

Report

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Report to:	Enterprise Services Committee
Date of Meeting:	17 May 2016
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Strathaven Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme and Amendment to Renewable Energy Fund Application
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ seek Committee approval for Planning and Economic Development Services to lead the Council's involvement in a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) for Strathaven.
- ◆ seek approval for a revised grant application from the Calder Water and West Browncastle Renewable Energy Funds

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

(1) that Planning and Economic Development Services take the lead in the delivery of a Conservation Regeneration Scheme (CARS) for Strathaven based on an award of funding from Historic Environmental Scotland.

(2) that the previously approved Renewable Energy Fund award to Avondale Civic Society be amended to £252,000 from Calder Water and West Browncastle Renewable Energy Funds towards the Strathaven CARS Project.

3. Background

3.1. Historic Environmental Scotland operate a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) which provides financial assistance over a five year period for conservation based regeneration and conservation initiatives undertaken by Councils or National Parks, Community Groups and third sector organisations.

3.2. South Lanarkshire Council prepared an application to this scheme for Strathaven in 2012 which was ultimately unsuccessful. Following a period of evaluation, and taking on board constructive dialogue with Historic Environmental Scotland, a second bid was submitted. This bid was submitted in August 2014 and was approved in January 2015 involving £625,000 of support from Historic Environmental Scotland.

3.3. A key outcome from the first bid was the need for the development of a partnership between South Lanarkshire Council and a range of local community groups

operating under the umbrella of the Market Towns Initiative. This partnership has been strengthened over the past three years with consultation events reflecting strongly the desire to support the CARS proposal.

- 3.4. The CARS project will be delivered through a partnership between the Council and community representatives drawn from Avondale Civic Society, Strathaven Community Council, Strathaven Business Association and the Rotary Club of Strathaven. This will feed into and link with established community / Council governance structures, such as the Strathaven Town Group, and the activities and priorities that they are pursuing.
- 3.5. In preparation for the overall CARS project, a Strathaven Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) and Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) have been prepared in accordance with guidance of Scottish Ministers and will provide a means to:-
 - set out the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area
 - define what is worthy of protection and enhancement
 - provide design guidance for future development
 - identify and explain the Council's intentions for protection and enhancement
- 3.6. Once adopted, the CAA and CAMP will provide supplementary planning guidance to assist in:-
 - the preparation and assessment of development applications
 - planning briefs and other area based proposals
 - promoting the special qualities and distinctiveness of Strathaven's built environment
 - supporting bids for external funding.
- 3.7. A draft Strathaven Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan was presented to and approved by the Planning Committee on 15 December 2015. The documents will go out to public consultation and, thereafter, any comments will be taken into account in finalising them. In turn, they will become a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications within the Strathaven Conservation Area.

4. Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)

- 4.1. The CARS project will play an important role in protecting and enhancing the character of Strathaven Conservation Area set out in the CAMP and contributing to vitality of the town centre and the town itself. The funding for the project is drawn from a number of sources : (1) the grant offer from Historic Environment Scotland (£625,000) , (2) developers' contributions that are specifically allocated to support works to historic environment (£165,000), (3) renewable energy fund, details of which are set out in section 5 of the report (£252,000), (4) contributions from owners of the buildings (£162,000) and (5) the Council's contribution which comprises existing budget for works to the road/footways and officers' resources in the management of the project (£294,000). It is important to note that there is no new Council funding being allocated to the project. Taken this together, it establishes a project budget of £1,498,000.
- 4.2. As stated above, the overall purpose of the project is to enhance and safeguard the conservation area, contribute to the vitality and viability of Strathaven Town Centre and, in turn, the town itself. In this regard, the project has 5 key elements:

1. Regeneration of the Historic Town Centre
2. Small Grants Scheme
3. Shop Front Improvements
4. Education and Training
5. Public Realm Works

- 4.3. The grants will only be available for specific conservation related repairs or reinstatement using traditional materials and is not intended to cover routine maintenance, internal cosmetic works or other improvements to properties. It is envisaged that grants will generally be awarded at up to 80% of eligible work costs. Through this work, it is intended to support the construction sector and build capacity to ensure future works that are undertaken are consistent with conservation area objectives.
- 4.4. The CARS project team will work closely with business support colleagues, shop owners and other businesses with the aim to develop and improve their business to complement the physical improvement works.
- 4.5. The CARS will allocate funding utilising the same procedures and processes presently followed by the Renewable Energy Fund utilising the new online system for ease of use. All applications received will be verified for eligibility before being assessed and scored against a list of set criteria.
- 4.6. Applications for grant of up to £20,000 will be approved using the scheme of delegation whilst applications for grant of over £20,000 will be reported to the Enterprise Services Committee. All spend will be reported to Committee on an annual basis.
- 4.7. Subject to Committee approval, the project will commence in May 2016 and run until March 2021.

5. Calder Water / West Browncastle Renewable Energy Fund

CARS

Project Cost – £1,498,000

Proposed Grant Award – £252,000

- 5.1. Over the past five years, a number of local organisations in Strathaven have worked together under the umbrella of the Market Towns Initiative and produced three extensive public consultation studies, identifying work packages at Common Green and Allison Green.
- 5.2. At the February 2015 Enterprise Services Committee, Avondale Civic Society (ACS) was awarded a grant of up to £75,000 towards works at the Common Green and Allison Green in Strathaven. The works were to be complemented by improvements being undertaken within the town centre by Roads and Transportation Services.
- 5.3. Building upon the coordinated strategic approach of the CARS, ACS has proposed that the Strathaven Town Centre works form part of the overall CARS project and that additional Renewable Energy Fund monies are sought.
- 5.4. It is proposed that the additional REF funding will be utilised for education and training initiatives being undertaken by the CARS project along with physical works at the Town Mill, a key building and venue within the local community.

5.5. The CARS project has a total cost of £1,498,000 with total eligible costs of approximately £420,000. The proposed revised award of REF is £252,000 over the five year lifetime of the CARS.

6. Employee Implications

6.1. The CARS Project will be managed by a Project Development Officer from Planning and Economic Development Services from within existing staff resources.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. Historic Environment Scotland has awarded £625,000 to SLC. Any cost to the Council is from existing budgets with no new or additional money required.

8. Other Implications

8.1. The risks associated with the individual projects are focused on the potential for cost overruns or delays to the programme. The applicants have indicated that any cost increases will be managed within their present budget subject to agreement on any changes to the proposed project. This is highly unlikely to have an impact on the Council.

8.2. Delays to the programme will have no impact on the Council.

8.3. Without the contribution from the Community Benefit Funds, it is highly unlikely that this project will proceed.

8.4. There are no implications for sustainability in terms of the information contained within this report.

8.5. Each of the Community Benefit Funds listed have sufficient resources to meet the proposed grant award commitment detailed in this report.

9. Equality Impact Arrangements and Consultation Arrangements

9.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

9.2. All necessary consultation arrangements, including any community consultations, have taken place.

Michael McGlynn

Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

4 May 2016

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Values

- Improve the quality of the physical environment.
- Develop a sustainable Council and communities
- Strengthen partnership working, community leadership and engagement
- People focused
- Efficient and effective use of resources

Previous References

- 17 February 2015 – Enterprise Resources
- 15 December 2015 – Planning Committee

List of Background Papers

- Strathaven CARS Application Form.
- Strathaven CARS award letter.

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Stuart Hodge, Project Development Officer, Planning and Economic Development Services,
Montrose House, 154 Montrose Crescent, Hamilton

Ext: 4759 (Tel: 01698 454759)

E-mail: stuart.hodge@southlanarkshire.gov.uk