

Cabinet – 4 February 2009

Walsall Arboretum Restoration Programme

Portfolio:	Councillor Harrison, Leisure and culture
Service:	Neighbourhood Services, Leisure Culture and Lifelong Learning – Greenspace Services
Wards:	St Matthews and Paddock
Key decision:	Yes
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Summary of report

The Council's is planning to restore Walsall Arboretum, the borough's premier park, through a three year Restoration Programme. This will be delivered from late 2009 to 2012. If project funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is secured, work will be centred on the provision of a new flagship Visitor Centre adjacent to the Centre Green, the restoration of the parks historic building stock, footpaths, fencing, fixtures and significant horticultural improvements. Comprehensive landscape works will be carried out, existing park facilities upgraded and new facilities created within the park.

In order to obtain funding to deliver the proposed Walsall Arboretum Restoration Programme, the Council submitted a Stage 1 application to the HLF Parks for People Programme in March 2007. A Stage 1 'pass' was received in March 2008 and the Council was awarded a development grant of £220,000 to assist with the production of a Stage 2 application. This will be submitted by March 31st 2009.

A report was considered by Cabinet in February 2007 prior to the Stage 1 submission. This report is intended to:

- update Cabinet on the progress of the project,
- obtain agreement on the submission of the Stage 2 application,
- outline the intended procurement process for the capital works programme, and
- outline the resources required from the Council to successfully deliver the Restoration Programme.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet are asked to agree that:-

- 2.1 The Stage 2 application be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Funded Parks for People Programme by 31 March 2009,

- 2.2 The procurement of the capital works programme is placed on the Procurement Team's Forward Plan and put out to OJEU tender as soon as possible after the HLF award,
- 2.3 The Executive Director for Neighbourhood Services is granted delegated authority to award works contract(s) during the delivery of the scheme, and
- 2.4 The revenue and capital resources required to deliver the Restoration Programme in future years are committed each year within the budget process.

(The following Capital and Revenue investment has been allocated for the project through the mainstream capital programme and the revenue investment programme respectively over the following four years – point 2.4 above relates to the need to confirm these allocations on an annual basis as the capital and revenue budgets are set).

Capital programme resource

Year	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Total
	374,233	557,506	498,176	93,154	£1,523,069

Revenue investment programme resource (from reserves)

Year	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	Total
	40,000	80,000	70,000	73,000	£263,000

3. Background information

3.1 Project Timescales

- Submission of Stage 1 application March 2007
- Stage 1 pass March 2008
- Development of Stage 2 application April 2008 – March 2009
- Submission of Stage 2 application March 2009
- Decision by HLF at Stage 2 October 2009
- Project delivery Early 2010 - winter 2012

The Stage 2 application will request £4.7m funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund / Big Lottery Fund to part fund the delivery of the Arboretum Restoration Programme. If this application is successful and a match funding package secured, the £7.9m Arboretum Restoration Programme will be delivered between early 2010 and winter 2012.

3.2 Restoration Project areas

The majority of the restoration activity will be concentrated in the 'historic core' of the Arboretum. Work will be carried out in the following areas of the park:

- Zone 1 - the 1874 park. This includes Hatherton Lake, the Deep Pond and the Centre Green,
- Zone 2 - the 1892 extension. This includes the Broad Walk, Bowls Greens and the area known as the Lions Den, and
- Zone 3 – Provision of a new youth play facility adjacent to the children's play area.

3.3 Arboretum Masterplan (Proposed Capital works)

The proposed improvements to the park are illustrated in the Arboretum Masterplan and can be summarised as follows:

- Provision of a high quality Visitor Centre on the Centre Green to house a cafeteria, education classroom, meeting rooms, staff accommodation, park toilet facilities and changing rooms,
- Refurbishment of the Grade 2 listed Boathouse and park bandstand,
- Provision of a new youth play facility adjacent to the children's play area,
- Comprehensive footpath resurfacing and creation of new footpath networks,
- New bins, benches and signage,
- Repairs to park boundary walls and fencing,
- Restoration of park entrances,
- Horticultural improvements to rockeries, prestige planting areas, stream corridor and lake margins, and
- Comprehensive tree works to include new tree planting.

3.4 Restoration Programme - Revenue proposals

3.4.1 Staff structure

To support the delivery of the capital works and to ensure that the HLF investment in the park is protected, a new staff structure for the park was proposed within the Stage 1 application. This has been approved by HLF.

The structure includes three new staff posts which are viewed as key to the long-term sustainability of the park and its future management, maintenance and development as follows:

- Arboretum Parks Manager - To lead a team of staff dedicated to the management and maintenance of the Arboretum creating a benchmark for Service Delivery across the borough,
- Head Ranger - To supervise a team of rangers, assisting the Arboretum Manager in enhancing visitor enjoyment and expectation, promoting the value of the Arboretum as a visitor attraction, and
- Head Gardener – To supervise a team of gardeners to maintain the park to a high standard and achieve horticultural excellence in key areas of the park.

The Arboretum Parks Manager and Head Ranger posts will be 60% funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund for 5 years and it will be a condition of the

Stage 2 grant award that these posts are mainstreamed once the Restoration Programme has been delivered.

The Head Gardener post will be funded by the Council through enhancement of the existing Team Leader post within the park.

In addition to the above posts a Project Manager post (to co ordinate the development and delivery) of the Restoration Programme was created and this post was appointed in August 2008. This is a four year fixed-term post which will be 60% funded by the HLF. The remaining 40% will be funded by Walsall Council through additional revenue investment which has already been identified within the Council's existing revenue investment programme for the next four years.

3.4.2 Other revenue proposals

Additional project revenue proposals which will be part funded by HLF are as follows:-

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| • Training budget to support the delivery of the Training Plan | £10,000 |
| • Measuring the success of the project (Evaluation purposes) | £15,000 |
| • Marketing and promotional materials | £20,000 |
| • Overheads | £25,000 |

3.5 Stage 2 application

The Stage 2 application will consist of detailed plans and costings for all of the landscape and building work proposed within the Arboretum Masterplan. All of the supporting documents produced for the Stage 1 application are also being developed and finalised to meet the requirements of the HLF at Stage 2. These documents are as follows:-

- Design and Restoration Strategy (update of the Conservation Management Plan produced for the Stage 1 application) -to provide the justification for all of the work required within the park,
- 10 year Management and Maintenance Plan – an action plan to improve standards of management and maintenance within the park and ensure that the capital investment from the Restoration Programme is sustained,
- Audience Development Plan – an action plan to increase the number of visitors to the Arboretum and range of audiences that the park attracts,
- Business Plan (New Visitor Centre) – to demonstrate how the Visitor Centre will be managed and run to benefit a wide variety of users, and
- Training Plan – to develop a staff and volunteer training programme to increase the skill base involved in the management and development of the park.

A specialist consultancy team was appointed in August 2008 to assist with the preparation of the Stage 2 application (and the subsequent delivery of the project, subject to a Stage 2 award) and the Council has appointed a Project Manager to oversee the development of the project. (Post 60% funded by HLF, 40% funded by Walsall Council).

Project Progress meetings chaired by the Head of Greenspaces and attended by key council officers and members of the consultancy team are being held on a monthly basis to ensure that the project is on course and the Stage 2 submission deadline is met. Fortnightly Steering Group update meetings are also held with the Head of Leisure & Culture.

Specialist survey work was carried out in the park last year and the results of this work were used to inform detailed landscape and building design work. The detailed proposals are now available for consultation and copies have been placed in each of the Group rooms.

The supporting documentation is currently being finalised and subject to Cabinet approval the complete Stage 2 application will be submitted in March 2009.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

Stage 2 Project Development (April 2008 – September 2009)

The funding package for the project development period has been agreed as follows:

Development Costs	£
Fees for consultants	302,000
Project Manager	42,373
Recruitment/Overheads	4,000
Contingency	17,419
Total Development Costs	365,792
Funding	
Walsall Council (39.86%) Already secured through capital and revenue investment 2008/09	145,792
Heritage Lottery Fund (Development Grant) (60.14%)	220,000
Total funding:	365,792

The HLF Stage 1 development grant of £220,000 was awarded in April 2008 and the Walsall Council funding has been secured through mainstream revenue and capital investment programme.

Project Delivery (Spring 2010 to 2012)

The cost breakdown and proposed funding package for the delivery of the Restoration Programme are as follows:-

Restoration Programme Costs	£
Capital Works	5,151,874
Revenue / Activity Costs	£682,614
Contingency	£515,187
Inflation	£927,337
Future maintenance costs	£316,000
Total Costs	7,593,012
Funding	
Walsall Council Capital (secured)	1,523,069
Walsall Council Revenue (already secured within investment programme)	263,000
Heritage Lottery Fund (subject to Stage 2 award)	4,572,000
Landfill Tax funding (secured)	100,000
Match funding to be secured	1,134,943
Total funding:	7,593,012

4.1.2 Match funding

There is currently a shortfall in the project match funding package of just over £1.1m. Funding applications have so far been submitted to Advantage West Midlands and to Central Government (Communities and Local Government funding) to fill this gap. A recent funding application to Walsall Housing Group (VIEW funding) was unsuccessful.

The match funding package must be finalised before the Stage 2 application is submitted. If the match funding is not secured the Restoration Programme will have to be scaled back which will also result in a reduction in HLF funding.

Should the restoration programme be scaled back there will be no additional financial pressure for the Council as work will have to be planned within the constraints of the final funding package secured.

4.1.3 Walsall Council Financial Commitment

Walsall Council's capital and revenue funding is shown in the project funding package above.

The capital funding is contained within the mainstream capital programme and the revenue funding is earmarked within the revenue investment programme (from reserves) for the next four years (2009 – 2013).

The funding for the increased salary costs to the Council throughout the lifetime of the Restoration Programme is already secured and contained within the revenue investment programme over the following four years (2009-13). The Arboretum Manager and Head Ranger posts will be mainstreamed within the Council from 2013/14

once HLF funding for the project ceases. Resources will be reallocated from within the existing Green Spaces budget for this.

There is a HLF requirement to increase the maintenance budget to the Arboretum. It is anticipated that this additional budget will be funded from within the existing servicewide Grounds Maintenance budget.

The capital and revenue investments outlined above will be a condition of the Stage 2 grant award and are essential to demonstrate to HLF that the Restoration Programme will be sustained.

It will also be a condition of the grant award that the Arboretum obtains a Green Flag award in 2012 and maintains it for in the region of at least ten years.

4.2 Procurement

Procurement of the Capital Works Programme

It is intended that the Arboretum project be procured as one single package of works, however as the procurement strategy is finalised consideration will also be given to procuring the works as two main packages with the Visitor Centre (new build) comprising the first package and the second package comprising all remaining works.

The contract will be led by a main contractor for landscaping and architectural works and will potentially incorporate a series of subcontract packages for specified specialist works such as masonry works, boundary works and specialist crafts.

This does not preclude the development and letting of minor works contracts for example, for arboricultural works, demolitions or necessary works which may be desirable in response to overall programme management needs or to meet financial or funder requirements.

The contract package will comprise construction of the new principal building – the Visitor Centre, refurbishment of other buildings and structures, fencing works, enhancement of existing entrances; extensive and varied hard and soft landscaping components; installation of street furniture; drainage works and specialist craft activities.

Prospective contractors will be drawn together for consideration by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) monitors and project team. The procurement process will be managed by the Council's Procurement Team in line with national and European legal requirements. Selection will take into account the varied nature of the works (new build, restoration, landscaping and specialist craft) and the consequent requirement to manage specialist sub-contractors and suppliers. This is considered as the most economically advantageous method of procuring the works and will also facilitate improved on-site co-ordination.

Cabinet are requested to delegate authority to let the work contract(s), (within the parameters of the project budget), to the Executive Director Neighbourhood Services, in order to expedite the delivery of the Restoration Programme.

4.3 Legal:

Permission is required for the following work within the park:

- New build Visitor Centre (Planning Permission and Building Regulations)
- Building demolitions (Conservation Area consent)
- Building restoration / conversion (Planning Permission)
- Restoration of the Grade 2 Listed Boathouse (Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent)

All of the permissions will be in place before the Stage 2 application is submitted with the exception of Planning Permission for the new Visitor Centre. The planning application for the Visitor Centre has been delayed due to the need for a park flood risk assessment (FRA) from the Environment Agency to support the application. The FRA is due to be completed in March 2009 and ideally the Visitor Centre Planning application will be lodged before the Stage 2 application is submitted to HLF.

4.4 Staffing:

The intention will be to create a dedicated staff structure for the park with three new posts (See 3.4.1 Staff structure), in-line with HLF expectations.

5. Citizen impact

The regeneration of the Arboretum is a priority for the Council and for the people who live, work in and visit the town. The park provides a large area of open space close to the town centre where visitors can play, relax and exercise providing both physical and mental health benefits. The restoration of the park will offer an abundance of opportunities which will have a positive impact on quality of life within the borough and help to create a sense of civic pride.

An outline Audience Development Plan (ADP) was produced for the Stage 1 application which will be developed for the Stage 2 submission. The ADP identifies the range of current audiences / users of the park and their needs and priorities relating to facilities and provision within the park, based on the results of community consultation. The plan then identifies how improvements to the park will benefit current audiences and how new audiences will be attracted to the park.

During the development of the Stage 2 application baseline data on visitor numbers has been collected through an Observational Survey and the installation of Visitor Counters which will be used for comparison purposes in the future as the park is developed and new facilities created within the park. This data and the results of further community consultation undertaken (September 2008 – February 2009) will be incorporated within the finalised ADP which will form an action plan to boost park visitor numbers and turn the Arboretum into a regional visitor destination.

The new Head Ranger post will be responsible for visitor development activity.

6. Community safety

The Arboretum is Walsall's premier park and will set the standard in future for all other greenspaces throughout the borough. 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 (MMP) and subsequently put into practice.

The production of a 10 year MMP which is delivered and regularly reviewed by the new Arboretum Manager will ensure that concerns are 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 greenspaces are the most valued leisure and cultural facilities in Walsall. They are well used by residents of the borough for informal recreation, sports or as venues for events and activities. The restoration of the Arboretum will benefit local residents and park users and contribute to improving the quality of life in the Borough of Walsall.

Landscape evaluation and building condition surveys were carried out within the Arboretum as the Stage 1 bid was being developed. The results of this work demonstrate the deterioration of the overall fabric of the park and underpin the restoration vision.

The environmental impact of the restoration proposals have been considered carefully during the development of the Stage 2 application and the following specialist surveys were undertaken within the park last year (2008) to inform the detailed design process, these being:-

- Ecological surveys
 - Bat survey
 - Habitat survey
 - Watervole survey
 - Geodiversity assessment
- Ground investigations
- Appraisal of renewal energy options for the new Visitor Centre

Further ecological survey work will be carried out in spring / summer 2009 before any work commences on site.

Recommendations contained within the specialist reports will ensure that the proposed works are completed sensitively and a balance is achieved between the natural and built environment.

The information recorded about the park will also be used when producing park interpretation material in the future to assist park users in their understanding and enjoyment of the park environment.

8. Performance and risk management issues

8.1 Risk:

A project risk log has been produced and this is reviewed on a monthly basis by the Project Team at the Progress Meetings and on a weekly basis by the Project Manager and lead consultant.

The key risks to the project are outlined below:

- 1) Failure to secure the match funding package for the project

This risk is considered to be high to medium. The outcome of funding bids to Advantage West Midlands and Central Government is awaited.

- 2) Project budget (agreed at Stage 1) is exceeded

This risk is considered to be medium. The Council have a commitment to delivering the improvements contained within the Stage 1 masterplan and must do this within the project budget. Stringent budget checks are being carried out by the project Quantity Surveyor and the Project Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the scheme is delivered within budget.

- 3) Planning application for the new Visitor Centre delayed / refused

This risk is considered to be medium. Progress on the production of the Flood Risk Assessment is being closely monitored and preliminary discussions with the Environment Agency to establish their requirements for the Planning Application have been held. Discussions have been held with Planning staff. Some details need to be settled, but overall, the scheme is supported on present information.

8.2 Performance management:

The Arboretum Restoration programme links to the following performance indicator contained within the Green Spaces Service Plan:-

- KPI 119 - Resident satisfaction parks / open spaces
- Securing a Green Flag Award for the Arboretum in 2012 is a target within the Greenspace Strategy Action Plan,
- The regeneration of the borough's premier park is a priority project for the Council. Delivering the capital works programme and associated revenue activities will improve the Council's performance in the provision of high quality, well maintained green spaces 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.

- 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.

9. Equality implications

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

Access Audit

People with disabilities represent a large potential audience for the Arboretum and access and accessibility into and within the park need to be considered. An Access Plan was produced for the Stage 1 application which contains an action plan identifying priority works to improve access within the park; this ranges from physical entrance improvements and upgrading of pathways to reviewing the way the park is marketed and park information is provided. Representatives from Walsall's Disability Forum held 'walkabout' sessions within the park and fed back their concerns and issues over access, which influenced the content of the action plan. The new Visitor Centre will be accessible via ramps, be all on one floor, have disabled toilets, hearing loop and a range of other services and facilities.

It is recognised that there is also a need to improve future information, consultation and engagement with minority groups. The production of the Access Plan has identified a need to develop a planned approach to engaging with marginalised groups to identify wider barriers to the use of the Arboretum.

Further targeted consultation with marginalised groups will be carried out as the project is developed and the Access Plan action plan will be addressed in line with the delivery of the Restoration Programme.

A project Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) to identify how the proposed restoration programme will affect people covered by equalities legislation will be carried out in May/June 2009 before any work is carried out on the ground. As an Access Audit has already been carried out and plans are in place to improve access to the Arboretum it is anticipated that the EqIA will demonstrate that the Restoration Programme will have a positive benefit in terms of Equality.

10. Consultation

Comprehensive community consultation was carried out to inform the development of the Stage 1 application.

It is important that local people are involved in refining the plans for the Arboretum as the detailed designs are produced and further consultation has been carried out as part of the development of the project.

The Stage 2 consultation activities undertaken to date are summarised below:

- Young People's Stakeholder Forum (October 14th 2008). Consultation workshops around project proposals, preferred choice of youth facility within the park and designing a 'perfect park'
- Walsall Illuminations final weekend. Information panels and project questionnaire
- Adult Stakeholder Forum (November 13th 2008). Consultation workshops around project proposals, preferred choice of youth facility within the park and priorities activity
- Exhibition boards on display in Walsall Central Library with project questionnaires
- Project Information on Plasma Screen Displays in Civic Centre One Stop Shop and Walsall Central Library
- Citizen's Panel questionnaire. Arboretum questions included within December 2008 Citizen's Panel questionnaire
- Walsall Pride Article (Project Information and Caption Competition. Return date for caption competition 31st January 2009)

In addition to the above, the project has been marketed and promoted through the local press and project information is available on the Council's website www.walsall.gov.uk/arboretum

A project leaflet has been produced for marketing purposes and the project designs have been displayed in various community venues to allow people to identify their priorities for improvement within the park.

Background papers

Arboretum Masterplan (September 2007)

Proposed new Arboretum staff structure

Project Risk Log

Grounds Maintenance Briefing note

Stage 2 Parks for People Application, including detailed landscape and building proposals (available end March 2009)

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Jamie Morris
Executive Director

4 February 2009



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4 February 2009