

## **CULLOMPTON TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE**

**Cabinet Member** Cllr Richard Chesterton  
**Responsible Officer** Amy Tregellas, Head of Communities & Governance

**Reason for Report:** To gain members approval to proceed with an initial application to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiative.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Policy Development Group consider and endorse recommendations 3.2 (a) to (g) and make recommendation to the Cabinet.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** This project will contribute to all four of Mid Devon District Council's corporate priorities, in particular to 'improve and regenerate our town centres' and 'planning and enhancing the built environment', but it also links in with the Homes theme, by bringing back empty flats back into use, and supports the Community theme. It is also implementing a key recommendation of the Conservation Area Management Plan for Cullompton.

**Financial Implications:** The Council will need to commit some funds in order to draw down a sizable grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The extent of this commitment is dependent on working up the final bid.

**Legal Implications:** None at this stage

**Risk Assessment:** The bid represents an opportunity to bring considerable investment into Cullompton and kick-start heritage-led regeneration in the town centre. Failure to take this opportunity will mean that the historical fabric of Cullompton is likely to deteriorate further, making it more difficult for the town centre economy to recover and grow.

### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 Mid Devon District Council has an opportunity to apply for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) under its 'Townscape Heritage Initiative', which if successful could provide over £1 million investment in Cullompton's historic built environment, and help boost the local economy. The Heritage Lottery Fund has already indicated their willingness to receive an application from Cullompton, and officers have been undertaking preliminary work in order to make an initial submission by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016.

### **2.0 Background**

2.1 Cullompton's main town centre street, and the courts that run off it, have a wide range of properties that are poorly repaired, redundant or under-used. Many are listed buildings, whilst others have importance as part of the town's

history. A Townscape Heritage grant would obtain funding to help bring buildings back into life and/or repair them, contributing to a general uplift of the town centre and stimulating the economy. In addition funding would enable the replacement of worn out street signs and continuation of the shopfront facelift scheme. Activities would include training for builders, owners and tenants in maintenance and building techniques for historic buildings as well as interpretation of the history of and open days on specific properties as they are repaired. Whilst all figures are ballpark and subject to a great deal more work, a project costing in the order of £1million might attract a £700,000 grant, with much of the match funding coming from developers (estimated £250,000 - £300,00), with in-kind support and cash contributions also included.

- 2.2 Richard Chesterton, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration, Penny Bayer, Project Development Officer, and Sue Warren, Conservation Officer, met with representative from HLF earlier in the year to discuss an initial enquiry. HLF requested various pieces of work be done before a second meeting in June to determine whether the application is likely to be ready to submit this year. Initial results (surveys and reports are in progress at the time of writing) indicate that many buildings are in a poor condition and many owners are interested in the scheme.
- 2.3 Applications are accepted by HLF once a year and the next deadline is end of August for decision in January 2017. This is a long term project over 6 years (1 year development, 5 years implementation) requiring commitment from all parties.
- 2.4 The full case for funding is set out in Appendix A.

### **3.0 Recommendations**

- 3.1 This is a significant project, which could have major benefits to Cullompton and the surrounding area. The project will contribute to Mid Devon District Council's corporate priorities for the economy and environment as well as implementing a key recommendation of the Conservation Area Management Plan for Cullompton. In order for the project to proceed we need members' in principal approval prior to an important meeting with the Heritage Lottery Fund in June.
- 3.2 It is, therefore, recommended that the Economy Policy Development Group consider and endorse the following, subject to the case being fully made to the HLF through the surveys and reports currently being produced:
  - (a) MDDC to act as the accountable and lead body for this project;
  - (b) In principal, MDDC to allocate staff and councillor time to the project over 6 years – to include Chairing and sitting on the Steering Group, managing and employing/contracting a project officer and input into the project work;

- (c) MDDC to allocate some funds (in the order of £12.5K initially with the option of further funding from MDDC or finding alternative funding in subsequent years) to the project in order to draw down potentially in the region of £1 million (tbc). The exact figure is dependent on the final structure of the bid, and whether other funding can be drawn down to offset it in future. HLF has indicated that without some cash input from the principle authorities the application will not succeed.
- (d) MDDC to corporately investigate drawing down other funds to contribute to this project e.g. Empty Homes bonus, S106 related to development of Cullompton, property portfolio.
- (e) MDDC to consider what it can do to facilitate the development of the gap site on the former Harlequin Valet site in Cullompton which continues to be an eyesore in the Higher Bull Ring and problem for neighbouring properties. The Higher Bull Ring is the heart of Cullompton town centre and this key site could be beneficial to the economy of the town and to the appearance of the Conservation Area.
- (f) MDDC to integrate the aims of the scheme into all relevant strategic documents relevant to forward planning, empty homes and property in Cullompton
- (g) MDDC to obtain indications of support from Devon County Council, Cullompton Town Council, Cullompton Town Team, Culm Valley in Business and the Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan Group.

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**Circulation of the Report:** Cllr Richard Chesterton, Management Team

**List of Background Papers:** none

Appendix A - The Case for a Townscape Heritage Grant application

## **Appendix A**

### **The Case for a Townscape Heritage Grant application**

#### **1. Heritage Need**

- 1.1 The Cullompton Conservation Area is described as in “very bad” condition on Historic England’s (HE) 2015 Heritage at Risk register. In relation to specific buildings, HE note that the Walronds was on the At Risk register from 2005-2013 but has now been renovated with HLF and other funding. HE sees the completion of the Walronds project as a key milestone in the regeneration of Cullompton town centre. It believes the repair of the Walronds will help to improve the condition of the Cullompton Conservation Area, which is itself at risk”.<sup>1</sup> St Andrew’s church is also on the list with a note that a solution has been agreed but not yet implemented. In September 2015 the work was in progress. However the Manor House Hotel was added to the “Heritage at Risk” register on 20 October 2015, its condition marked as “poor”.
- 1.2 In addition to these key heritage buildings there is a long list of listed and other buildings in Cullompton town centre in need of physical improvement. Whilst there has been some uplift of shopfronts in the immediate vicinity of the Walronds since its completion, it is now time to look at ways of enhancing and securing other buildings and places of historic importance in the town centre with the aim of working towards taking the Conservation Area off the At Risk register.
- 1.3 Whilst an outline review has been produced, the Conservation Area Management Plan requires updating and rewriting.

#### **2. Economic need**

- 2.1 Cullompton Town Centre needs more footfall to sustain local shops and businesses. In 2010 a Devon County Council benchmarking study found that Cullompton and its local economy needed a major boost with more employment opportunities; the Town Centre had a vital role to play but its image and environment needed revitalisation. The link between repair of buildings and the economy has been demonstrated in the town following the renovation of the Walronds. The Cullompton Enhancement and Regeneration Advisory Group (CRAG)/Cullompton Town Team have been working on initiatives linking economy and heritage for more than 6 years, and recognise heritage as one of the town’s strongest Unique Selling Points (USPs) (see for example CRAG Action Plan 2011/2013). The joint purpose of the bid is therefore to bring buildings into their full potential to contribute to the business, retail, cultural, tourist and leisure economy of the town centre.

#### **3. The link between heritage and regeneration**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/har-2014-local-summaries/har-2014-sw-local-leaflet.pdf/>

- 3.1 It has become clear that the renovation of the Walronds has had an economic benefit on the town. Soon after its completion a number of surrounding shops upgraded their shopfronts. The Walronds has also attracted footfall into the town. It has been the foundation stone for the Cullompton Food and Drink Festival, which took place in October 2015, attracting a greatly enhanced footfall into the town. Other towns have shown how heritage-led regeneration can work (eg Bedford; Dalkeith; Tavistock – in progress).
- 3.2 The link between place-making, heritage and economy is being examined in a commissioned report from Ash Futures (see below).

#### **4. Strategic background**

- 4.1 The idea of progressing a Townscape Heritage project has been included in various strategic documents. The Cullompton Conservation Area Management Plan (CAMP) 2009 included the Townscape Heritage programme as a potential funding stream suitable to support improvements to the Conservation area. The 2015 review report on the CAMP identifies works that have been achieved since 2009 and areas that need further attention. This report calls for: the shopfront grant scheme to be continued; for under-occupancy and redundancy of upper floors buildings along Fore Street to be addressed by bringing residential units back into use; attention to repair and maintenance of whole buildings rather than just the shopfront; address the large number of vacant and disused buildings in the town centre; improve historic floorscapes; and street lighting issues. The review recognises THI as an appropriate vehicle to achieve some of these aims. The emerging Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan recognises the value of the historic town centre and the link between conservation and economy and is expected to include policies to support applications such as townscape heritage and regenerated courts.
- 4.2 The Cullompton Town Team progressed initial discussions on THI, and comprises a partnership of Devon County Council, Mid Devon District Council, Cullompton Town Council, Culm Valley in Business Group, Churches Together, the Cullompton Walronds Preservation Trust, the Hayridge centre, the Community Centre, the Farmers' Market, and individual local businesses representing owners and landlords, tourism and the independent sector. The idea of a THI application has been included in Town Team discussions and action plans over at least 6 years. The Town Team has previously shown its ability to work together on a heritage project (as advised by HLF) through the Culm Valley, Cullompton and the Cloth Trade project, which has been successfully completed (March 2015). The Town Team visited Tavistock THI in June 2014 and was inspired by what it saw.
- 4.3 MDDC has now taken on the lead for this complicated project, chaired by Cllr Chesterton.

#### **5. Reports and survey work in progress, May 2016**

5.1 The following reports and surveys are on target to be ready to present to HLF in mid June.

- **A report setting out the links between place-making, heritage and economy** in Cullompton has been commissioned from Ash Futures and will be produced by mid June 2106. This report is expected to help make the strategic case for the Townscape Heritage grant.
- **A survey of owners and tenants** in the main street in Cullompton is currently taking place (by the Project Development Officer, the Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan Administrator, the Conservation Officer plus members of the Steering Group). Owners and tenants have been approached in person, by email, by letter and through a survey leaflet. Initial results indicate that a good number of owners and tenants are interested in taking part in the scheme. On 10<sup>th</sup> May, when the full results had not yet come in, twenty five owners (83.3% of owners who had responded at that point of time) had indicated that, without prejudice, they would be interested in a grant towards repair and renovation between 2018 and 2023. In addition 14 tenants were interested in smaller grants towards shopfront improvements.
- **A street audit of all buildings in the main street** is taking place (by the Project Development Officer with 3 Members of Cullompton Town team, - Richard Thorne, Building Surveyor, Bill Williams, Builder and Sue Williams, buildings letting agency owner). This is indicating that many buildings are in very poor condition.
- **A survey of public realm** in and around the main street is taking place by the Conservation Officer.
- **Evidence of support from the three Councils**

## 6. The Cloth Trade Heritage

6.1 In 2012 HLF advised the Project Coordinator for the Cullompton Enhancement and Regeneration Advisory Group (CRAG) that before applying for THI funding, Cullompton should successfully complete a smaller partnership project. The 2013-2015 HLF funded project, *Cullompton, the Culm Valley and the Cloth Trade*, was successfully completed in early 2015, when the touchscreens and town trail were launched by Simon Timms, Chairman of HLF, South West.

6.2 The project identified a range of buildings that were part of the town's cloth trade heritage. Whilst covering the whole town centre, a prime area of interest was the area around the Walronds, which had been occupied by two weavers in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Next door was the Manor House Hotel, which had been owned by the Upcott family of cloth makers and exporters, and the Merchant's House. Nearby, at the top of New Cut, was Shortlands House where the Upcott family had had a cloth manufactory for hundreds of years, and the Workhouse building where handloom weaving took place. Weavers also met in the Methodist Church in New Cut from the time of John Wesley. A great deal of new information was uncovered about these buildings and their occupants during the project and a town trail was created.

6.3 Some of these buildings - which are key to the history of the town - are in need of work to either bring them back into use or to safeguard their fabric.

## 7. Partners

7.1 A Steering Group has been set up with representatives of DCC, MDDC, the Town Council, the Town Team, The Neighbourhood Plan Group and Culm Valley in Business Group.

- Mid Devon District Council: the project Steering Group is chaired by Cllr Richard Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration of Mid Devon District Council. The proposal arose out of the MDDC Conservation Area Management Plan and the work of the Cullompton Town Team.
- Cullompton Town Team organised a visit to Tavistock THI and supports a bid. The Town Team are giving extensive volunteer involvement in surveys and possibly small cash contribution.
- Cullompton Town Council has indicated its support (October 2015, May 2016) for the THI application in principal and is now awaiting the survey results. The Town Council/Neighbourhood Plan Group have provided the services of the Neighbourhood Plan Administrator to help with the survey work.
- Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan Group, key personnel Michael Speirs and Cllr Gordon Guest indicated their support November 2015. Michael Speirs has helped with the survey work.
- Devon County Council – the following possibilities were discussed at the first Steering Group meeting:
  - DCC to ask for a contribution from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)/S106 for Knowle Lane Transport Improvement
  - DCC to keep the project on its radar and keep communication open e.g. re redesign of pavements/ parking linked to relief road
  - DCC to consider improvements to roads, when work being done
  - Licensing – special brokerage re skips etc or it might be possible to broker a process by which the Town Council takes on the paperwork. (Bideford has looked at this). There may also be a way of facilitating agreements for scaffolding.
  - Possible locality funding via Local DCC Member
  - Potential discretionary pots of funding
  - The County Archaeologist to speak to Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) about the possibility of raising their own funding to bring archaeological objects to the town as part of the interpretation aspect
  - The County Archaeologist would be involved in any archaeological events or activity; provision of Historic Environment Record information about the study area; helping tease out any archaeological aspects; bringing in information about finds such as the cremation vessel (linking with RAMM); archaeological work as

- planning conditions; building in community involvement as appropriate and bringing interpretation into town centre.
- Owners and tenants will be key partners and beneficiaries and are being contacted via the current survey.

## **8. Other possible sources of funding**

8.1 HLF wish the THI bid to indicate a holistic approach to place-making, economic development and heritage in Cullompton town centre. The THI grant application will therefore outline a package of works, not all of which can be progressed at this time and within the THI bid. There are other sources of funding which may be able to be pursued for these. These sources will not be possible to be used as match funding against THI but it may be possible to use them separately to fund areas of work mentioned below in the long list for which match funding within a THI bid cannot be currently found.

- Heritage Lottery Fund has indicated that the refurbishment of Cullompton Town Hall might be best pursued under a Heritage Grant, and whilst a THI might fund a feasibility study for the renovation of the major part of the Manor House Hotel, the actual work would best be progressed separately due to its scale.
- Historic England Partnership Scheme in Conservation areas: it is considered unlikely that this might be used in conjunction with THI or not, but needs to be checked out.
- Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy, associated with the growth of Cullompton. Mid Devon District Council (Planning) and Cullompton Town Council will jointly investigate whether any funding can be agreed for town centre improvements through planning applications for the Cullompton North West extension or other applications at the appropriate time.
- Cullompton Relief Road; £8 million pounds is allocated for this by DCC. DCC and MDDC to investigate whether any of this could be used for town centre improvements at the appropriate time. These figures have been queried by Cullompton Town Council, which has objected to the use of any of this funding for town centre improvements.

## **9. Long list of possible building works and activities**

9.1 A long list of possible buildings and activities to consider for inclusion in a THI bid has been drawn up and discussed with HLF. This initial work indicated that a ballpark figure, which will need professional valuation expertise to confirm, is in the region of £ 902,000-£1,352,000. This is for illustrative purposes and the total is based on 9 buildings being renovated and no public realm works other than new street signs. .

9.2 However HLF/English Heritage have indicated that they would like us to take a wider look at the entire main street as most buildings in it require improvement which will contribute to place-making. A further street audit will take place in the near future and this list and costs will then be adjusted.

## **10. Income**



- 10.1 The joint funding pot will be made up of: cash contributions, third party funding from grantees or private developers toward any high, medium or reserve priority project, volunteer time, non-cash contributions, and value of maintenance and management of properties for 5 years after completion of works. It is expected to be more than 5% of the total (ie more than £25,000-£50,000 total). Advice is required from HLF on this aspect. The aim is to have contributions from Mid Devon District Council, Cullompton Town Council, Devon County Council and the Cullompton Town Team.

Developer contributions in range £0.2m-0.3m

Voluntary and in kind contributions t.b.c.

Offers of support have already been received from the Devon County Council Archaeology Department. The Steering Group will include volunteers with experience of land ownership and management issues, heritage interpretation and research.

Cash contributions t.b.c.

## **11. Grant**

- 11.1 Grant request not currently known: it could be in the region of £1million. If under £1 million a contribution of 5% is required; if more than £1million, this requires 10% minimum contribution. If we pegged the amount at £995,500 5% the contribution would be £44,775 [we need to check that this can be achieved through developer contributions, support in kind plus cash, amount to be determined]. A greater contribution including some cash contribution is likely to be required for a successful application.

## **12. Timetable**

- 12.1 This is long-term project, which would reap substantial benefits for the town.
- We would aim to submit the Phase 1 application by 31 August 2016 for decision in Jan 2017.
  - We would aim to submit the Phase 2 application by 31 August 2017 for decision in Jan 2018.
  - We would aim to finish the project by 2023.