approval to undertake necessary work for this bid, as well as approval of a funding for 2007/08, and 2008/09 for £30,000 per annum.
- 3.4 The PiCAS initiative was withdrawn before the Council had an opportunity to make a bid. A further report to Cabinet in February 2006 sought the slippage of funding in the Capital Programme, to 2007/08 to act as match-funding for a then proposed bid under the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI).
- 3.5 Before a THI bid was made English Heritage invited the District Council to submit a detailed application for a grant scheme under the newly launched PSiCA in May 2006, focused on Bridge Street, and parts of New Street, York Street and High Street. The PSiCA makes grants available to the owners of eligible properties, within conservation areas, for the repair and other appropriate work to the built fabric.
- 3.6 The first stage of the bid was submitted in July 2006, and was approved in principle by English Heritage in September 2006, subject to the approval of a second stage of the bid comprising the Delivery Plan.
- 3.7 The Delivery Plan was submitted in January 2007, and approval of this was given by English Heritage in April 2007, subject to the completion of a Funding Agreement between both parties.

4. Key issues

- 4.1 English Heritage have approved in principle a three-year PSiCA, funding, subject to review on an annual basis, and to the completion of the Funding Agreement between English Heritage and the District Council. The first year of grant allocation from English Heritage is for £38,000 for 2007/08. If approved by English Heritage during the annual reviews, then the funding available for 2008/09 will be £48,000, and for 2009/10 will be £58,000. This has to be

matched 50% by the Council. There is currently a Capital Programme Allocation of £70,000 for 2007/08 and £30,000 for 2008/09, for Conservation. In order to square this with the English Heritage allocations over the three years, £13,000 from 2007/08 capital programme will be moved to the 2008/09 programme, and the remaining £24,000 from 2007/08 will be moved to 2009/10. A further £24,000 will be required for the 2009/10 programme and will need to be considered as part of the 2008/09 budget setting process.

- 4.2 Of the English Heritage allocations a proportion is being set aside as revenue to support the administration of the project and this is being matched in kind by Council officer time.
- 4.3 In order to assist with a successful delivery of the grant scheme further resource is required to administer the project. Internal resources are limited and, following discussions, it is proposed to enter into an agreement with Bewdley Development Trust, for the provision of one member of staff from the Trust on a part-time basis, to provide administration support to the Conservation Officer. The cost of this can be met from within the grant allocation from English Heritage.
- 4.4 At present the Council does not have arrangements in place for approving grant allocations under this type of initiative, the nearest being the award of financial support for affordable housing schemes which is approved by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health & Rural affairs in conjunction with Community & Regeneration Committee. This process has served the Council well and it is therefore proposed that mirror arrangements are put in place to enable the Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Prosperity to have powers delegated by Cabinet to determine the award of grants under the PSiCA following recommendation from the Community and Regeneration Committee.
- 4.5 Following the same procedure as for affordable housing grant support, bid details with a recommendation by the Head of Planning, Health and Environment will be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Prosperity on a summary sheet for consideration by the Community and Regeneration Committee. The Recommendation of the Community and Regeneration Committee will inform the decision of the Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Prosperity.
- 4.6 The Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Prosperity will have delegated authority from Cabinet to make decisions on the allocation of financial support for grants under the PSiCA, following the consideration of the Committee's recommendation. Should the Cabinet Member disagree with the Committee's recommendation, the matter would be referred to the Cabinet for a decision.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Allocations already exist in the Capital Programme for years 2007/08 and 2008/09 sufficient, with some rearrangement, to match fund English Heritage allocations for years one and two of the project. A further £24,000 addition to the Capital Programme for 2009/10 will need to be considered in the next

budget setting process to provide equal match-funding to the English Heritage allocation for the same year.

- 5.2 This will be subject to the receipt of Capital funding from English Heritage.

6. Legal and Policy Implications

- 6.1 If the recommendations within this report are agreed, and the PSiCA progresses, it will be subject to a legal agreement between English Heritage and the District Council;
- 6.2 If it is agreed to progress the administration proposals within this report, then this will be the subject of a legal agreement between the District Council and Bewdley Development Trust.

7. Risk Management

- 7.1 There are risks in ensuring that a three year funding programme, five year completion of works, is deliverable when dealing with private sector landowners but there is sufficient flexibility in the scheme to be able to manage the programme should problems occur. The use of Bewdley Development Trust for assistance in administering the programme will help reduce the further pressure on Council officers.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 A bid to English Heritage for three-year funding of a Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas has been successful, with a first year allocation of £38,000, and in principle allocation for 2008/09 of £48,000 and for 2009/10 of £58,000.
- 8.2 In order to assist in the administration of the scheme, it is proposed that a partnership agreement is entered into with Bewdley Development Trust.
- 8.3 To progress any applications for grant assistance under the PSiCA, it is proposed that a protocol for grant approvals is adopted.
- 8.4 To assist in the match-funding English Heritage contributions to the PSiCA some amendments are required to the Capital Programme for 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.
- 8.5 To provide equal match-funding for the English Heritage contribution in 2009/10, an additional £24,000 capital will need to be considered in the next budget for 2009/10.

9. Consultees

- 9.1 Head of Legal and Democratic Services
- 9.2 Head of Financial Services

Background Papers:

Cabinet Report July 13th 2005: Bid to English Heritage for a Partnership in Conservation Areas Scheme for Stourport-on-Severn

Cabinet Report February 16th 2006 : Bid to Heritage Lottery Fund for a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) for Stourport-on-Severn.

Adopted District Local Plan (January 2004)