

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: FALKIRK TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE (THI)  
UPDATE REPORT**  
**Meeting: EXECUTIVE**  
**Date: 19 NOVEMBER 2013**  
**Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report advises Members on the outcome of the Council's Round 2 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for funding to establish a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) in Falkirk Town Centre, and the programme for delivering the THI going forward.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Members will be aware that, after a successful Round 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, £2m was provisionally awarded to Falkirk in July 2012 to deliver a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) within Falkirk Town Centre Conservation Area. A critical condition of the HLF grant award was to prepare by May 2013 a detailed Round 2 THI bid establishing an Action Plan over the 5 year life of the THI supported by detailed costs and delivery plans. The Round 2 bid was submitted to HLF in May 2013.
- 2.2 Full details of the Round 2 submission, including the aims & objectives of the THI, are contained in the report to the Executive dated 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013. In summary, a Townscape Heritage Initiative is a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (with other match funders) which aims to help communities to regenerate conservation areas displaying particular social and economic need. The Falkirk THI area was selected on the basis of heritage need and is located mostly at the centre of the Falkirk Conservation Area and includes several of the town centre's commercial streets and many listed buildings.
- 2.3 The grant investment aims to help regenerate Falkirk Town Centre by repairing, restoring and preserving the area's heritage features and historic buildings, in a bid to create a more attractive streetscape, boost business and encourage more visitors, residents, services and retailers to the area. The funding will be used to:
- Repair and restore the area's important historic buildings and structures;
  - Improve the public realm;
  - Restore shopfronts to their traditional design;
  - Engage the community and help local people learn more about their heritage;
  - Provide training and job opportunities linked to the conservation of traditional buildings, historic environments and boosting town centre business.
- 2.4 Townscape Heritage Initiatives schemes have been successful up and down the UK in transforming Conservation Areas facing the same type of economic and social pressures as Falkirk and it is anticipated that this initiative will play an important part in the regeneration of the town centre.

### 3. FALKIRK THI ROUND 2 SUBMISSION APPROVED

- 3.1 Members are now advised that, at their meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2013, the HLF Trustees in London approved the detailed Round 2 bid and confirmed their £2 million grant award. This means that the Council can now progress with the implementation and promotion of this critical regeneration project for Falkirk Town Centre.
- 3.2 The HLF funding is in addition to the £1.6million previously awarded to Falkirk by Historic Scotland as part of their Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS). As a result of this, and funding from other partners, over £5 million will be invested in Falkirk Town Centre Conservation Area over the next five years.
- 3.3 The expenditure and funding matrix for the Falkirk THI project is largely unaltered since the Committee report dated 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013. The table below sets out the funding breakdown:

HLF grant	£1,949,900
Historic Scotland (CARS) grant	£1,600,000
Falkirk Business Improvement District (BID)	£54,000
Private owner's expected contributions	£661,230
Falkirk Council contribution	£1,304,070
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>£5,569,200</b>

- 3.4 As members were previously advised, Falkirk Council will be required to contribute to the THI through costs associated with public realm improvements (£1.1million) and in respect of its role as building owner. The total gross contribution the Council will be required to make is £1.304m. Existing capital programme and revenue budgets have £600k allocated to the Falkirk THI project and the net funding gap the Council will be required to confirm over the five year life of the THI is £704k. This will be met from revenue budgets although the scope for external funding opportunities is actively being explored.

### 4. FALKIRK THI DELIVERY PROGRAMME

- 4.1 The Council has recently recruited Susie Dibdin, THI Project Officer, to assist with promotion and delivery of the THI whilst Julia Branch who is an employee of Falkirk Community Trust, is the THI Heritage Engagement Officer, to promote and engage with schools, community, visitors and businesses. These two posts are critical to the delivery of the THI.
- 4.2 A THI project office is being established in the THI area, to be located in the newly refurbished office centre, The Hub, on Vicar Street from where both THI grant assistance and business support and Business Gateway advice will be made available.
- 4.3 Following 'permission to start' being granted by HLF, early actions in the delivery of the THI will include promotion of the THI, preparation of grant documentation and publicity materials, and an official 'launch' event.

- 4.4 As set out in the May report, a number of 'Priority Projects' were identified as part of the THI development stage, which will be the initial focus of efforts to secure upgrade, subject to support from their owners. These are:
- The Steeple
  - 16-18 Newmarket Street & 1-3 Glebe
  - 35-50 Newmarket Street & 14-32 Vicar Street
  - 25-29 Newmarket Street
  - 11-17 Kirk Wynd & 2 Manor Street
  - 20-22 Kirk Wynd
  - 6-8 Kirk Wynd
  - 185-189 High Street
  - 195-201 High Street
- 4.5 In addition to the Priority Projects, building owners with properties within the THI area will be able to apply for building repair grants to cover up to 85% of the eligible cost of bringing their properties into good repair, following best building conservation practice using appropriate natural or traditional materials.
- 4.6 Shop owners will also be offered the opportunity to transform their traditional shop fronts with the aim of making the streets more attractive and boosting the town centre's prosperity. The community engagement and training aspects of the THI will also be developed and progressed during Year 1.

## 5. FALKIRK TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 5.1 Members will be aware that the Falkirk Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) was presented to the Executive in August 2013 for approval.
- 5.2 The adoption of the CAMP was a condition of the HLF grant award and its publication and distribution marks a major early milestone in the progress of the THI.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 **Policy:** The Falkirk THI directly supports the Council's Town Centres Regeneration Strategy, Built Heritage Strategy and My Futures in Falkirk, as well as meeting key objectives of the Falkirk Business Improvement District, Falkirk Community Trust, the Strategic Community Plan, Corporate Plan and Development Plan are also met.
- 6.2 **Legal:** The Council is required to sign a grant award contract with both the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Scotland setting out the governance arrangements for the Falkirk THI. Incumbent on the Council is the requirement to ensure that appropriate planning enforcement and compliance arrangements are in place.
- 6.3 **Financial:** As set out in section 3.4 above, the Council is expected to contribute £1.304m through existing capital programme and revenue budgets. A total of £600,000 had already been identified and the balance will be secured through Council budgets and/or external funding over the five years of the initiative.

- 6.4 **Personnel:** As noted above, two posts have been created to enable the delivery of the Falkirk THI over the next five years. Both posts are primarily funded through the grant awards made by the HLF and Historic Scotland. The THI delivery and outcomes will be managed by the Growth and Investment Manager within Economic Development and Environmental Services.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 Town centre regeneration is an important Council priority. Through bringing building owners, retailers, delivery partners and the local community together and acting as a key facilitator of the Falkirk THI, the Council is playing a vitally important role in bringing investment to Falkirk town centre, enhancing its economic, civic and heritage function for the wider Falkirk community. The success in securing the HLF award enables significant steps to be taken in the regeneration of Falkirk town centre and support for its local businesses over the next five years.

- 7.2 The progress of the Falkirk THI will be subject of further reports to convey progress in line with the THI governance and reporting structures.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 **It is recommended that the Committee:**

- a) **notes the successful outcome of the Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative Round 2 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund;**
- b) **agrees to progress the Townscape Heritage Initiative to the delivery stage as described in this report; and**
- c) **agrees to receive further annual reports on the delivery of the THI and any additional implications for the Council.**

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**DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**Date: 11 October 2013**

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### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 1. Executive Committee Report dated 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013
- 2. Falkirk THI Files.

Anyone wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone 01324 590971 and ask for Peter Reid.