

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 22 September 2011

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director - Communities

**SUBJECT:** Runcorn Hill Park, "Parks for People" Project

**WARDS:** Heath

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

**1.1** To update Members on progress and the successful achievement of a Round 1 Pass from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) "Parks for People" Programme, for the refurbishment and development of Runcorn Hill & Heath Park.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION:** That the Board give delegated authority to the Strategic Director for Communities, in consultation with the Executive Member for Physical Environment, to progress the project and to prepare and submit all necessary information for a Round 2 submission to Heritage Lottery Fund.

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**3.1** Members will recall that on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2008 a report to the Executive Board outlined the next phase of major refurbishment to key Borough Parks and Open Spaces. Runcorn Hill Park was identified as a key area.

**3.2** The area under consideration for refurbishment and development includes the formal grounds of Runcorn Hill Park, Runcorn Hill Local Nature Reserve & the Heath Playing Fields.

**3.3** The "Parks for People" programme is a funding stream administered by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). It is aimed at improving parks and open spaces and supporting their historic and cultural heritage for the benefit of local communities, it can provide up to 90% funding to enable this.

**3.4** The "Parks for People" application process is a lengthy one and consists of two competitive assessment stages, Round 1 and Round 2. Work with local community groups and HLF has been undertaken to develop and gain a Round 1 pass in February 2011. A Round 2 decision, if successful, will not be known until September 2012. If successful, it is not anticipated that work on site will commence before the end of 2013.

**3.5** A "Parks for People" Project Development Group, which includes Ward Councillors, Council Officers and community group representatives, has been set up to guide the development of the project.

- 3.6 Other people consulted on a regular basis include park users, local residents, the Friends of Runcorn Hill, Runcorn Model Boat club, Runcorn Bowling Club, Scout/ youth group leaders, sports clubs, Police and Fire Service.
- 3.7 The Project proposals contain capital elements to refurbish and enhance existing features, such as the boating lake and formal park elements as well as historic features such as 'Happy Valley'. It will provide a new visitor centre, which will replace the run down existing building, and improve access to other features unique to the site such as the former quarry rock outcrops. The project aims to raise awareness of the site's industrial heritage and promote these as an attraction for a wider audience. The project also offers the potential for more formal education purposes and links. See Appendix 1.
- 3.8 The Project proposals and grant application include a revenue support element for a 5-year part-time development post for the Park. This is a key feature for the "Parks for People" programme to promote the site heritage, help community involvement in the Park and enable user group activities to improve self-sustainability. This will be in the manner currently adopted in Hale with the Hale Heritage Champion.
- 3.9 In order to complete work to support the Round 2 bid, some additional consultants will be procured to support Open Space Design & Development Team to carry out certain elements of the bid. These will include architects and engineers and will be appointed in accordance with Standing Orders.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Runcorn Hill "Parks for People" Project will improve the open space and help create better recreation and outdoor education facilities for the benefit of local communities, helping to achieve the objectives of 'A Healthy Halton', 'Urban Renewal' and 'Employment, Learning and Skills'.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 In February 2011 the Council successfully achieved a HLF Parks for People Round 1 Pass and was awarded a development grant of £40,000 to help produce the design detail required for a Round 2 application. Total cost for Round 2 development work is £58,000, with a £15,000 contribution from the current Open Space Services development budget. The 'cost' of volunteer time, attending meetings etc., can also be included and claimed as a match funding element.
- 5.2 Costs for delivery of the proposals were estimated at the Round 1 application stage as approximately £1.3 million. If a HLF Round 2 bid is successful, the estimated grant from the Parks for People Programme is £910,000. Approximately £390,000 match-funding will be sought from a combination of sources including external grants combined with contributions from Halton BC funds. An example of how the match funding will be made up is listed below.

<b>Funding Source</b>
Heritage Lottery Grant
Ineos Chlor Environmental Levy
Proposed development at the Heath S106 monies
Wren Grant
Other Grants
Volunteer time contribution
*Increased management & maintenance funding
<b>TOTAL</b>

\*The Authority is able to use the money spent over a five year period on ongoing park management as part of the match funding contribution.

- 5.3 A more detailed match funding package will developed during the next stage and will be clarified and reported for approval to the board in the future.

## **6.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Sustainability: the refurbished and additional park features will be maintained and managed by Open Space Services Division using existing resources. Many outdated assets within the park will be renewed as part of the project. With a combination of good design, community group involvement and by additional private concessions such as a café business in the new Visitor Centre, it is hoped that a robust business strategy will allow efficient operation of all the facilities over the long term, safeguarding the investment.

## **7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

- 7.1 A Healthy Halton: improved facilities will encourage more recreation and exercise in the Park, helping to combat obesity, to encourage cardio vascular and muscular activity and to promote mental well-being for local communities.
- 7.2 Halton's Urban Renewal: improvements to Halton's green infrastructure will further improve the image of the Borough and help retain and attract residents, business and visitors.
- 7.3 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton: community enablement will offer opportunities for local people to gain additional knowledge and skills which will support personal development and will be transferable for future employment.

## **8.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 8.1 If the HLF Round 2 bid should not be successful, the development work achieved for the application could be used to source funding from other external grants, however, the proposals would have to be scaled down and some of the improvement proposals would not be achievable.

## **9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

- 9.1 No significant Equality and Diversity issues have been identified.

## **10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Runcorn Hill Park Round 1 'Parks for People' Bid	Open Spaces Services Picow Farm Depot	Nick Martin
Executive Board Report 25 <sup>th</sup> September 2008	Open Space Services Picow Farm Depot	N Martin
HLF Guidance notes for 'Parks for people' grants	On line – HLF	