

Cabinet – 18 November 2009

Barr Beacon Heritage Project

Portfolio: Councillor Sanders, Leisure and Culture

Service: Greenspace Services

Wards: Pheasey Park Farm and Streetly

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary of report

- 1.1. At its meeting on 22 April 2009, Cabinet identified the Barr Beacon Heritage Project as a priority for seeking Lottery funding and supported Greenspaces in submitting a Stage 1 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) Heritage Grants programme by June 2009.
- 1.2. An application was duly submitted and HLF granted a Stage 1 pass in September 2009 and awarded a Development Grant of £25,900. Match funding includes £8,650 from the Barr Beacon Trust and £53,100 in officer and volunteer time.
- 1.3. A Stage 2 application must be submitted by 31 September 2011. If successful, including non-cash contributions, this will result in a programme of £468,455 to restore the war memorial, flagpole and Scott plantation fencing. The draft proposals for this programme are documented within the report and the potential sources of match funding for the bid are also highlighted.
- 1.4. The delivery of the restoration programme will have limited financial implications for the Council, as Barr Beacon is managed by the Barr Beacon Trust, of which all Council Members are Trustees. Nevertheless, consideration is given to how the site is managed and maintained.
- 1.5. The restoration of these valued heritage features is seen as a priority for the Council. Opportunities exist to link the project to other heritage sites, including Bentley Cairn, Doe Bank Park and Walsall Arboretum.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Stage 1 pass and award of a Development Grant are welcomed.
- 2.2 That a Stage 2 application for the Barr Beacon Heritage Project to the HLF Heritage Grants programme by 30 September 2011 is supported.

- 2.3 That the Head of Leisure and Culture acts as the lead contact on the HLF application form.
- 2.4 That bids for match funding are submitted to other external grant bodies.
- 2.5 That opportunities are fully explored to develop links between the Barr Beacon Heritage Project and other heritage sites.
- 2.6 To note and endorse that no scheme will be allowed to commence unless an approval from the funding provider has been received to ensure that there will be no unbudgeted call on council mainstream resources.

3. Background information

- 3.1 Barr Beacon is one of the highest points in the West Midlands. Its panoramic views, rich history and variety of wildlife serve to make it one of the most valued sites in Walsall.
- 3.2 In 1918, Lieutenant Colonel Wilkinson purchased Barr Beacon and gifted it to the public. In 1933, a memorial was erected to commemorate those of Staffordshire and Warwickshire who gave their lives in World War I, and to the memory of the late Lieutenant Colonel Wilkinson.
- 3.3 Following re-organisation under the Local Government Act, 1972, the trusteeship passed to Walsall Council. A meeting of the Trustees requires all Members of the Council to meet. In order to ease management of the Trust's functions, the Barr Beacon Trust Management Committee was established in 2007 with delegated authority to make decisions. The Management Committee consists of councillors for the Pheasey Park Farm and Streetly Wards and the Cabinet Members whose portfolio includes regeneration and leisure.
- 3.4 Since 1995, day-to-day site management has been undertaken by Walsall Countryside Services, which reports on activities and issues at Management Committee meetings. All Trustees are kept informed of the work of the Management Committee by way of an annual report to Council.
- 3.5 During late 2007, the Management Committee agreed that funding be sought from external grant bodies to repair the war memorial and undertake other improvements.
- 3.6 In partnership with Aldridge Rotary Club, £24,000 was secured from the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme in November 2007 to clean the war memorial, apply an anti-graffiti coating and install a new panoramic disc, and publish a new nature trail leaflet.
- 3.7 A conditions survey of the war memorial, flagpole and Scott plantation fencing was commissioned in November 2008. A final report was presented in April 2009.

3.8 It is anticipated that the heritage project will be delivered between January 2012 and December 2014 and will include the following elements, with indicative costs:

Project Manager (one year)	£ 39,140
Fulltime Community Liaison Officer (three years)	£ 85,800
War memorial	£ 51,387
• Replace the copper work of the roof	
• Replace the lead work of the roof perimeter gutter	
• Install a ladder restraint system to allow future inspections	
• Replace areas of concrete with stone to match existing	
• Re-point stonework	
• Replace balustrades and handrails	
Flagpole	£ 4,329
• Replace flagpole base	
• Restore and replace flagpole	
Scott plantation fencing	£ 8,140
• Repair/replace damaged railings	
Archaeological excavation and community dig	£ 25,784
Community development, including events and interpretation	£230,379
Fees	<u>£ 23,496</u>
Total £468,455	

These costs are lower than those outlined in the report of 22 April. The previous report was written prior to the condition survey for the war memorial being undertaken. The survey identified lower costs associated with the restoration than were originally estimated.

3.9 The anticipated timescale for the project is:

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| • Development of Stage 2 application | November 2009 to September 2011 |
| • Submission of Stage 2 application | September 2011 |
| • Decision by HLF at Stage 2 | December 2011 |
| • Project delivery | January 2012 to December 2014 |

3.10 HLF advisors have strongly urged that through the project, links are developed to local plans and other heritage sites. Opportunities, for example, to replicate activities undertaken through the Bentley Cairn restoration project and to develop footpath/bridlepath links and wildlife corridors to Doe Bank Park and Walsall Arboretum have been welcomed by the advisors.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

The HLF has awarded a Development Grant of £25,800 revenue funding to work up the Stage 2 submission between now and September 2011. Match funding includes £8,612 from the Barr Beacon Trust, £45,000 in non-cash contributions (Walsall Council staff time, outlined in 4.3) and £8,100 in volunteer time (Walsall Countryside Conservation Volunteers and Health Walk Leaders).

The total cost of the heritage project would be an additional £468,455, covering capital and revenue items (outlined in 3.8). An application for 75% i.e. £351,200 will be made to the HLF Heritage Grants programme by September 2011. A total of £117,255 (25%) is required as match-funding during the project delivery phase (anticipated to be January 2012 to December 2014). Regeneration has allocated £10,000, whilst the balance would be secured from the Barr Beacon Trust and other external grant bodies, such as the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme and War Memorials Trust before any work starts or staffing recruited.

No scheme will be allowed to commence unless an approval from the funding provider has been received to ensure that there will be no unbudgeted call on council mainstream resources.

4.2 Legal:

The Charitable purposes of the Barr Beacon Trust as specified in the Trust Scheme are:

- "...for the provision and maintenance thereon of an open space and recreation ground for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Urban District of Aldridge-Brownhills and the Counties of Stafford and Warwick and, subject thereto, of any other persons (hereinafter together referred to as "the beneficiaries") without distinction of sex, or of political, religious or other opinions and in particular for use for the purposes of physical exercise and training and such other forms of recreation and leisure-time occupation, having the object of improving the conditions of life for the beneficiaries as the Council shall from time to time think fit.
- The Council shall maintain and keep in repair the Memorial erected on Barr Beacon in the year 1933 to commemorate the men and women of the Counties of Warwick and Stafford who gave their lives in the Great War of 1914 to 1918."

The Development Control Committee approved the addition of the war memorial to the List of Buildings of Local Architectural and Historic Interest (Local List) on 16 September 2008. The war memorial has also been proposed for national listing. Planning permission would be required for its restoration.

4.3 Staffing:

The Stage 1 application was co-ordinated by Countryside Services staff in liaison with other Leisure and Community and Regeneration colleagues. The Stage 2 application would be prepared similarly, with a Project Management Group comprising the Council's Countryside Services Manager, Countryside Project Development Officer, Senior Countryside Ranger, Greenspace Improvement Co-ordinator, Principal Creative Development Officer, Regeneration Officer, Capacity Building Manager – Third Sector, and Press and Publicity Officer.

The restoration work would be overseen by a Project Manager. We envisage this being for a period of one year. A Community Liaison Officer would be employed for up to three years to deliver the public engagement elements of the project.

5. Citizen impact

Barr Beacon is much loved for its panoramic views, rich history and variety of wildlife. It provides a large area of open space where visitors play, relax and exercise, providing both physical and mental health benefits. The restoration of the historic features will offer an abundance of opportunities which will have a positive impact on quality of life within the borough and help to restore a sense of civic pride.

As part of the Stage 2 HLF submission an Audience Development Plan will be produced, which will look at the range of current audiences/users of the site and their needs and priorities. The plan will identify how the project would benefit current audiences and attract new audiences, boosting visitor numbers to Barr Beacon.

6. Community safety

Barr Beacon is a premier green space. It is recognised that open spaces must be safe and secure places for all members of the community to use and all relevant safety issues must be addressed in management and maintenance plans and implemented on the ground. Any concerns that arise will be addressed promptly, with particular attention to equipment and facilities, security, anti-social behaviour, visibility of staff, dog fouling, litter and vandalism, health and safety policies and service standards.

7. Environmental impact

A household survey undertaken during the development of Walsall's Green Space Strategy in 2006 demonstrated that parks and green spaces are the most valued leisure and cultural facilities in Walsall. They are well used by residents for informal recreation, sports or as venues for events and activities.

In September 2008, Barr Beacon and Pinfold Lane Quarry were declared together as Walsall's eleventh Local Nature Reserve. A five-year management plan was produced to direct ongoing management of the site. Through its objective to maintain and enhance public amenity and appreciation, the management plan recognises the need for a complete restoration of the war memorial.

The environmental impact of the restoration proposals has been considered carefully and a condition survey of the historic features was commissioned in advance of the Stage 1 application.

The restoration of the historic features at Barr Beacon would benefit local residents and site users, and contribute to improving the quality of life in the Borough of Walsall.

Consideration will also be given through the project to improving the links between Barr Beacon and other sites and initiatives, particularly the Arboretum, to encourage visitors to explore the wider countryside and to ensure that the project forms part of a much wider programme of environmental improvements across the Borough.

Information recorded about Barr Beacon and its historic features will be used when producing interpretation material in the future to assist users in their understanding and enjoyment of the environment.

8. Performance and risk management issues

8.1 Risk:

The key risks to the project are:

1. Failure to obtain support for the restoration of the historic features.

This is considered to be a low risk as the project has gained political support and has the backing of user groups, key stakeholders, staff and members of the public.

2. Failure to attract sufficient resources to fund the capital bid.

This risk is considered to be low to medium. Countryside Services are working in partnership with colleagues to secure additional funding from external sources. The Barr Beacon Trust has confirmed that it will match fund these applications.

3. Failure to sustain the quality of the restoration activity undertaken through the project.

This risk is considered medium on the basis that resources to guarantee the long-term sustainability of new investment will be identified before the investment takes place. Additional revenue resources may be sought to complement the capital project or revenue funding may be redistributed internally to maximise efficiency and guarantee the sustainability of the project. The management plan will enable limited resources to be managed more efficiently and effectively by focusing directly inline with customer needs.

4. An unsuccessful bid

This risk is considered to be low to medium. Due to competition from other submissions, it is possible that HLF could reject the Stage 2 submission. This could delay the project by six to twelve months.

8.2 Performance management:

Delivering the project would improve the Council's performance in the provision of high quality, well maintained green space facilities and services, which meet local need, provide a safer environment and contribute greatly to the well being and quality of life of the local community.

In September 2008, Greenspaces subscribed to GreenSTAT, an online system that gives local residents the opportunity to comment on the quality of their open spaces and how well they feel they are being managed and maintained. It also allows site managers to compare the results with others up and down the country to give a truly national voice of what we think about our open spaces. Barr Beacon is one of the open spaces included, and the first results will be obtained later this year.

One of the Council's pledges is to *"... ensure more parks staff are present and visible in public places"*. A successful HLF scheme will help deliver this aim.

Securing a Green Flag Award for Barr Beacon is a target within the Greenspace Strategy Action Plan. Delivering this project would improve the chances of achieving this.

9. Equality implications

Barr Beacon plays a key role in bringing people together on common ground. The site can unite diverse communities through activities, education, celebrations, cultural events and engagement. Barr Beacon is open to all, regardless of ethnic origin, age or gender, and as such represents a democratic forum for the citizens of Walsall.

As part of the Greenspace Strategy, an Access Audit was undertaken across 23 parks and countryside sites. Recommendations for Barr Beacon included providing level access to all grassland and meadow areas, particularly to the war memorial and panoramic views. Although not part of the HLF submission, such improvements will be included in applications for match funding.

Further targeted consultation with marginalised groups will be carried out as the project is developed, which will help to refine access improvements.

10. Consultation

The Barr Beacon Trust Management Committee has been engaged throughout the development of the Heritage Project.

In September 2008, GreenSTAT was launched for Walsall. This online system gives local residents the opportunity to comment on the quality of their open spaces and how well they feel they are being managed and maintained. It allows site managers to compare the results with others up and down the country to give a truly national voice of what we think about our open spaces.

During March 2009, a public consultation questionnaire was made available to individuals and groups both online and in libraries and other public venues. The consultation, launched with a news release, sought people's thoughts about Barr Beacon and what improvements they would like to see.

Also in March 2009, a creative thinking workshop was co-ordinated by the Community Arts Team for members of the Barr Beacon Trust Management Committee and officers involved in the site's management.

Results from all these different consultations contributed towards the Stage 1 application.

The development of the second-round application will include the preparation of a schedule of work required for the restoration of the war memorial. This will be carried out by an external contractor. A feasibility study will also be undertaken into the delivery of a local internet site. Subject to this initial investigation, it may be possible to provide visitors with information about Barr Beacon direct to their mobile phones and other devices capable of receiving the Internet. Preproduction for a DVD ROM will also be carried out. This will be used to promote Barr Beacon to a wider audience and will feature educational programmes for use by schools, colleges and community organisations.

In order to demonstrate community involvement and give people an opportunity to engage in the project, three small-scale music events are planned for summer 2010. These, together with the project overall, will be promoted through the Barr Beacon Street Team. A small marketing and promotion unit will be visiting district centres to conduct surveys and generate interest and support for the project.

Background papers

None.

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