

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: THE HELIX**  
**Meeting: FALKIRK COUNCIL**  
**Date: 14 MARCH 2012**  
**Author: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Members will recall the terms of the report on the proposed revised governance arrangements for the Helix project reported to a special meeting of the Full Council held on 23 January 2012. This report is attached for ease of reference as Annex A. Members, at that time, agreed to the following:-
- (a) to confirm their agreement in principle to the proposals for the governance review described in the report including the dissolution of the Helix Trust and the assumption by the Council and Falkirk Community Trust of the services previously to be delivered by the Helix Trust and the Helix Futures' Trust ;
  - (b) subject to all necessary external approvals and consents, to authorise the Chief Executive to take forward the work required to implement the proposals and
  - (c) to instruct the Chief Executive to report back to this meeting for final approvals to the extent of the council's interests.
- 1.2 This report describes the progress to date on the transition work and provides Members with a further update on the progress of the Helix project itself.

**2. TRANSITION PROCESS**

- 2.1 Since Members last met as a full council, a number of work strands associated with the transition programme have been progressed. This work involves contributions from the primary funding partners, Falkirk Council and British Waterways Scotland, together with Central Scotland Forest Trust as a subsidiary (non funding) partner together with the Big Lottery Fund and Falkirk Community Trust. In addition the Helix Trust has been heavily involved in the preparation for handover and the wind up of the Trust itself.
- 2.2 The Helix Trust, having undertaken the governance review, including the option appraisal exercise referred to in the previous report, now requires to ensure that appropriate and effective measures are taken to properly wind up the Trust. This will include arranging for proper disbursement of assets, overseeing the staff transfer arrangements and ensuring that all other obligations that currently sit with the Helix Trust are properly fulfilled or migrated to their respective new locations. This Trust's board has established a transition subgroup to oversee this work and report back to the full board at its monthly meetings. The Trust will have to ensure that it leaves no

- unnecessary residual liabilities with itself or board members which would prejudice a clean handover on transition day. Thus far the Trust is moving forward with its work plan having encountered no significant obstacles.
- 2.3 Meetings have taken place with Big Lottery Fund representatives at which the transition proposals were covered in detail. Whilst there will require to be formal approval confirmed by BLF in terms of their own governance process, and this is factored into the critical path of our work plan, the merit of the proposals for transition has been acknowledged by the funding provider. The increased proximity of the funding partners to the project has benefits in terms of scrutiny and accountability as well as integration with other complementary activity in the area and a sense of increasing local ownership. BLF recognise the aspiration of the delivery partners to achieve these aims and acknowledge that improvements to the efficiency of operations will assist the long term sustainability of the project. They further note that the project should also be unaffected adversely by any proposed changes. We require to update the Big Lottery Fund regularly on the transition arrangements, report on general progress and on the particular safeguarding measures for their interests that we have agreed.
- 2.4 Contact has been made with the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator. Advice has been received in respect of its requirements for transition and this will be followed. A workstream has been included to ensure that all activities associated with this formal consent process are properly concluded. No significant issues are anticipated that will impact adversely on the transition programme.
- 2.5 Consultation with the staff employed by the Helix Trust has commenced and the detailed work associated with staffing issues is now under way. As has been previously reported to Members, the capital stream of the Helix project is delivered by Helix Trust staff working in association with officers from the Council, primarily Development Services. Other Council officers, but primarily those from Falkirk Community Trust, are heavily involved in project work on the People and Enterprise themes. It is anticipated that, given the amount of actual task integration that has already taken place and the amount of day to day cross agency work undertaken, the staff transition arrangements which will be effected should be seamless. However, where any potential transfer of undertaking is to be effected, the legal issues can be complex and require to be handled with precision and sensitivity. Further detailed work in this regard requires to be completed over the course of the next short while.
- 2.6 The board of Falkirk Community Trust considered the transition proposals at its meeting on 26 January 2012. The board members concluded that the Helix is an ambitious project which will transform the landscape between Falkirk and Grangemouth and create an exceptional level of community engagement. They took the view that these ambitions fitted very well with the goals and values of the Community Trust and that it would be appropriate for the Trust to have an active role in the Helix's future development and operations. Accordingly, the board agreed in principle to the transition proposal and for the Trust Chief Executive to represent

the trust in taking the proposal forward with the Council, BWS, CSFT and the demitting Helix Trust.

As might be expected, a significant part of the transition work plan comprises creation of the strategic and operational plans which will be put in place with Falkirk Community Trust for the delivery of the longer term outcomes from the Helix project. These plans are being developed via a series of workshops and meetings and will form a large part of the contract documentation which will regularise the relationships amongst the various parties.

- 2.7 In addition to all of the work described above a fair amount of time has been spent on revising the legal and other documentation which describes and manages how the parties will interact with each other. These documents will comprise inter alia the partnership agreement, which will detail the project and the relationship that the primary funding partners will have to it and each other. There will also be an agreement between the partners and the council in respect of the services and a modified version of the existing joint funding agreement between the council and Falkirk Community Trust for the purpose of integrating the Helix activities into this managed environment.

Further miscellaneous documentation in relation to, for example, asset transfer registers etc is also nearing completion.

### **3. PROGRESS OF THE PROJECT**

- 3.1 The capital element of the project continues to see increased presence on the site. Whilst the southern paths network is now largely complete and nearing handover, the access road contract to provide access to the canal hub and Kelpie developments, is proceeding to plan. Works in respect of the canal based infrastructure are primed to start soon following completion of the relevant s75 agreement and the release of planning permission. A report on the tender process in respect of the Kelpies themselves is included as a separate agenda item for this meeting. Tenders for the public realm works (Central Park & the new canal hub) will be due back on 21 March, with a final set of smaller packages to the Helix North which will include path construction, woodland management and public art installations will be procured this year.

The Council's Best Value Forum met on Friday 2 March and heard details of the first of the "sentinel" public art features to be incorporated into the Helix site at Abbotshaugh Wood which serves the Langlees, Bainsford and Carron communities. The Planning Committee will consider the corresponding planning application at its meeting on 7 March. A final planning application will be submitted for a 2<sup>nd</sup> public art feature within the next 4 months.

- 3.2 In addition to the people and enterprise activities highlighted to Members in the previous report, some further developments within these themes are as follows :-
- 3.3 (a) The Helix team, in conjunction with Development Services, British Waterways and Bespoke (Callendar Estates Cycle Project) are working to create communications and marketing around the emerging cycle network in the area which has the opportunity to be one of the best connected cycle networks in Scotland. As part of this the following streams are being developed to help promote and develop this.
- Development of volunteer Cycle Champions from the connecting communities.
  - Working with and promoting Larbert High School as an exemplar school for cycle development/training and community cycling support.
  - Commencing cycle tours that will take in the Helix site but can be developed out to the wider community and core path areas.
  - Creation of maps which are specific to the Helix but ensure reference to the wider network.
  - Review of potential social franchises to provide support to the wider cycle network thereby creating potential enterprise opportunities.
  - A major cycling conference is due to be held which bring together all cycling stakeholder groups in and around the local area to ensure multi party support for the initiative.
  - A major cycling event will take place at Falkirk Stadium on Saturday 16 June as part of bike week.
  - In addition 10 new bikes have now been delivered as part of the Helix bike library.
- (b) The first Helix Red for Heart day attracted 50 enthusiasts from the local business community and a total of £1400 was raised for the British Heart Foundation. Regular netwalking events are now planned to be carried out with local businesses on the Helix path network
- (c) The Helix bus tour volunteers will feature in a forthcoming Falkirk Herald as the paper's Group of the Week. Tours kick off in earnest at the beginning of next month
- (d) Plans are in hand for a summer programme of "Meet the species" with events in scheduled in Westquarter, Langlees, Grangemouth, Polmont and one partnering with Communities along the Carron.
- (e) Schools liaison work continues to build with firm connections made now with all secondary schools and many primary feeders

- (f) The beekeeping training course continues with participants hoping to develop a social enterprise base. The locations for the apiaries are close to being finalised.
- (g) The volunteer programme is now in place in partnership with CVS and BTCV. This will help develop the existing volunteer network in terms of training opportunities and will create opportunities for new volunteers.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Since the decision of the council just over seven weeks ago to pursue, along with our partners and other stakeholders, the transition of the Helix project governance from the existing arrangement to that outlined at that meeting, a great deal of positive progress has been made. However some activities are yet to be completely concluded and all strands of the work, involving some seven different organisations finally pulled together. The project itself is also at a critical stage of activity particularly in relation to the capital elements.

4.2 It is expected that the remaining outstanding transition work will be able to proceed to satisfactory conclusion in early course. In the meantime, the project continues to gather momentum and enjoy a raised profile and increased community interest in the area

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

**5.1 It is recommended that Members note the progress made in relation to the Helix governance transition programme and receive a future report on concluding matters at the next appropriate meeting after the election recess.**

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**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Date: 5 March 2012

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