

## **Cabinet – 28 February 2006**

### **Arboretum Restoration Programme**

<b>Portfolio:</b>	Councillor Louise Harrison, Leisure and Culture
<b>Service:</b>	Leisure, Culture & Lifelong Learning – Greenspace Services
<b>Wards:</b>	St Matthews, Birchills Leamore, Pheasey Park Farm and Paddock
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Forward plan:</b>	Yes

#### **Summary of report**

The report outlines the intention of Greenspace Services to submit a Stage 1 Application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Parks for People Programme to support the restoration of Walsall Arboretum and provides details on the full submission process. If successful the application will result in a £6.7m restoration programme; the draft proposals for this programme are documented within the report and the potential sources of match funding for the bid are also highlighted.

The delivery of the restoration programme will have a financial implication for the Council as additional revenue funding will be required to guarantee the long term sustainability of the project; this is demonstrated within the report. Consideration is given to how the Arboretum is currently managed and maintained and how it will need to be managed in the future, both during delivery of the restoration programme and on completion of the project.

The restoration of the borough's premier site, as a stand alone project, is a priority for the Council. On a regional basis the restoration of the Arboretum has been included as a flagship project within the recent People's Millions Big Lottery Fund application by the Black Country Consortium - the 'Black Country as an Urban Park' which, if successful, will lead to additional funding to develop the green corridor from Walsall to Sandwell, incorporating the Arboretum. The restoration also has very strong links into the future development and improvement of the Illuminations.

The submission of the Stage 1 application to the HLF Parks for People programme will be made in March 2007 to fall in-line with the People's Millions project.

#### **Recommendations**

- (1) That cabinet approve the submission of a Stage 1 application to the Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) Parks for People Programme for a £5m grant towards the restoration of Walsall Arboretum,

- (2) Subject to a successful HLF Phase 1 award, it is proposed to employ a Project Manager on a fixed-term eighteen month contract from October 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, to develop a phase 2 bid over the next twelve months,
- (3) The additional revenue implications will be considered as part of the usual budget setting process for the 2008/9 financial year, and
- (4) That Cabinet authorise the Head of Leisure and Culture to act as the lead contact on the HLF application form.

## Resource and legal considerations

### Capital Funding

To apply for £5m HLF funding, 25% match funding (£1.7m) from other sources must be demonstrated. There is currently £1m identified within the Council's Capital Programme as follows:

2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
£50,000	£50,000	£100,000	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000

Other potential match funding sources are currently being explored by officers in partnership with Environmental Regeneration and it is hoped that 'agreement in principle' funding offers will be obtained from three funding bodies to the value of £670,000 by the March submission deadline.

The full project cost of the restoration would therefore be funded as:-

Heritage Lottery Fund	£5.00m
Walsall Council	£1.00m
Other funders	£0.67m
	£6.67m

### Project detail

Securing the HLF grant and related match funding will result in a £6.67m restoration programme, consisting of the following elements:

- Review of the park building stock with selective demolition of redundant buildings and creation of a new park visitor/education centre, cafeteria and ranger base incorporating new toilet facilities for park users
- Restoration of the Grade 2 listed boathouse - suggested future uses range from reintroduction of boating activity possibly through the Sports Development Team to use as a bird watching area/hide
- Refurbishment of the bandstand and redesign of the bandstand seating area
- Provision of a new youth play facility within the park

- Repair and / or replacement of boundary walls and fencing
- Improvements to park entrances
- Footpath resurfacing
- Soft landscaping works
- Programme of tree maintenance and management
- Provision of new site furniture
- Provision of new information and interpretation signage

Specific project proposals and cost estimates for individual items are currently being developed. In the event of all desired work exceeding the proposed project budget a prioritisation exercise will be undertaken by the project steering group (influenced by the results of the consultation process) to identify the final proposals to be included within the HLF bid.

For clarification, the restoration project will include the areas identified below:-

- Zone 1 ~ the 1874 park. This includes Hatherton Lake, the Deep Pond and the Centre Green,
- Zone 2 ~ the 1982 extension. This includes the Broad Walk, Bowls Greens and the Lions Den,
- The Lido and children's play area,
- The main length of fencing along The Broadway,
- The main pedestrian route to The Grange car park, and
- Some improvement works to the car park.

Any additional work outside of the scope of the HLF bid will then have to be identified and delivered through the Council's future capital programme.

A condition of the HLF award will be that the park must achieve Green Flag Status on completion of the restoration programme and sustain this for five years.

There is a strong link between the restoration project for the Arboretum and the previous Cabinet report (20 December 2006) regarding the Illuminations. Some improvements and infrastructure work which will benefit the Illuminations will be undertaken as part of the HLF project, however, additional applications will also need to be made to external funding partners and possibly the Council's capital programme for the Illuminations themselves.

## **Revenue Funding**

### Staffing

Within the criteria of the HLF bid, it is possible to request a 75% contribution towards the funding of relevant posts to develop and subsequently deliver the Restoration programme. The contribution would last for a period of five years. The plan is to submit the phase 1 bid to the HLF by March 30<sup>th</sup> 2007.

A decision will then be made by the end of September and, if successful, a phase 2 bid can be developed over the next twelve months. For this stage it is proposed to employ a Project Manager on a fixed-term eighteen month contract from October 1<sup>st</sup> 2007.

Whilst it is part of the longer term planning framework, if the phase 2 bid is successful, then the following staff would also be sought from February / March 2009:-

- Interpretation & Marketing officer (responsible for community consultation / visitor development),
- Head Gardener, and
- Arboretum Parks Manager

Walsall Council will be required to fund 25% of these posts for the duration of the restoration programme and this would cover three years during implementation and a further two years of the restored park being fully open.

These positions are key for the long term sustainability of the park and its future management, maintenance and development. Without such a structure, the HLF generally take the view that their investment will not be protected since the applicant authority is not willing to commit its own revenue and staffing commitment.

The additional revenue implications will be considered as part of the usual budget setting process for the 2008/9 financial year.

There will be scope for additional income generation through the new visitor centre and also enhanced use of the Arboretum generally by schools, events, weddings etc.

### Management and Maintenance

HLF stipulate the production of a ten year park Management and Maintenance Plan as part of their application process.

This document, which is currently being produced for the Arboretum, outlines the processes and costs involved in managing and maintaining the park at present and how these could change in the future. HLF require a commitment from Walsall Council to support the annual revenue funding available for managing and maintaining the park for ten years post completion of the Restoration Programme, i.e. 2012 - 2022. The running costs, which take into account new facilities to be managed and maintained and new staff posts required to manage and maintain the new facilities, will be documented in the Management and Maintenance Plan.

### Cost Implications

The proposed staffing structure for delivery of the Restoration Programme and staff restructure to demonstrate Walsall Council's commitment to sustaining the HLF investment will require revenue investment. This is coupled with the need for Walsall Council to demonstrate to HLF an uplift in annual revenue funding available for the Arboretum for ten years post completion of the Restoration Programme.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the additional revenue implications will be considered as part of the usual budget setting process for the 2008/9 financial year.

## **Project Timescale**

Subject to Cabinet approval, the HLF application will be submitted by the end of March 2007. There will then be a thorough assessment of the application and subject to this, it is anticipated that a decision will be released by 1 October 2007.

- Submission of Stage 1 application March 2007
- Anticipated decision for Stage 1 during September 2007
- Development of Stage 2 application (with Development Funding from HLF, 25% match funding required from Walsall Council) October 2007 - September 2008
- Submission of Stage 2 application September 2008
- Decision at Stage 2 March 2009
- Project delivery 2009 - 2012

## **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 restore a sense of civic pride.

As part of the Stage 1 HLF submission an Audience Development Plan will be produced for the park which will look at the range of current audiences / users of the park and their needs and priorities relating to facilities and provision within the park. The plan then identifies how improvements to the park will benefit current audiences and attract new audiences, boosting visitor numbers to the Arboretum.

## **Community safety**

The Arboretum is Walsall's premier park and will set the standard 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 and implemented on the ground. Concerns which 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.

## **Environmental impact**

A recent household survey undertaken during the development of the Green Space Strategy has shown 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. Consideration will also be given to improving the link between Walsall Town Centre and the Arboretum, to encourage town centre visitors / workers to explore the park and the facilities it offers. There are direct links into the Illuminations event and the idea of a “corridor of light” into the town.

The environmental impact of the restoration proposals are being considered carefully and the following specialist surveys are being produced as part of the application process:

- Ecology survey
- Hydrology survey
- Arboriculture survey
- Landscape condition survey
- Buildings condition survey

The results of these surveys will input into a Conservation Management Plan, (which will form the basis of the application to HLF), to ensure that proposed works are completed sensitively and a balance is achieved between the natural and built environment. After the Stage 1 application has been submitted to the HLF, it is intended to produce an ecological management plan for the park as a later phase of work, to complement the ten year management and maintenance plan, currently being written.

## **Performance and risk management issues**

### **i) Performance Management Issues**

The restoration programme links to the following performance indicators contained within the Greenspace Services Service Plan:

BV119e - Resident satisfaction parks / open spaces

Llc 5 - Number of friends / action groups supporting greenspace development

### **(ii) Risk Management Issues**

Risk 1 - Failure to obtain support for the restoration of the Arboretum

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

## Risk 2 - Failure to attract sufficient resources to fund the capital bid

This risk is considered to be low to medium. £1 million of capital funding had been identified over a 5 year period. It is currently in the prior year commitment section of the capital programme and the 2007/8 commitment will be confirmed in February 2007. Greenspace services are working in partnership with Environmental Regeneration to secure a further £700k from external sources.

## Risk 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 & maintenance plan will enable limited resources to be managed more efficiently and effectively by focusing directly in line with customer needs.

## Risk 4 - An unsuccessful bid

This risk is considered to be high. Due to very tight deadlines and competition from other March submissions it is possible that HLF could reject the initial bid and ask the Council to re-submit in September 2007 or even March 2008. This will delay the project by six to twelve months.

## **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 also need to be considered. An Access Plan is currently being written for the park which will contain an action plan to identify priority works to improve access within the park; this will range 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 have undertaken 'walkabout' sessions within the park and fed back their concerns and issues over access, which have influenced the content of the action plan.

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.

## **Consultation**

Project consultation has been planned to reach the maximum amount of people in the limited timescale. Consultation will be carried out as follows:

Ongoing consultation with the Arboretum User Group

Park User survey -to be completed on site

Online survey-to be promoted to staff, schools and park user contact databases-linked to updating of Arboretum pages on Council website and creation of new direct web address- [www.walsall.gov.uk/arboretum](http://www.walsall.gov.uk/arboretum)

Group survey- to be completed by park user groups and other community groups within Walsall

Articles in Walsall Pride, Team Spirit and Walsall Chronicle

Arboretum specific questions included within Citizens panel questionnaire (January)

Staff workshops- for Arboretum and Illuminations staff

Elected members workshop

Presentations to St Matthews, Birchills and Leamore and Pheasey and Paddock LNP meetings

Possible open day event in the park linked to Green Bridge project consultation

All consultation results will be fed into a report, which will demonstrate the priorities for improvement within the park. Where possible these priorities will be reflected in the final proposal list supplied to HLF and the report will be supplied as supporting information.

## **Vision 2008**

The links between the Council Vision and green spaces are set out below:-

1. Ensure a Clean and Green Borough
  - High quality management and maintenance of the Arboretum will ensure that Walsall's premier greenspace makes a positive contribution to a clean and green borough
2. Make it Easier for People to Get Around
  - The Arboretum provides a "Safer Routes to School" and offers traffic free routes between key residential areas
3. Ensure all People are Safe and Secure
  - A visible staff presence will help reassure visitors that the Arboretum is a safe place to visit.



- Robust management and maintenance systems can will ensure that the Arboretum is safe and secure
4. Make our Schools Great
    - The Arboretum is an excellent place for formal and informal learning
    - Environmental Educational is a cross cutting theme for the National Curriculum
    - The park provides a good venue for schools sports and other activities
  5. Make Walsall a Healthy and Caring Place
    - The Arboretum makes a positive contribution to a healthy environment, helping to ameliorate air pollution and provide sustainable urban drainage protecting the town centre from flooding.
    - The park provides a places for physical activity and recreation and supports physical and mental well being
    - The park supports a variety of wildlife and brings people into contact with nature on a daily basis which can have proven health benefits
  6. Encourage Everyone to Feel Proud of Walsall
    - A restored Arboretum will help create a sense of place and civic pride
    - Events and activities held in the park such as Walsall Illuminations help promote Walsall and attract visitors from outside the borough
    - The Arboretum, like the Art Gallery, will help promote tourism initiatives in the borough
  7. Strengthen the Local Economy
    - Recent research undertaken by CABE Space indicates that good quality parks help attract people and businesses to towns and cities
    - Good quality parks contribute to the attractiveness of an area and can increase land and property values
  8. Listen to What Local People Want
    - Walsall Council has demonstrated good practice in working with friends groups and other community based organisations for the last 15 years
    - Communities across Walsall will be involved with improvements to the Arboretum
    - Events and activities in parks can provide a good way of bringing communities together and allow consultation about other services
    - Extensive community consultation is currently being carried out to feed into the HLF application
  9. Transform Walsall into an Excellent Authority
    - Achieving the Green Flag Award will demonstrate the authority's commitment to improving green spaces in the borough
    - Improvements to service delivery relating to the borough's flagship park will help the authority demonstrate it's commitment to becoming an excellent authority

## Background papers

A copy of the application form and supporting documents will be placed in the Members rooms (after 30 March 2007)

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19 February 2007



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19 February 2007