

**Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme Bids****Report by John Blair, Director Corporate Resources****1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1** This report advises of a fresh round of grant funding by Historic Scotland for improvement works within conservation areas: and recommends that this Council submit a bid in respect of Gorebridge. The funding programme is referred to as Historic Scotland's Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS).

**2 Background**

- 2.1** CARS schemes are five-year grant programmes awarded by Historic Scotland. Such schemes 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** To date, Historic Scotland has provided four rounds of CARS to locations across Scotland. It will make up to £10 million available over a five-year period (1 April 2013 to 31 March 2018) to fund a 5<sup>th</sup> round of CARS grant schemes. Applications to CARS round 5 must be submitted by 31 August 2012.
- 2.3** Historic Scotland has indicated that the maximum award that will be made to a single scheme from CARS round 5 will be £2 million. The size of award will depend on the need of the local community. The decision on whether to award support will continue to be based on the regeneration benefit of the scheme to the historic environment as determined by Historic Scotland and the ability to successfully deliver the project.
- 2.4** Priority will be given to areas that have demonstrable social and economic disadvantages which affect their capacity to support sustainable regeneration, and areas which clearly contribute towards the Scottish Government's Economic and Regeneration Strategies.
- 2.5** Historic Scotland will provide successful applicants 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 officer.

**2.6** In addition to the CARS grant scheme, the other main grant scheme available to conservation areas is Townscape Heritage Initiatives (THI). The THI grant scheme is administered by the Heritage Lottery Fund. A CARS scheme can provide financial assistance as a stand-alone project or as an additional funding stream of a joint THI and CARS project. The significance of CARS is that a successful bid offers the opportunity to 'lever in' THI funding, as has been the case in Dalkeith Town Centre.

**2.7** Previously Midlothian Council, in partnership with Dalkeith Business Renewal, was successful in obtaining CARS funding from Historic Scotland of £318,000 and THI funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund of £991,000 for the Dalkeith Conservation Area. These schemes have been taken forward as a joint THI and CARS project in Dalkeith. The Dalkeith THI and CARS is currently in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the 5-year programme and has helped to fund public realm works, work to a variety of buildings in private ownership and a number of training and education initiatives.

### **3 Gorebridge Conservation Area**

**3.1** In 2010 an application was submitted by the Council to Historic Scotland for a CARS scheme in Gorebridge, under round 4 of the programme.

**3.2** Historic Scotland wrote to Midlothian Council in February 2011 to advise that, due to the fund being heavily subscribed, the application had been unsuccessful. However, Historic Scotland recognised the good local support for the Gorebridge CARS application and noted that it fitted well within the proposed development plans for Gorebridge. It also noted that CARS grant and the contributions from owners were the only sources of funding proposed and no match funding was available from Midlothian Council at that time; and this was a weakness in the application.

**3.3** Accordingly, Cabinet agreed on 1 March 2011 that additional sources of funding would be investigated and consideration given to submitting a fresh Gorebridge application to Historic Scotland if a 5<sup>th</sup> round of CARS was announced. The extent of the area concerned is shown on the map attached to this report.

**3.4** It is recommended that the eligibility of Gorebridge to meet the CARS criteria remains strong; both in terms of the deprivation data and the potential for notable improvement in the Main Street.

## **4 Report Implications**

### **4.1 Resource**

None arising directly from this report. If the application is successful, CARS and/or THI schemes require staff time during their 5-year implementation period.

In respect of the significant issue of contributory Council funding, 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.

### **4.2 Risk**

If no CARS scheme is submitted, the opportunity to access funding to improve our town centres will be lost.

A deterioration of town centres could add to a loss of confidence and pride in these areas, with a potential adverse impact upon trade. The potential loss of trade and the decline in the quality of the environment could be mitigated through the development of a CARS and/or THI project.

### **4.3 Policy**

#### **Strategy**

Improvement of the town centre accords with the Corporate Priority to regenerate and improve Midlothian's towns and villages. In terms of the Single Outcome Agreement, the Gorebridge CARS would contribute towards the following Local Outcomes:

- make Midlothian a more attractive place for doing business;
- safeguard and enhance the amenity of Midlothian.

#### **Consultation**

None required in the preparation of this report. Consultation was undertaken with the Gorebridge Community Development Trust during the development of the previous application; and this, together with consultation with the Community Council would be a part of any new application. Further consultation would be undertaken during the development phase of any CARS scheme.

#### **Equalities**

To comply with current legislation a project such as a new Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme will require an Equalities Impact Assessment to be undertaken.

## **Sustainability**

Environmental, economic and cultural benefits would arise through an improved town centre. This would maintain and increase the appeal of the town centre for users and visitors.

## **5 Recommendations**

### **5.1 Cabinet is recommended to agree that:**

- a) a fresh application to Historic Scotland for Gorebridge Town Centre be prepared for the 5<sup>th</sup> round of the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme;
- b) identification of sources of match funding, including developer contributions, continues; and
- c) an update on the finalised application be provided to Members prior to its submission by 31 August 2012.

**Date 18 May 2012**

### **Report Contact:**

Elaine Richardson Tel No 0131 271 3465  
elaine.richardson@midlothian.gov.uk

**Background Papers: File 4710/ER/JR**