

## WEST DEVON BOROUGH COUNCIL

### OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 11<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2016

#### BRIEFING NOTE

#### TAVISTOCK TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

### 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Committee will be aware of the longstanding (approaching 10 years) commitment of the Borough and Town Councils to economic regeneration and the protection of heritage assets in Tavistock. The Town forms part of the UNESCO Mining World Heritage Site and includes a Conservation Area.
- 1.2 To take this commitment forward the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sponsored Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) Scheme was chosen in view of its purpose to, inter alia:-
- Bring new uses to, and sustain existing/bring new jobs to heritage buildings and the communities they serve;
  - Repair and regenerate the historic environment;
  - Provide enhancements to the public realm making the town a better place to live in, work and visit;
  - Provide information and education associated with historic buildings. In particular to increase local resilience through supporting and promoting the historic skills/crafts needed to keep such in good and authentic repair.
- 1.3 Efforts to develop a Scheme in the latter part of the last decade were unsuccessful. However, a later 'Stage 1' (preliminary) application promoted and led by the Borough Council<sup>1</sup>, working closely with both the Tavistock Townscape Heritage Partnership<sup>2</sup> and the Town Council was successful.
- 1.4 Subsequently the Borough Council invited the Town Council to assume future co-ordination of the Scheme by way of accepting responsibility to be the accountable body for the Stage 2 (formal development) process and subsequent delivery, an application being successful in 2014<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For consideration by WDBC see also <http://www.westdevon.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=7817&p=0>

<sup>2</sup> A multi group partnership established and supported by the Borough Council comprising business, community, heritage and statutory interests.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.tavistock.gov.uk/your-council/council-initiatives/townscape-heritage-initiative>

- 1.5 In common with other THI Schemes funding from the HLF was dependent upon securing a proportion of local match funding. Such being added to the HLF contribution (in what is called the 'common fund'). This represents the 'pot' to which landowners can apply for monies toward the restoration or repair of eligible buildings. The rates for such contributions are set and the landowner is required to meet the balancing percentage. The terms of the scheme are strict, they are administered by the accountable body and overseen by HLF.
- 1.6 The contribution of HLF is in the order of £900,000 which, alongside landowner contributions, brings the overall Scheme value to approximately £2.1m. The three largest direct local contributors to the common fund were the Town Council with £300,000 over a five year period, Greater Dartmoor Leaf with £70,000 and West Devon Borough Council with £50,000 over a five year period. Other monies have been received by way of S106 obligations and Devon County Council. In addition, both the Borough Council and Town Council contributed the sum of £6,000 match funding toward development stage costs.
- 1.7 Particular requirements associated with the Scheme included the development of a Public Realm Strategy<sup>4</sup> and revision by the local planning authority of the Tavistock Conservation Area Management Plan. Originally the Bank Square Car Park was included within the Public Realm Strategy with a view to regenerating the western part of the Town but this has since been withdrawn by the landowner. The three remaining areas are Guildhall Car Park, Market Street and Pannier Market surround.

## **2. THE CURRENT SITUATION**

- 2.1 The HLF bid documents previously referred to indicate the range of components of the Scheme which can be broadly broken down into:-
- i) seeking to address the needs of Critical buildings (work which must be completed if the Scheme is to be considered a success) ,
  - ii) seeking to address the needs of Priority buildings (significant buildings deserving of attention),
  - iii) improvements to the Public Realm
  - iv) a range of Complementary Initiatives
  - v) improvements to the Conservation Area Management Plan and relevant planning framework<sup>5</sup> .

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.tavistock.gov.uk/your-council/council-initiatives/townscape-heritage-initiative>

<sup>5</sup> By WDBC as the Local Planning Authority

- 2.2 The Scheme is now in the delivery phase and runs to 2019. It is managed by a Board which reports to the Accountable Body and comprises representatives of the Business and Community sectors, Town and Borough<sup>6</sup> Councils. Grants are awarded via an independent grants panel<sup>7</sup> and operation is monitored and overseen by HLF.
- 2.3 The Scheme is now in its first full year of delivery - work on the first critical building (Butchers Hall<sup>8</sup>) will be finishing in October 2016 and third party applications are being processed (one being already approved and expected to start in October).
- 2.4 Additionally to help the Scheme to succeed the Borough Council, in its capacity as Local Planning Authority, has also committed to the on-going review and development of the Conservation Area Management Plan and the associated range of possible options which could be taken to improve the way in which it is managed and maintained.
- 2.5 A copy of the 'Traffic Light' report showing progress to date is appended and the THI Project Manager will outline scheme progress in more detail at the meeting.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 In the current economic environment THI Schemes represent one of the few cost effective strategic routes by which Local Authorities can leverage in significant investment to support and deliver new jobs, bring redundant or under utilised space back into use and improve the built heritage environment. By way of example a Borough Council cash contribution of £56,000 has leveraged £2.1m across public/private owned buildings, jobs, the public realm and skills<sup>9</sup>.
- 3.2 Such Schemes have an immediate impact as improvements are made. They are also accompanied by an equally (possibly more) important ongoing legacy of economic regeneration, jobs and heritage preservation together with improvements to heritage skills and the planning framework. THI's thereby serve to grow local capacity, community resilience, reinforce communities of place and

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<sup>6</sup> Represented by the Conservation Officer

<sup>7</sup> On which Councillors J Moody and Mrs D Sellis serve

<sup>8</sup> Which will bring approx 400square metres back into commercial/employment use in the Town Centre

<sup>9</sup> In addition had Bank Square Public Realm continued in the scheme that contribution could have come close to being cost neutral.

enable those communities to better work within an environment of devolution and austerity.

**CARL HEARN  
TOWN CLERK  
SEPTEMBER 2016  
TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL**