

REPORT TO: Executive Board Committee
DATE: 29th March 2012
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Communities
PORTFOLIO: Physical Environment
SUBJECT: Sankey Canal Restoration Project
WARDS: Riverside, Halton View and Warrington

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update Members on progress and preliminary discussions with Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

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 1 submission to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Members may recall Executive Board report 25th September 2008 outlining the next phase of major refurbishment to key Borough Parks and Open Spaces.

3.2 The area under consideration as part of this project is a section of the Sankey Canal (also referred to as St. Helens Canal in the above report) from Spike Island to Fiddlers Ferry Marina in Warrington. The working title for the scheme is '*Sankey Interlocks*'.

3.3 This is a joint project with Warrington Borough Council and also involves volunteer representatives from Sankey Canal Restoration Society (SCARS). Other partner organisations consulted so far include the Catalyst Science Discovery Centre and Fiddlers Ferry Power Station.

3.4 Initial discussions with representatives from HLF have indicated that a bid to support this project would be appropriate. Due to the anticipated size and cost of this type of project it would be an application that HLF would consider at a national level with applications from all over the Country.

3.5 A Project Development Steering Group, has been set up to guide the development of the project. Currently the group comprises of relevant Council Officers from both Authorities and a representative from SCARS. Open Space Services, Design & Development Team are leading the Project. An outline project programme/timeline is included in Appendix 1. This illustrates the key dates for deadlines and decision periods. It should be noted that this is a long

term project with a lengthy application process. It is aimed to submit a Round 1 application for the November 2012 deadline.

- 3.6 At present the exact project proposals are not fully determined and are being developed by the Steering group, and will be further refined following consultation with members, interested groups and local people. In order to attract maximum interest and backing from HLF it is thought that a combination of physical restoration works, for instance to make the canal navigable again, will need to be balanced with a robust development plan for activities, attractions and educational opportunities. Any potential business links that can be created will also be beneficial. These could include the Catalyst Centre as one of the main access points to the site providing café facilities and historical interpretation. A smaller centre would be located at Fiddlers Ferry Marina. The boat yards at Spike and Fiddler Ferry will also benefit from increased usage of the canal, with the potential to run a 'pleasure' type boat service along the canal with several stops along the route. See Appendix 2 – Concept Plan.
- 3.7 In order to complete work to support the Round 1 bid, it is hoped that the bulk of the information can be divided up and prepared by members of the Project Group. The final documentation will be produced and submitted by Open Space Services Design & Development Team on behalf of both Authorities.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Sankey Interlocks Project will restore and enhance this part of the Borough and create new recreation and outdoor facilities for the benefit of local communities, and wider audiences. It will provide potential for improved leisure industries and educational links, helping to achieve the objectives of 'A Healthy Halton', 'Urban Renewal' and 'Employment, Learning and Skills'.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No detailed financial costs have been prepared yet. For a Round 1 submission an indication of likely costs will be required. Based on detailed survey work undertaken by Warrington for structural repair works to their section of the canal, it is anticipated that physical works for the whole canal under consideration could be in the order of £20m in total.
- 5.2 If a Round 1 pass is gained, the work required to progress to Round 2 will include detailed cost elements for the whole scheme.
- 5.3 Should a Round 2 pass be successful a minimum match funding package of at least £2.5m would be needed. This would be made up of direct capital money from Halton & Warrington Borough Councils combined, and other external funding the project may be able to lever in. For instance Fiddlers Ferry Power Station have been approached and in principle are willing to contribute towards the project; an exact figure is to be confirmed.

6.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Sustainability: the restored canal and associated facilities will provide a new attraction for people to visit in the area. Through a combination of good design,

working closely with partners, such as Fiddlers Ferry Power station, the Catalyst Centre as well community group involvement. It is hoped that this approach will provide additional income to allow the efficient management and 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 area, helping to combat obesity, to encourage cardio vascular and muscular activity and to promote mental well-being for local communities.
- 7.1 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.
- 7.1 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.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 If the HLF Round 1 bid should not be successful, the development/research work prepared for the application could be used to source funding from other external grants to deliver smaller elements and improvements in a series of phases as and when funds are available.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

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

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Executive Board Report 25 th September 2008	Open Space Services)) Nick Martin
HLF Guidance notes for grants.	On line – HLF))