

Report

Report to:	Community and Enterprise Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	9 August 2022
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Scottish Government Vacant and Derelict Land Fund Programme 2022/2023
----------	--

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ advise the Committee of progress made during 2021/2022 in implementing the South Lanarkshire Delivery Plan for the Scottish Government financed Vacant and Derelict Land Fund (VDLF)
- ◆ seek approval for the VDLF Programme for 2022/2023

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the progress made during 2021/2022 in delivering the agreed Vacant and Derelict Land Fund Programme in South Lanarkshire be noted; and
- (2) that the allocation of funds in the 2022/2023 Vacant and Derelict Land Fund Delivery Plan, as set out in paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2, be approved.

3. Background

3.1. The Scottish Government allocation to South Lanarkshire for the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund for the financial year 2021/2022 was £737,000. A Local Delivery Plan was produced and approved by Committee on 28 September 2021 to implement the key objectives of the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund which are to:-

- ◆ tackle long-term vacant and derelict land
- ◆ stimulate economic growth and job creation
- ◆ develop a diverse, sustainable environment with a focus on temporary and permanent greening
- ◆ support communities to flourish and tackle inequalities

3.2. The Council acknowledges that vacant, derelict, and contaminated land acts as a major constraint to the re-development of land and impacts on the quality of life of many residents.

3.3. The Scottish Government Vacant and Derelict Land Fund is available to a small number of local authorities in Scotland – South Lanarkshire Council, Fife Council, Glasgow City Council, North Ayrshire Council and North Lanarkshire Council. The eligibility criteria for projects require the following conditions to be met:-

- ◆ Sites have been on the Vacant and Derelict Land Register for a minimum of 15 years.
- ◆ Eligible sites must be more than 0.1 hectares in size.
- ◆ VDLF will not support housing related projects on eligible sites.
- ◆ Sites on the Vacant and Derelict Land Register which are privately owned are subject to State Aid / Subsidy Control rules on grant support amounts.

South Lanarkshire's continued inclusion on the short list of Councils who are in receipt of VDLF awards is primarily down to the existence of large and complex vacant and derelict sites within the Clyde Gateway boundary in our Council area.

Other funds such as Place Based Investment Fund, Town Centre Regeneration Fund, Clyde Mission and Vacant Derelict Land Investment Programme are being accessed by the Council and community-based organisations to tackle sites that are vacant and derelict but would not qualify for support under the VDLF criteria.

4. Progress Achieved in 2021/2022

- 4.1. The 2021/2022 Local Delivery Plan was designed to build on the work that has been undertaken over recent years on key projects located within South Lanarkshire as follows:-

Cuningar Loop Phase 2

The successful development of the award-winning Cuningar Loop Urban Park has been a collaboration between South Lanarkshire Council, Clyde Gateway URC and Forestry and Land Scotland over the last 10 years. To date the park has welcomed over 600,000 visitors. The Phase 2 proposals were successful in attracting £4million of funding from Clyde Mission and Green Infrastructure Fund. Whilst the site works did not commence until Autumn 2021 due to ecological issues the additionality directly associated with the introduction of £500,000 of VDLF enabled it to provide the following elements:-

- ◆ an extended riverside boardwalk
- ◆ linked woodland walkways with seating and picnic areas
- ◆ an orientation point with local maps highlighting zones for birds, bats and butterflies
- ◆ an arts walk with river viewpoints
- ◆ an education zone with interpretation points explaining and describing the site and its historical legacy
- ◆ additional car and mini-bus parking with associated EV charging points
- ◆ an improved public access road and footpath for visitors

The main works completed in July 2022 and the improvements to the car park access road and pedestrian footpath will be completed by the end of July 2022, it is anticipated that it will be open to the public for the end of August 2022.

The VDLF funding was conditional on Clyde Gateway URC reaching agreement with Forestry and Land Scotland on the future management and maintenance of the Phase 2 site and this agreement has progressed and will be implemented on conclusion of the Phase 2 site works.

From a VDLF perspective these works aligned with the VDLF 'sustainable environment and greening' priority set out Section 3.1.

Cuningar Loop Phase 3

This project at Cuningar Loop, to the south east of the Phase 2 site, has been developed to provide much needed food growing space in the Rutherglen area. Food growing spaces are instrumental in helping to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of those in disadvantaged communities.

- ◆ This vacant and derelict former landfill site will be regenerated into food growing space, including, allotments and raised beds. The site development works were held up as a result of delays experienced in implementing the Cuningar Phase 2 proposals and will be undertaken on completion of the upgrading works to the car park access road. In the meantime, design work has been progressed to enable the provision of up to 50 allotments along with raised beds, a car park for allotment users, storage provision, associated paths and shelters for users to utilise during inclement weather conditions. Clyde Gateway will transfer control of the site to SLC at the appropriate time to allow the project to be completed.

From a VDLF perspective the provision of allotments and food growing facilities align with the VDLF 'greening' and 'supporting communities' priorities set out Section 3.1.

5. 2022/2023 VDLF Proposal

- 5.1. The Scottish Government allocation to South Lanarkshire for the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund for the financial year 2022/2023 is £737,000. A Local Delivery Plan (LDP), compiled following a review of site opportunities that comply with the eligibility criteria for the Fund, has now been produced and submitted to Scottish Government to implement the key objectives of the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund as follows:-

Clyde Gateway URC, Cuningar Loop Phase 3 Greening

This project, in conjunction with the SLC food growing proposal, will complete the development of Cuningar Loop Woodland Park in Rutherglen, South Lanarkshire by providing the community access to 27 hectares (ha) of accessible riverside woods and parkland. It will deliver, over a currently vacant and derelict 4 ha site, the final series of woodland paths, biodiverse habitats, remediated landscapes and healthy outdoor activity and learning hubs, all within accessible walking and cycling distance for Clyde Gateway's deprived communities in Rutherglen and the East end of Glasgow. It will provide enhanced maintenance infrastructure to bolster the long-term sustainability of the park and opportunities will be investigated to benefit from the British Geological Society's (BGS) £9m geothermal research station located on the Loop.

South Lanarkshire Council Food Growing Facility, Cuningar Loop Phase 3

As noted in Section 4.1 the development of up to 50 allotments, raised beds and associated facilities is being developed for implementation early in 2023. Following a review of the proposals and programme, in order to secure the full implementation of the scheme additional funding will be required. Over the last year we have emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, are managing supply chain issues arising from Brexit and dealing with the issues that continue to arise from the Russia / Ukraine conflict. The construction industry has experienced unprecedented impacts on its subcontractor supply chain, skills availability, raw material prices and construction material availability. This has resulted in a significant rise in construction cost inflation and pressure on construction market capacity. Estimated costs for the project have increased significantly and the additional request for funding in this delivery plan reflects the current funding requirements for the project.

Project Objectives

- ◆ to create new functioning green space for growing, planting and relaxing
- ◆ to complete the remediation of a regionally important woodland park and thereby removing the final area from the Vacant/Derelict Land Register
- ◆ to continue to encourage biodiversity to flourish within the park
- ◆ to encourage the local community and visitors to engage with nature and open space to improve health and wellbeing

Project Outcomes

- ◆ complete the removal of Cuningar Loop from the Vacant and Derelict Land Register
- ◆ provide a local and regional greenspace in the heart of the City Region

5.2. The above projects represent a balanced programme of activities which address Scottish Government priorities. The allocation of funding on these projects is proposed as:-

- ◆ £500,000 - Clyde Gateway, Cuningar Loop Phase 3 Greening, Rutherglen
- ◆ £237,000 – South Lanarkshire Council, Cuningar Loop Phase 3, Rutherglen - Food Growing Space – increase to existing budget due to current construction market conditions

6. Employee Implications

6.1. There are no employee implications. Proposed workstreams can be managed using existing staff resources.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. The VDLF programme will be funded from the Scottish Government Vacant and Derelict Land Fund allocation.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

8.1. The initiative identified in this report will be delivered using a range of sustainable techniques and models, having regard to best practice and current construction industry guidance.

9. Other Implications

9.1. The key risks associated with these projects are focussed on the potential for cost overruns or delays to the programme. These risks will be managed by Clyde Gateway URC in respect of the Cuningar Loop Phase 3 greening project and by Community and Enterprise Resources on the Cuningar Loop Phase 3 food growing project. An appropriate level of contingency funding is included in the project budget to mitigate risk.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

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

10.2. This report has been prepared in consultation with Finance and Corporate Resources. Liaison with Clyde Gateway URC will continue utilising the Council's existing monitoring arrangements and attendance at URC Stakeholder meetings and Board meetings.

David Booth
Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

19 July 2022

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

- ◆ Caring, connected, sustainable communities
- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live
- ◆ People live the healthiest lives possible

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ Community and Enterprise Resources Committee - 28 September 2021
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Council 2021/2022 Proposed VDLF Delivery Plan – June 2022

Contact for Further Information

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

Ken Meek, Project Manager, Enterprise and Sustainable Development Services

Tel: 07385347906

E-mail: ken.meek@southlanarkshire.gov.uk