

Subject: The Venetian Waterways and Boating Lake Project

Report to: Council

Report by: Robert Read- Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods

#### **SUBJECT MATTER/RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Council is asked to approve the development of the Venetian Waterways and Boating Lake Project and to establish a dedicated project board to pursue a stage II application to the Heritage Lottery Fund in August 2016.

### **1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

The Waterways and Boating Lake is a seven acre park, included on the register of historic parks and gardens.

The area is in need of substantial investment to realise its potential and to restore an important heritage asset. The project was identified as a key priority to progress within the council's corporate plan.

Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund has been secured to undertake a project including restoration and training.

### **2. PROJECT DETAIL**

The Waterways, which also includes the Boating Lake, is a historic park at the northern end of the seafront, it is registered as grade II on the historic parks and gardens register. The park was created in the 1920's as an unemployment relief program to support veterans of the First World War. Throughout the middle part of the twentieth century the park, it's planting and activities were a significant attraction.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council in partnership with Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust have successfully achieved a stage one award from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Parks for People Program, a national scheme aimed at the restoration of historic parks.

#### **Parks for People**

Parks for People is a two stage bidding process. The first stage provides the Heritage Lottery Fund information about the park and why it is significant, why it needs funding and general proposals for restoration and reuse. The application

provides information about management of the project, community engagement and how the project compliments other work and aspirations at a local, regional and national level.

If a stage one application is successful the applicant is asked to develop the project for a stage two application. During stage two the applicant is expected to develop the project in great detail, to provide full specification for restoration, a comprehensive program of works and activities, produce a master plan and a conservation plan and undertake full public consultation.

To provide enough information for the HLF to understand exactly what will be delivered and how it will be delivered. Importantly it details precise costs.

### Development Study

As part of the stage one pass the project was awarded £45,0000 of HLF funding, matched with £10,000 of GYBC funding, providing £55,000 to develop the project. This funding is used to appoint a landscape architect and full professional team to undertake the development works. Other work needed to successfully develop the project will be undertaken by officers from the Neighbourhoods and Communities team and Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust.

A stage two application will need to be submitted in August 2016, to comply with the HLF deadline. If the stage two application is successful a further £1m will be released by the HLF to deliver the full restoration project.

### Management

A project board to steer and oversee the project is a requirement of the grant. It is expected that the council will actively involve local communities as stakeholders in the project. Waterways Action Group (WAG) and People of North Yarmouth (PONY) have been involved in a range of activities over recent years to raise the profile of the Waterways

### The Waterways Project

The stage one application identified three areas which the development study will concentrate on and establish into a robust and deliverable project. These three elements are:

#### **1. Restoration**

To restore planting, based on the original planting scheme, held in the council archive. Original beds now grassed or gavelled over will be reinstated. The original planting scheme was a radical moved away from familiar seaside bedding plant displays and instead concentrated on perennials and annuals used in drifts. The combination of plants and design was considered

innovative. The design was exhibited at the 1928 Royal Horticultural Societies, International Exhibition of Garden Design, where it was considered "bold". The intention is to recreate the spirit of this planting and flower beds. This element of the project will also allow for research to fully understand the original scheme and its importance in terms of seaside planting history.

Rusticated thatched shelters, the boating lake, bridges and other structures which contribute so much to the special character of the place will undergo comprehensive repair. The boating lake will be repaired and brought back into operation.

## **2. Training**

The project presents an enormous opportunity for training and engagement.

Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust has developed a model where projects are delivered by trainees and volunteers under the guidance of experts and professionals (Cemeteries, Hopton, Bulgaria). This successful model will be adopted for this project. The benefits are true community involvement and the development of a highly skilled local work force. It allows and enables ownership of the project and the heritage asset by the community.

As with other recent conservation led training initiatives training is it fundamental to the success of the project and will provide real opportunities both during and after the project. Opportunities for training are broad and include initial research and survey, landscaping, propagation of plants, gardening, traditional building skills. There is a clear synergy between this project and the Big Lottery funded "Neighbourhoods that Work" programme, connecting local people to skills and jobs.

As with other Borough / Preservation Trust projects it is proposed to provide training and engagement at all levels including schools and colleges, the unemployed, older people and other hard to reach groups.

Previous training projects have been over subscribed and it is anticipated that because of the level of interest in heritage as well as the level of interest in gardening, training and volunteering places will be in demand. The main focus of training will be gardening and traditional building skills. This will not only inspire people and generate skills it will help to develop a skilled workforce.

Work to train people in traditional building skills is already well underway on other HLF supported projects in the town and is beginning to pay dividends in

terms of a skilled workforce able to maintain the historic built environment. This project will compliment and accentuate that work.

Two full time posts will be created to manage and coordinate the project, as well as manage the experts and professionals needed to provide the training and engagement activities.

### **3. Legacy**

A restored park will contribute to the borough council's ambitions to encourage year round cultural tourism and support the local economy. It will also contribute to the sea front heritage offer. It will safeguard an important heritage asset.

The skills developed during the project will be put to use maintaining the park into the future. This will be achieved by direct employment and by the potential creation of a Friends of the Waterways Group or a social enterprise company, where volunteering will continue post project.

The benefits of providing opportunities to garden in a town with limited garden space, can create a legacy of well being . The therapeutic benefits of gardening are well documented.

Comprehensive and robust management and maintenance planning and a firm continuing commitment from the Borough Council will ensure the projects success into the future.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The council has allocated £10,000 to match the Heritage Lottery Funds development grant of £45,000 to support the development phase.

At stage II the council will be required to consider appropriate match funding to support up to £1million investment from the HLF. It is anticipated that this will come from existing council expenditure for maintenance of the sites.

Officers are also exploring applications to other funders to support the project including Coastal Communities Fund and the New Anglia LEP calls for bids.

### **4. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

Risks currently relate to the current lack of capital investment to restore the Waterways and Boating Lake and the ability to enhance the current seafront offer. The Boating Lake remains drained and the current concession remains unlet of the site.

A risk management framework will be developed during the feasibility stage and will be a requirement for a successful stage II submission to HLF. The council will remain the accountable body for the funds and contracts will be awarded using the council's procurement framework. The council's conservation section in partnership with the Preservation Trust has a strong track record in delivery Heritage Lottery funded programmes.

Sustainable end-use will be central to a successful stage II application and robust business planning will need to ensure future operations on the site are sustainable.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The project represents a timely opportunity to invest in the towns important and unique heritage, it will support and complement existing and planned council projects.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The council is asked to approve the pursuit of a stage II submission in August 2016 to the Heritage Lottery Fund based on the contents of this report and with the noted match-funding commitments in section 3.
- The council is also asked to establish a dedicated "Waterways Project Board" to meet the requirements of the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Board will oversee the development of the project and will provide the council with the ability to respond swiftly to project decisions to meet the funders requirements. The project will form a "key project" for the council and will be monitored and reported through corporate performance measures monthly.
- It is recommended that the board is made up of 4 elected members with 1 additional seat representing Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust and 2 further seats representing community stakeholders (Waterways Action Group and People of North Yarmouth) to fulfil requirements around partnership and community involvement.

<b>Area for consideration</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Undertaken
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Approved at EMT 12/05/16
Existing Council Policies:	Corporate Plan
Financial Implications:	Noted in report.
Legal Implications (including human rights):	Developed through Stage I feasibility study.
Risk Implications:	Developed through Stage I feasibility study.
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	Developed through Stage I feasibility study.
Crime & Disorder:	Considered through Stage I feasibility study.
Every Child Matters:	N/A