

Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme Bid for Gorebridge

Report by Ian Johnson, Head of Planning and Development

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1** To update Members on the successful funding bid to Historic Scotland for a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) in Gorebridge.

2 Background

- 2.1** At its meeting on 28 August 2012, the Planning Committee agreed that the Council should submit an application to Historic Scotland for a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme in Gorebridge. This was submitted on 31 August 2012.
- 2.2** As previously advised to Members, CARS schemes are five-year grant programmes which help to meet the costs of repair work to improve the condition of historic buildings within conservation areas. Owners of eligible buildings within a CARS scheme can make an application to the scheme and can receive a grant award towards the cost of repairing/improving their historic building. Owners are also expected to make a financial contribution towards the cost of the work.
- 2.2** Historic Scotland will provide the Council with a rolling 5-year grant offer. The CARS scheme will fund:
- a repairs programme for priority projects;
 - a small grants scheme (such as to homeowners or retailers);
 - community engagement through providing training opportunities in traditional skills and through education programmes;
 - training opportunities for traditional craftsmen;
 - public realm conservation and restoration; and
 - administration costs, including the appointment of a dedicated project manager.
- 2.3** The eligibility of Gorebridge to meet the CARS criteria was strong; both in terms of the deprivation data and the potential for notable improvement in the Main Street. The CARS boundary will match the Conservation Area boundary. Many of the buildings in the Conservation Area require improvements to their roofs, rainwater goods, doors, windows and stonework. Newbyres Hall is a key streetscape building but requires considerable façade improvement.
- 2.4** On 27 December 2013, Historic Scotland wrote to the Council confirming that the Council's application for CARS funding had been successful, with a Historic Scotland CARS grant of £548,500 being made available towards the proposed scheme in Gorebridge.

- 2.5** The current round of funding (Round 5) saw 25 applications seeking £24 million from a £10 million funding allocation. The Gorebridge application was one of only 12 successful applications throughout the whole of Scotland and was secured against very strong competition.
- 2.6** Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, announced the success of the bid on 29 January in conjunction with a visit to Dalkeith to view the improvements made as a result of the CARS funding awarded by Historic Scotland to Dalkeith in 2008. The Cabinet Secretary met Council Members from Dalkeith and Gorebridge, Council officers and community representatives before leading a walk around the town centre to inspect the improvements to the public realm and individual buildings improved as part of the project.
- 2.7** The success of the Gorebridge bid can be attributed to a number of key factors:
- a comprehensive, well researched and well presented bid document;
 - strong local community support for, and involvement in, the project;
 - the excellent progress, and clearly demonstrable benefits, of the acclaimed Dalkeith THI/CARS project; and
 - the willingness of the Council to demonstrate its strong commitment through the allocation of some of its own funding to the Gorebridge CARS project.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

At its meeting of the 28 August 2012, the Planning Committee agreed that as part of the funding application to Historic Scotland, the Director Corporate Resources should include the potential to offer a modest sum of direct funding from existing allocated budgets. A sum of £50,000 over 5 years was subsequently identified and included in the bid. This was a key factor in securing the £548,500 grant from Historic Scotland.

Midlothian Local Plan 2008 makes provision for the collection of developer contributions towards town centre improvements in Gorebridge. Developer contributions of up to £82,000 are due from various sites around Gorebridge. At present, approximately £45,000 has been identified as being available over the next five years.

The successful application will require a staff resource during the 5-year implementation period. Staff time can be recognised as a contribution in kind. Within Corporate Resources the necessary technical staff resource will be assigned to the Project, building on the approach taken in the Dalkeith CARS Project.

Agreed CARS Funding package

Direct funding from Midlothian Council	£ 50,000
Developer Contributions from Midlothian Council	£ 45,000
Confirmed Historic Scotland CARS grant	<u>£ 548,500</u>
TOTAL Funding (Excluding Contributions in kind)	£ 643,500

Contributions in kind, including those from the community	£ 55,000
TOTAL Funding	<u>£ 698,500</u>

3.2 Risk

To enable the project to commence in April 2013, the Director, Corporate Resources will ensure the necessary staff are assigned to the Gorebridge Project Management Team.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

This report relates to the 'Improving opportunities in Midlothian' community planning theme in that eligible property owners will have the opportunity to apply for grants to improve the external fabric of their property. The project will make Midlothian a more attractive place for doing business and safeguard and enhance the amenity of Midlothian. A range of training and education activities are planned as part of the project. They will be aimed at building professionals, local residents and local businesses.

3.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

This project will contribute towards the priority to regenerate and improve Midlothian's town and village centres.

3.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Encouraging eligible property owners to take part in the project will improve the external fabric and appearance of properties in Gorebridge Conservation Area and help secure the long term future of the buildings. Owners will be encouraged to attend workshops highlighting the importance of building maintenance in terms of preventative and remedial measures.

3.6 Involving Communities and other Stakeholders

Consultation has been undertaken with the Gorebridge Community Development Trust. The Trust has confirmed its support for the project and offered office space for the CARS Project officer. Further consultation will be undertaken during the development phase of the CARS scheme. The strong level of support from the local community was a key factor in securing the CARS funding from Historic Scotland.

3.7 Ensuring Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required for the project as the building grants are awarded on the basis of condition and importance in

the Conservation Area and on the streetscape. The terms of the funding grant from Historic Scotland are strictly laid down and monitored.

3.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Gorebridge Main Street was designated a Conservation Area in 1978 in recognition of the fact that it possesses a complete set of 19th century houses and shop fronts that form an important part of Midlothian's heritage. The Gorebridge CARS project covers the whole of the Conservation Area and will help secure the repair and improvement of a number of important buildings for the future.

3.9 IT Issues

There are no IT issues arising from this report.

4 Summary

Funding for the Gorebridge CARS project has been secured against strong competition from other local authorities across Scotland. In delivering the Gorebridge CARS project, the Council and its community partners will be able to draw on the experience that has been gained from the well delivered and highly regarded Dalkeith THI/CARS project.

5 Recommendations

It is recommended:

- i) that the Council notes the announcement of the successful bid to Historic Scotland for the Gorebridge CARS project;
- ii) that, as a consequence, the Council formally enters into a contract with Historic Scotland to deliver the CARS project over a five year period commencing on 1 April 2013; and
- iii) that work commences on the development stage of the project involving the Council's community partners and other stakeholders in April 2013.

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Background Papers: File 4711 Vol 2/GM