

Subject: **Winter Gardens Restoration Programme**

Report to: Economic Development Committee – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Report by: Darren Barker, Principal Conservation Officer

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

**EMT are asked to note the proposal to proceed with pre-application work to submit a stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund bid to support the restoration of the Winter Gardens in November 2016 and the request for a one-off investment of £25,000 to secure expertise and capacity to prepare a robust stage 1 application.**

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

- 1.1 The Winter Gardens is a grade II\* listed building, on Great Yarmouth's seafront and set within the Seafront Conservation Area. It is a landmark building and one which can be justifiably described as iconic. This type of building is now extremely rare and marks a significant period in the history of the town and the nation. It forms part of Great Yarmouth's collection of 20<sup>th</sup> century seaside entertainment architecture, a collection of national importance.
- 1.2 The building has been vacant and deteriorating for a number of years and before that was under maintained and tied up in a lease agreement with the organisation Family Amusements, that lease has now ended by negotiation and the council have full control.
- 1.3 The Winter Gardens is a dangerous structure and appears on Historic England's Buildings at Risk Register.

- 1.4 After the St Georges project was completed the Winter Gardens was made the priority for repair and reuse, as the last significant historic 'building at risk' in the borough and especially as it remains in council ownership. The building and its condition is a concern of national heritage agencies including the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic England.
- 1.6 In 2013 Historic England were asked about demolition, their advice was that the danger (the glass) should be removed, and that demolition of a grade II\* listed building was not an option as the building is not beyond repair.
- 1.7 The Winter Gardens has been identified as a key project within the Corporate Plan for 2016-20. There was some media attention during late spring 2016, raised as a consequence of public concerns around the aesthetics of the building in a derelict state. As an interim measure the conservation team commissioned some art work depicting the picture postcard history of Great Yarmouth and Gorleston upon hoardings to improve the appearance of the exterior of the site.

## **2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT AND RESTORATION**

### Heritage Lottery Fund

- 2.1 The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is the UK's biggest funder of heritage projects and since 1994 has invested £11.7 million into Great Yarmouth. It is hoped that the HLF will play a pivotal role in supporting the restoration and reuse of the Winter Gardens.
- 2.2 The borough council have been seeking a solution to repair of the building for a number of years and has met with the HLF on a number of occasions.
- 2.3 In July 2016 the Regional Director of the HLF visited the building and discussed potential funding and support. The advice was extremely helpful and highlighted the need for embarking on an application with;
- a clear indication of the full extent of structural condition of the building,

- a consideration of viable and sustainable end uses,
- a professional and realistic approach to project activities and associated budgets.

2.4 It was also made clear that such a large scale project (anticipated upto £4million) will need to be properly resourced at the planning stage to ensure that any stage I application for funding is comprehensive and robust, especially as the grant programme is extremely competitive.

2.5 It would be expected that any stage I application will be supported with a broad range of consultation works including structural engineering advice and activity planning.

### Sustainable Reuse

2.6 It is extremely unlikely that any funding body, including the HLF will support such a project without a robust and convincing end use.

2.7 In 2013 a consultant undertook some work and produced a report considering reuse of the building, this focused on a horticultural/botanical reuse. The report indicated that horticultural/botanical reuse was an option but needed more detailed research and development to prove viability.

2.8 A major reason that the Winter Gardens has failed to find a sustainable end use for decades is the extreme micro climate within the building, resulting in unbearable summer temperatures. As a purpose built green house for botanical use this temperature range was acceptable and relieved by the humidity the planting environment created and the shade large palms provided. Options around this will be fully explored during the feasibility stage of the project.

## Business Planning

- 2.9 In order to make a strong application for funding good business planning is required. This fundamental work will present the business cases for reuse options and will reduce the risks of any investment by funders and the borough council.
- 2.10 Prompted by a visit to Great Yarmouth in 2012 by the Prince of Wales, a discussion was had with the Princes Regeneration Trust about assisting the Winter Gardens project. The Princes Regeneration Trust offered to help move the project forward by acting as a "critical friend", but did not have the capacity to maintain a longer-term involvement with the scheme and were unable to assist with business planning. The Royal Horticultural Society has also visited the building and offered design and technical advice.
- 2.11 Although a complete business plan will not be expected at stage one of the application for HLF funding there does need to be some feasibility work and options appraisals to ensure that whatever end use is taken forward is sustainable.

## Project Timetable and Budget

- 2.12 The grant programme is a two stage application process with stage one submissions accepted in November 2016 for a decision in March 2017. If the first stage is successful it is also possible that 'development study' funding is made available. This funding will be used to develop the application and to fund important elements such as the business plan, conservation plan and management plan.
- 2.13 However to support a stage I application the HLF will expect robust costings, strong evidence of pre business planning and detailed costs for the development stage of the project.

- 2.14 The conservation team is able to manage the application process and provide much of the information required but will need additional support / resource in terms of consultant/ specialist input. The HLF have stressed that for this size of application specialist preparatory work will be essential.
- 2.15 The following funding will be required to progress a suitably robust stage I application:
- Structural Engineering Advice
  - Options for regulating of the ambient temperature
  - Consultant Advice: including market analysis, pre-business planning, feasibility study, options appraisal, activity planning etc

#### Case for Investment

- 2.16 It is clear that investment is required to realise the full potential of the Winter Gardens restoration. A relatively small investment by GYBC at this stage could potentially unlock significant (multi-million) funding into Great Yarmouth, which would bring about the repair and reuse of a challenging and deteriorating building.
- 2.17 The annual costs for maintaining the Winter Gardens in its current condition is met on a responsive repair basis, this figure is likely to increase year on year as the building further deteriorates. A repaired building with a sustainable and viable end use, generating sufficient revenue to maintain the building and support the activity would result in council being able to reduce costs from a responsive repair budget.
- 2.18 There are broader benefits in terms of tourism, and the visitor economy that a fully restored seafront attraction will help to realise. Along with the principles of the Waterways restoration programme, work experience and apprenticeships, along with job creation will form a core component of the project.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There is a financial implication of approximately £25,000 for the preparatory work of this scheme. This expertise is not available within the council. Consideration will need to be given as to how to resource this work.
- 3.2 As with all HLF funded schemes, there will be a requirement for the council to secure match funding for both the development and delivery phases of schemes. The recently submitted Coastal Communities Fund Bid 'Coast and Culture' included a capital contribution of £750,000 towards the restoration of the Winter Gardens. The outcome of stage 1 of this assessment will be known in late August. The council will therefore need to consider further council investment as the project develops.

### **4. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The full project will be risk managed in accordance with both council processes and the requirements of the funders. Project management will come from the Neighbourhoods and Communities Group.
- 4.2 At this stage, in order to meet a HLF funding deadline in November 2016 pre-application work will need to commence in September. Failure to meet the November deadline will lead to a further 6 month delay to an anticipated 3 year scheme. This may also impact on the availability of the Coastal Communities Fund as match should the scheme not be completed by November 2019.

### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 The report outlines a proposed process for a restoration programme for the Waterways, as encouraged by the HLF. The ability to lever in HLF investment will greatly impact on the council's ability to deliver a full restoration

programme and sustainable end-use.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1**

- EMT is asked to approve the process of a November submission to the HLF for stage 1 and appropriate governance mechanisms within the council structure.
- EMT is asked to consider the request for one-off funding of £25,000 to secure external capacity to prepare the submission.

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 Attached is a project plan for the Winter Gardens as submitted to the Coastal Communities Fund.

<b>Area for consideration</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Discussed at EMT 18.8.16
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Discussed at EMT 18.8.16
Existing Council Policies:	Corporate Plan, Cultural Heritage Strategy
Financial Implications:	Raised
Legal Implications (including human rights):	None identified
Risk Implications:	Identified
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	Will need to be considered through development phase.
Crime & Disorder:	None identified.
Every Child Matters:	None identified