

Statement on Council's Commitment to Castle Green Regeneration

In early 2004 the Herefordshire Council announced its intention to commence preparatory work on a potential Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) project to regenerate the Castle Green area.

As part of the Heritage Lottery application process, a rigorous and comprehensive assessment needed to be undertaken to scope the potential of such a bid and the practicalities of meeting the complex and very onerous award obligations should such a bid be successful. This is the exercise that the Council has been undertaking over the past 12 months.

In undertaking that exercise the following work has been commissioned: -

1. A full review of HLF criteria.
2. Informal discussions with HLF Officers to determine the scope of items eligible for funding within a potential bid.
3. The determination of priority elements of such a scheme.
4. Undertaking risk assessments (both Corporate and HLF)
5. Research into similar schemes funded under this particular HLF programme.
6. The generation of an outline Project Management Plan and cost plan to deliver the Project Planning phase of scheme.
7. The commissioning of initial project briefs for this phase.
8. An assessment of the implications for the Council in proceeding with an application and the timing of the bid submission.

On completion of this work, due consideration was afforded to the proposed scheme as part of the Council's corporate and budgetary planning cycle. Whereas, the scheme was considered to exhibit significant merit, the scale of preparatory work needed to progress a bid this year was deemed to be beyond the Council's immediate resourcing capacity given its known level of critical commitments.

As part of the Council's long deliberations on the priorities for its very limited capital allocations in the current financial year it was considered that the regeneration of the City Centre deemed higher immediate priority. The resultant allocation of £2 million for this purpose against a very difficult budgetary position serves to reaffirm that commitment.

Meanwhile, there is no lessening of resolve to progress with proposals for the regeneration of the Castle Green area when commitments and resources allow. To this end, the Council is seeking to make available a modest sum of money this year to assist the Friends in their endeavours to seek Grant Aid to progress a scheme of enhancements for the area. Clare Wichbold will continue to be available to advise the Friends and will be able to seek the advice and support of other professional officers as necessary to assist.

Finally, both Officers and Members wish to confirm their commitment and will continue to work with the Friends to identify opportunities to progress appropriate schemes and projects that will lead to a more sustainable and secure future for this much valued city amenity.