

ANGUS COUNCIL

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE

20 APRIL 1999

SUBJECT: HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND - TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE PROPOSED BID FOR ARBROATH

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

Abstract: This report outlines a proposed bid for funding for Arbroath under the second bidding round of the Townscape Heritage Initiative.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Director of Planning & Transport be authorised to submit a Stage 1 bid for development funding for an area of Arbroath around the Abbey (see attached plan), under the Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiative, and to report back after the outcome is known (in late September).

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Angus Council submitted a bid for funding under the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) for part of the Montrose Conservation Area in July 1998 (Report 633/98 refers). This was the first year that the THI operated and, not surprisingly, the budget was oversubscribed; the level of overbid was in excess of 400%.
- 2.2 The substantial overbid and the strict economic and urban regeneration criteria applied under the THI, meant that areas which were not in decline, or neglected, did not receive funding. The Montrose bid was rejected because of a failure to demonstrate sufficient "economic or heritage need". In effect, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) considered that Montrose did not demonstrate as much need as other areas across Britain.
- 2.3 Informal discussions have recently been held with the HLF to determine how any future bids could be prepared to enhance the likelihood of success. These discussions suggest that applicants will have to clearly demonstrate, that the areas forwarded for consideration require a boost through an award of public funding.
- 2.4 It is against this background that a bid for Arbroath is being considered; the town displays clear signs of economic deprivation. Before explaining the thinking behind the bid, it may be useful to re-state the scope and terms of the THI.

3 THE TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

- 3.1 The THI is intended to enable partnerships of local, regional and national interests to preserve and enhance the distinctive character of historic areas by:-

- repairing the fabric;

- restoring authentic details and materials;
- securing the continued use of historic buildings;
- bringing vacant floor space in historic buildings back into use;
- facilitating a high standard of design and materials in filling gap sites and key frontages.

This approach mirrors that of the joint Angus Council/Historic Scotland, Montrose Town Scheme which started on 1 April.

3.2 The essence of THI schemes is that members of the partnership develop a **clear strategy** to address the problems of an area, involving physical works. The principle is that partners contribute to a common fund from which:

- the cost of a project officer or team is met (in-house staff costs are not eligible);
- grants are offered towards the cost of eligible works undertaken by property owners;
- works to the public realm such as historic street features are undertaken or grant aided;
- grant levels are set so that any private gain is minimal and outweighed by the benefit of the scheme to the public at large.

3.3 THI schemes will run for a period of five years from the signing of the contract. Partnerships must make offers to third parties and contract direct works within the first three years, and settle all claims for payment within five years. The power to make offers from the common fund (including HLF's contribution) will normally be delegated to the partnership and monitored on behalf of HLF.

3.4 The level of funding provided under the THI is likely to be 50% with a maximum of 75% in exceptional cases. The HLF have stated that schemes, over their entire five year life, are likely to be between £100,000 and £2,000,000 in value.

4 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

4.1 Eligible bodies may be single organisations such as local authorities or partnerships which have corporate status and executive structures in their own right. The planning authority is not necessarily expected to be the lead partner, however, the HLF **"will expect that authority to demonstrate its commitment to the Initiative by being a member of the partnership, since long term investment in historic areas can only be protected through the sensitive operation of the planning system"**.

4.2 Priority will be given to areas of demonstrable significance to the character and identity of the region. The applicant partnerships must also:

- **demonstrate significant problems of disrepair and/or mutilation of historic buildings,**
- **outline the reasons specific to the area that are believed to be responsible for this state of affairs and how they will be addressed;**
- **justify the need for public sector intervention and investment (rather than, or in addition to, the use of statutory powers) to resolve them in ways which will preserve or enhance the heritage and cultural value of the area, as well as contribute to its regeneration.**

5 DEVELOPING AND RUNNING THE PROJECT

- 5.1 The applicant partnerships will need to demonstrate that they have, or will recruit, the necessary professional skills to ensure that work to historic buildings and areas supported through the scheme is undertaken to a high standard. The Heritage Lottery Fund states **“the success of schemes will depend crucially on the skills of such professionals. We will therefore expect to agree named individuals, normally on the basis of their qualifications and experience as demonstrated through their CV at the beginning of the project”**.
- 5.2 Informal discussions with the HLF suggest that at least one of the team will require to be formally qualified, and/or experienced, in Building Conservation. Consequently, some of the core expertise exists in-house, although much of the other input will require the use of consultants.
- 5.3 It is considered that the most effective way of bringing the project forward, is to apply for development funding. This would not commit the Council to major expenditure at this stage, but would give an indication of the HLF's views on the bid.
- 5.4 An award of development funding would allow the Council to engage consultants to work up a feasibility study after September 1999. The feasibility study would then be used as the basis for a capital project funding bid in mid-February 2000. The consultants would work closely with appropriate Council officers, an approach which has proved successful in developing the HLF bid for the Mid Links in Montrose. The initial bid for development funding, which is due on 21 May, would be prepared in-house using the 1998 bid for Montrose as a template.

6 AREA FOR THE BID

- 6.1 It is clear that the scheme would be applicable to a number of towns in Angus, but for practical reasons of resource constraints, it is considered that an area of Arbroath should be selected for this application.
- 6.2 Arbroath is currently the focus of considerable regeneration work, including streetscape projects and the ongoing visitor centre at the Abbey. The area most in need of attention is the rear gardens of properties which face onto Abbey Street and the large, surface car park immediately to the south. It is anticipated that the consultants would explore how the area could be enhanced and whether there is redevelopment potential on the car park site. Other areas of the town centre have potential, so these will also be explored.

- 6.3 Because of the extensive work that has already been undertaken, much of the raw material for the study is already in place. Moreover, some of this material clearly identifies economic decline, one of the key issues which the THI seeks to address.
- 6.4 The ongoing work in Arbroath is part of a strategy. This also fits with the HLF's assessment criteria.
- 6.5 members will be aware of the proposed bid for HLF funding for the Abbey which will be submitted within the next couple of months. This project, and the other elements of the Arbroath strategy will continue to be developed and any THI funding will be regarded as a complimentary "windfall". The THI budget is ring-fenced for townscape projects so this bid will not complete, or conflict, with the bid for the Abbey.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 It is estimated that a study to explore the possibilities of enhancing and/or redeveloping the site would cost £20k maximum. 50% of this sum (75% in exceptional cases) could be available from the HLF. SET may be prepared to contribute because they regard Arbroath as a priority in Angus. This leaves the Council to fund a maximum of around £5k of the study, from the Planning & Transport Budget in 1999/2000.
- 7.2 If the Stage 1 bid is successful, the Council will have to consider how to fund the project. Possible sources include the Local Capital Fund, Departmental Capital Budget and external agencies, possibly including a Housing Association.
- 7.3 The benefit of applying for development funding only, at this stage, is that the Council would have an opportunity to develop the capital funding package over the next 10-12 months. This allows a long, lead-in time to fully develop the project.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, and the Directors of Finance, and Law & Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Townscape Heritage Initiative is an exciting development which potentially could provide substantial sums of match funding over the next few years. It is now clear that socio-economic considerations, as well as heritage issues, are integral to the THI. In view of the considerable background work which has been carried out already, and the economic issues, it is considered that a submission based on Arbroath should be submitted.
- 9.2 The initial bid would be prepared in-house, so there are no financial implications at present. If the Stage 1 bid is successful, the Council will not be faced with major expenditure at that stage either; the likely outlay will be up to £5k. The only point at which larger financial considerations will have to be considered is around summer 2000.

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/PM/KW
13 April 1999

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