

Cabinet – 22 April 2009

Barr Beacon Heritage Project

Portfolio:	Councillor Harrison, Leisure and Culture
Service:	Leisure Culture and Lifelong Learning – Greenspace Services
Wards:	Pheasey Park Farm and Streetly
Key decision:	No
Forward plan:	No

1. Summary of report

- 1.1. The report outlines the intention of Greenspace Services to submit a Stage 1 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Heritage Grants programme to support the restoration of heritage features at Barr Beacon and provides details on the submission process.
- 1.2. If successful, the application will result in a programme of about £750,900 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.
- 1.3. 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 Members are Trustees. Nevertheless, consideration is given to how the site is managed and maintained.
- 1.4. 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 and the Arboretum.
- 1.5. The submission of the Stage 1 application to the HLF Heritage Grants programme will be made by June 2009.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Barr Beacon Heritage Project is identified as a priority for seeking Lottery funding.
- 2.2 That the submission of a Stage 1 application for the Barr Beacon Heritage Project to the HLF Heritage Grants programme by June 2009 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 the scheme will only commence when approval from the funding provider has been received to ensure that there will be no unbudgeted call on the council's 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 During 2008, the Heritage Lottery Fund changed its Heritage Grants programme, starting the new scheme in April, but not considering applications before September. The application process involves two stages, but following a successful Stage 1 pass, development funding is not available for a Stage 2 submission.

3.8 HLF development officers have confirmed that restoration of heritage features such as the war memorial, flagpole and Scott plantation fencing would be appropriate for an application for funding, subject to:

- Clarifying how the project is prioritised in relation to other possible applications from Walsall Council;
- Explaining how the project links to local plans and other heritage sites;
- Demonstrating the heritage merit of the features of the project;
- Commissioning a conditions survey on the heritage features;
- Meeting the HLF's priority to enable people to learn about their own and others' heritage.
- Being creative in the way that people around the site are engaged; and
- Maximising the amount of match-funding towards the project.

3.9 A conditions survey of the war memorial, flagpole and Scott plantation fencing was commissioned in November 2008. A draft report was presented in February 2009, with a final report due around Easter.

3.10 It is anticipated that the heritage project will include the following elements, with indicative costs:

Project Manager (one year)	£ 35,000
Fulltime Community Liaison Officer (three years)	£ 75,000
War memorial	£420,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace the copperwork of the roof • Replace the leadwork 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	£ 15,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace flagpole base • Restore and replace flagpole 	
Scott plantation fencing	£ 7,400
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair / replace damaged railings 	
Archaeological exaction and community dig	£ 25,000
Community development, including events and interpretation	£100,000
Fees	£ 73,500
Total	£750,900

3.10 The anticipated timescale for the project is:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Submission of Stage 1 application | 15 June 2009 |
| • Decision by HLF at Stage 1 | September 2009 |
| • Development of Stage 2 application | October 2009 to March 2011 |
| • Submission of Stage 2 application | March 2011 |
| • Decision by HLF at Stage 2 | September 2011 |
| • Project delivery | October 2011 to September 2014 |

3.11 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 the Arboretum have been welcomed by the advisors.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

The total cost of the heritage project is £750,900. An application for 65-70% i.e. c£500,000 is to be made to the HLF Heritage Grants programme. Regeneration has allocated £10,000 match-funding, whilst the balance of £240,900 will need to be secured from the Barr Beacon Trust and other external grant bodies, such as the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme and War Memorials Trust. External funding will need to be sought and confirmed before the scheme commences to ensure there is no unbudgeted call on the council's resources. Should external funding not be fully secured, a further report will need to be brought to cabinet on this matter.

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 is being co-ordinated by Countryside Services staff in liaison with other Leisure and Community and Regeneration colleagues. The Stage 2 application would be prepared similarly. Project delivery would be undertaken by a Project Manager in the first year, with a Community Liaison Officer engaged later and 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 1 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 greenspace. 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 greenspaces 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 Local Nature Reserve was declared Walsall's eleventh LNR. 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 high. Due to very tight deadlines and competition from other June submissions, it is possible that HLF could reject the initial bid and ask the Council to re-submit in December 2009 or even June 2010. This will 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 greenspace 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 will contribute towards the Stage 1 application.

Background papers

A copy of the application form and supporting documents will be placed in the Members rooms (after 30 June 2009).

Author

Kevin Clements
Countryside Manager
☎ 451830
✉ clementsk@walsall.gov.uk



Jamie Morris
Executive Director
8 April 2009



Councillor Louise Harrison
Portfolio holder
8 April 2009