

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: FALKIRK TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE UPDATE REPORT
Meeting: EXECUTIVE
Date: 7 MAY 2013
Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report advises Members of the progress of the Council's bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and updates on the Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) proposed projects and funding matrix, to be submitted as a Round 2 submission to the HLF in May 2014.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) is a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) 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
- 2.2 In September 2012 Economic Strategy & Development Committee noted the successful outcome of the Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative Round 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery fund with a provisional award of £2m for delivery of a THI in Falkirk and agreed that a Round 2 submission for the Falkirk THI be prepared. A further update to Committee in February 2013 advised on progress of the Round 2 bid and that this must be submitted to the HLF by May 2013. The Round 2 bid identifies and costs in detail the projects to be delivered by the THI and methodology for delivery.
- 2.3 The Committee were also advised of significant additional match funding secured for the Falkirk THI with the successful application by the Council to Historic Scotland's Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS), awarding in January 2013 an additional £1.6m to the Heritage Lottery Fund award. Both the HLF and Historic Scotland awards represent the largest awards that have recently been made under the THI and CARS schemes to a town in Scotland, with the bid recognised as one of the strongest seen in the UK. The overall cost of the THI has been identified as £5.085m and will be delivered over a period of 5 years in line with a HLF contract established on approval.

3. FALKIRK TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE (THI)

- 3.1 The Falkirk THI will adopt an integrated approach, targeting the unique townscape of the area; building on the strength of local use and actively promoting the quality and diversity of independent retail and service businesses. The objectives include improving the connections, encouraging enterprise and business growth and attending residential investment in the town centre. It will help create more of a town centre destination, to complement the Falkirk Wheel, Callendar House and Park and the Helix as it develops. Investment in the THI will also help accelerate the wider regeneration of Falkirk town centre.

- 3.2 The Council has prepared the Round 2 bid with an updated boundary as identified on the plan in Appendix 1. The original boundary was defined prior to the Round 1 application, based on eligibility criteria of the HLF including building condition, vacancy and heritage risk. The boundary has been extended slightly, taking on board feedback from businesses and the public following consultation.
- 3.3 The Falkirk THI is specifically targeted to provide support by:
- Making grants to businesses, tenants and residential owners to upgrade properties within the THI area
 - Targeting vacant properties with grants to bring them back into economic use
 - Providing grants for the provision of new or improved shop fronts that reflect the town's heritage and Conservation Area status
 - Restoration of architectural detail and grants for repairs to buildings with more sympathetic materials used such as windows, gutters, roof and stone work
 - Enhancing the public realm of a number of streets off the High Street to improve surfaces and closes, increasing the heritage character and make them safer and more accessible to the public and shoppers
 - Provision of training initiatives and support for independent retailers
- 3.4 The THI will promote building repair and shop front grant opportunities in Glebe Street, Newmarket Street (northside), Vicar Street, Kirk Wynd, Manor Street, Wooer Street, Cow Wynd and traditional properties opposite Callendar Square Shopping Centre. The Steeple and other key properties in the THI area are identified as Priority Projects where additional opportunities for the use of vacant space will be developed. Finally, public realm improvements to streetscape and wynds will build on recent improvements to the historic churchyard quarter and Newmarket Street in the town centre.
- 3.5 The Round 2 bid has been developed by a specialist conservation design team of Gray Marshall Associates and Doug Wheeler Associates, in conjunction with Council officers and the delivery partners. It reaffirms the Falkirk THI will be delivered in partnership with The Falkirk Community Trust, Falkirk Council's Employment & Training Unit, Falkirk Towns Ltd and the Falkirk Local History Society. All partners are in agreement as to the key themes and projects to be delivered.
- 3.6 To finalise the Round 2 bid, the following activity has been undertaken:
- Preparation of detailed costings, design and cashflows for projects identified within the THI area over the projected 5 year life of the THI.
 - Recruitment of a THI Project Officer to promote the project and liaise with businesses and property owners within the area.
 - Recruitment of a Heritage Community Engagement Officer to deliver a THI education, interpretation and participation strategy to the community, schools and businesses served by the Falkirk town centre.
 - Workshops, preparation of awareness raising literature and interviews with local property owners, tenants, residents, businesses and property agents.
 - Public consultation promotion, events and display panels at central town centre locations.
 - THI Information and activity to date made available on dedicated pages within the Council website: www.falkirk.gov.uk/falkirkthi.
 - Preparation of a programme and costs for delivery of the project

4. FALKIRK THI ROUND 2 DELIVERY THEMES

- 4.1 To achieve the Falkirk THI vision, a series of three strategic themes have been established in the Round 2 submission.

1. Investing in the Unique identity of Falkirk

Grant aid will be available to address key priorities affecting the Falkirk town centre built environment. Subject to meeting THI criteria, grants will be available to be deliver property repairs that use traditional materials, reinstate traditional detailing; timber sash & case windows, cast iron rainwater goods & Scottish slates; shopfront improvements following approved guidance. The Falkirk THI will promote an increase in residential properties in the spine of the town centre, using the 'Living in Falkirk Town Centre' brand, supported by public realm improvements to better connect the different parts of Falkirk town centre and create an attractive environment. The town centre buildings within the THI area assessed as priority projects are:

- The Steeple
- 16-18 Newmarket Street & 1-3 Glebe Street
- 35-50 Newmarket Street & 14-32 Vicar Street
- 25-29 Newmarket Street
- 11-17 Kirk Wynd & 2-2F Manor Street
- 20-22 Kirk Wynd
- 6-8 Cow Wynd
- 185-189 High Street
- 195-201 High Street

Subject to support from their owners, these buildings will be the focus of efforts to secure upgrade.

2. Boosting town centre business and improving the retail and visitor offer.

In partnership with the Falkirk BID, the Falkirk THI will deliver support for businesses including 'shop doctor' master classes, a retail incubator, mentoring and support for young innovators to start up retail businesses, employee training, customer service training, development of quality cultural offer, cafe/bar & restaurant venue facilities and a private landlords forum to improve management standards & maintenance.

3. Delivering effective training and interpretation.

In partnership with the Employment and Training Unit delivery of a training plan targeted at building owners, businesses, contractors, youth, volunteers and schools with skills training and improved employment opportunities; Workshops for owners/businesses and a tailored 'Conservation Area Maintenance & Shop Fronts Guide'; and training placements through the Council's Community Benefits in Procurement policy.

- 4.2 In partnership with the Falkirk Community Trust and The Falkirk Local History Society the THI will deliver community, visitor and schools engagement events drawing public attention to the town centre's built historic environment. Critical to this will be the role and history of The Steeple, celebrating its 200th anniversary during 2014. Additional events will include exhibitions, doors open days, town tours, presentations and living history events.

5. FALKIRK THI ROUND 2 DELIVERY COSTS & FUNDING

- 5.1 The expenditure and funding matrix for the Falkirk THI project is summarised in Appendix 2. The total eligible cost of the Falkirk THI is £5.085m. The funding matrix requires private owner contributions of £229,000 enabling grant intervention rates of up to 90%. Combined HLF and Historic Scotland funding of £3.55m has been awarded to the Falkirk THI (£50,000 was awarded previously by HLF to assist with set up costs). The Falkirk BID will contribute match funding of £54,000 towards shop front grants.
- 5.2 Falkirk Council will be required to contribute to the THI through costs associated with non eligible grant public realm costs (£1.1m) and in respect of its role as building owner. The total gross contribution the Council will be required to make is £1.249m. Existing capital programme and revenue budgets have £600,000 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 £649,000. The confirmed budget will be the subject of a further report once a decision on the stage 2 award has been reached by HLF.
- 5.3 The net amount may be further reduced by match funding applications to bodies such as Falkirk Environment Trust who have formally confirmed support for the THI initiative as well as other match funding streams. All grant awards and contracts will be the subject of the Council's Standing Orders and HLF and Historic Scotland grant award conditions.

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:** At Round 2 approval the Council will be invited 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 will be the requirement to ensure that appropriate planning enforcement and compliance arrangements are in place.
- 6.3 **Financial:** The total eligible cost of the Falkirk THI is £5.085m. As set out in section 5.2 above, the Council is expected to contribute £1.249m through existing Capital Programme and Revenue budgets. The Council will be required to confirm the means of contributing the net £649,000 in a further report to the Council once the HLF discussion on the stage 2 award has been reached.
- 6.4 **Personnel:** Critical to delivery of the Falkirk THI will be the recruitment of two posts:
- the Falkirk THI Project Officer with specific heritage led regeneration and conservation experience to assist grantees and ensure best value and all grant conditions are met and
 - the Falkirk THI Heritage Engagement Officer to promote and engage with schools, the community, visitors and businesses.
- 6.5 Both posts are funded through existing grant awards made by the HLF and Historic Scotland. They will be based centrally within Falkirk town centre to

promote day to day engagement in the THI project. 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 £3.6m from the HLF and Historic Scotland to deliver the Falkirk THI enables significant steps to be taken in the regeneration of Falkirk town centre and support for its local businesses over the next five years. The conclusion of the Round 2 development phase of the Falkirk THI will confirm the projects costs and funding and represents the completion of the next critical step in delivery of this major project.

7.2 The progress of the Falkirk THI will be subject of further reports on the outcome of Round 2 and to convey progress in line with the THI governance and reporting structures.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) **agrees the proposals for the Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative Round 2 submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund as set out in this report; and**
- b) **agrees to receive further reports on the outcome of the Round 2 bid and any additional implications for the Council.**

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DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Date: 16 April 2013

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1. Falkirk THI Files.

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