

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER OR OFFICER

This form can be used for any decision but **MUST** be used to record:

- any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Councillor
- a key decision taken by a Council Officer

In these circumstances the form must be completed and passed to the Head of Members' Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Head of Members' Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

To accept a grant of £78,900 (seventy eight thousand nine hundred pounds) from the HLF to deliver a 'Past, Present and Future Landscapes of Bedford River Valley Park' interpretation project within the Bedford River Valley Park in accordance with their standard terms and conditions.

2. Date of decision

9th May 2013

3. Reasons for decision

To allow the Council, in partnership with the Marston Vale Trust, to deliver a project that will maximise the potential for the historic environment of BRVP to contribute to education, leisure, recreation and wellbeing, and in stimulating the local economy

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The alternative was not to accept the grant but this was rejected as there is not alternative funding to the interpretation project.

5. How decision is to be funded

There are no additional resource implications associated with accepting the grant

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (if yes give details and date of dispensation)

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

N/A

Signed Dan Hodgson Date 9th May 2013

Name of Decision Taker ... The Mayor

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Head of Members' Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published: 9th May 2013

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: 21st May 2013

Bedford Borough Council – Report to the Mayor

10 April 2013

Report by: Senior Archaeologist

Subject: Acceptance of Heritage Lottery Fund grant funding to finalise and implement a heritage interpretation strategy for Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP).

1. **Executive Summary**

The purpose of the report is to request approval from the Mayor to accept a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for heritage interpretation within Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP) under the project title 'Past, Present and Future Landscapes of Bedford River Valley Park'. The project, which will be managed by the Council working in partnership with Marston Vale Trust, and will seek to develop a range of interpretation for the diverse cultural heritage of BRVP, which spans at least 10,000 years. The grant is subject to terms and conditions which require formal authority to accept.

2. **Recommendations**

2.1 **The Mayor considers, and if satisfied, accepts a grant of £78,900 (seventy eight thousand nine hundred pounds) from the HLF to deliver a 'Past, Present and Future Landscapes of Bedford River Valley Park' interpretation project within the Bedford River Valley Park in accordance with their standard terms and conditions.**

3. **Reason For Recommendations**

3.1 Receipt of this grant funding will allow the Council, in partnership with the Marston Vale Trust, to deliver a project that will maximise the potential for the historic environment of BRVP to contribute to education, leisure, recreation and wellbeing, and in stimulating the local economy.

3.2 The HLF advise that the project should start as soon as possible, especially as delay increases the risk of rising inflation adding to budgets (a 5% contingency has built into the project budget as a safeguard).

4. **Key Implications**

4.1 The implications in accepting the grant offer with regard to any legal, policy, resource, risk, environmental or equality issues have been considered as follows:

Legal Issues

4.2 Other than that highlighted at 4.10 there are no legal implications arising from this report.

Policy Issues

- 4.3 BRVP was first defined within Policy NE23 of the Bedford Borough Council Local Plan (2002), which stated, "*When development opportunities arise within defined areas on the Proposals Map, the Borough Council will seek the creation of the Bedford River Valley Park as an area where opportunities exist for landscape enhancement, nature conservation, recreation and increased public access whilst acknowledging sites of archaeological importance.*" In May 2006 Marston Vale Trust bought the 300-acre Grange Estate with DCLG funding, which was previously gravel workings and will form the core of the new Park. This prompted the Trust to produce the Bedford River Valley Park Framework document (2008), which set out the vision for what should become Bedfordshire's largest park over the next decade. The framework identifies the interpretation of the historic environment of the Great Ouse Valley as a key opportunity offered by the creation of the park.
- 4.4 In response to Policy NE23 of the Local Plan and the objectives of the Framework, it has been recognised that, as the creation of the park gets underway, a heritage interpretation strategy and its implementation is required in order to interpret the park's many archaeological sites, historic buildings and wider historic landscape and present these for the benefit and interest of the local population. The aim is to maximise the potential that the historic environment of the park offers for learning, education, leisure, recreation and wellbeing. As such, a brief for a heritage interpretation strategy was drawn up by the Council's Historic Environment Team in February 2011 with a key theme of 'Past and Present Historic Landscapes of the Park'. The Council's partner, Marston Vale Trust, appointed heritage interpretation specialists, Hammer Design, to assist with the HLF bid pre-submission work, which was based upon the brief.

Resource Implications

- 4.5 There are no additional budget implications for the Council. The Council's contribution to the project will be staffing costs to manage the project which will be met from existing budgets.

Staffing

- 4.6 The project team will consist of the Council's Historic Environment Team (Archaeology) as lead partner, responsible for overall project management and delivery, with Marston Vale Trust acting in a supporting role, helping to deliver the project in conjunction with the appointed external heritage contractor (Partnership Agreement dated 16th August 2012 submitted as part of HLF bid). Marston Vale Trust has substantial experience in delivering interpretation within the Marston Vale and BRVP as well as consulting and engaging with local communities. The external heritage interpretation contractors have significant experience in their respective field.

- 4.7 The majority of interpretation mediums will be maintained by the Council's Countryside Team as part of their routine site maintenance. The exhibition display will predominantly be housed at Priory Country Park and will be maintained by its staff. A limited amount of the interpretation will be located on land owned by the Marston Vale Trust which will be maintained as part of their site maintenance program.
- 4.8 The upkeep of interpretation content for the listening posts, podcasts and website will be carried out by BRVP Volunteers, Council staff and MVT staff. BRVP volunteers will be made up of members from Marston Vale Community Forest Volunteers, Saturday Archaeology Workshop, Willington Local History Group and any other interested parties.

Financial

- 4.9 In order to determine a quantum for the grant it was necessary to undertake a tender process for designing and implementing the heritage interpretation strategy. The successful bidder has provisionally been appointed in accordance with the Council's and HLF's procurement procedures. The project was initially tendered in August 2012 and one bid was received. Due to HLF requiring a minimum of three bids, the project was re-tendered in October 2012 and 2 bids were received. The successful contractor submitted a winning bid of £78,400 (excl. VAT but incl. 5% contingency) which included a detailed breakdown of costs. In the circumstances, the Council's procurement team and the HLF have advised that the receipt of two written quotes is acceptable in this case. The Council's Accountancy Team has advised that in regards to land ownership and VAT, any interpretation media ('goods and services') will need to be placed on council land to protect the Council's ability to recover VAT. Marston Vale Trust has been made aware in writing that any interpretation media on their land will be subject to VAT. If the grant is agreed, then the successful contractor will be formally appointed and the project can commence.. The project will then be delivered in its entirety within 18-20 months of formally appointing the contractor. Regular monitoring of expenditure will be undertaken throughout the project to ensure costs do not exceed the budget.
- 4.10 The standard grant conditions of the HLF funding (which apply for 10 years) include repayment provisions in certain circumstances e.g. failure to keep to any of the terms of the grant, there is a significant change in the Council's status etc. Legal Services have checked the grant conditions and contract and consider the risk to be minimal provided the terms of the grant are adhered to. Should the grant be applied to land not in the control of the Council, the occupier of the site should acknowledge its land and premises are bound by the terms of the grant in relation to its relevant provisions e.g. claw back.
- 4.11 The grant conditions allow for the grant to be paid in instalments. HLF reserve the right to only pay these instalments under the National Lottery etc Act 1993 if enough funds are made available to it and they are satisfied that the approved purposes have been achieved. The risk of this is minimal, however, should this happen and project works have started the Council would have to bear the cost of the expenditure. The first payment request will tie in with the

formal appointment of the external heritage contractor and will be for up to 50% of the grant. There will be a further two payment stages throughout the life of the project, the last will be for the final 10% of the grant awarded. The project is expected to be delivered in its entirety within 18-20 months of formally appointing the heritage contractor.

Property implications

- 4.12 The project site is partly owned by the Council and partly by Marston Vale Trust. The latter has received a separate letter from the HLF asking them to sign up to the Terms of the Grant and have already been advised in writing of their position in regards to recovery of VAT – see section 4.4.5 above.
- 4.13 The project and locations of interpretative media have been discussed with Property Services. It has been agreed that they will carry out the necessary liaison with lessees of Borough land in order to draw up an agreement where necessary, to install the media.

Risk Implications

- 4.14 If acceptance of this grant is not approved, the Council and its partners will not have the resources required to deliver the targeted project and meet Policy NE23 of the Local Plan and a key objective of the BRVP Framework.

Environmental Implications

- 4.15 There are no adverse environmental implications identified in accepting the grant offered.

Equalities Impact

- 4.16 In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.17 A relevance test for equality has been completed and followed by a Level 1 Equality Analysis for the project, which indicates that it has the potential to adversely impact or discriminate against disabled people and those whose first-language is not English. However, actions to mitigate/ rebalance this have been identified through a heritage interpretation strategy which is fully inclusive. On this basis, there is no need for the BRVP Heritage Interpretation Project to be assessed at level two stage and it is now ready for approval.

5. Details

Background

- 5.1 The HLF sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage through innovative investment in projects with a lasting impact on people and places. As the largest dedicated funder of the UK's heritage, with around £255 million a year to invest in new projects and a considerable body of knowledge, they are also a leading advocate for the value of heritage to modern life.
- 5.2 The HLF is administered by the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) which was given the responsibility of distributing a share of money raised through the National Lottery for Good Causes, to heritage across the UK, in 1994. They are a non-departmental public body accountable to Parliament via the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.
- 5.3 If this request is approved the grant will be invested to design and implement the heritage interpretation strategy for BRVP.

Project Activity

- 5.4 The project involves the development of interpretation for the diverse heritage of Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP). Through mixed media interpretation, comprising interpretation panels with QR codes and/or Near Field Communication, an interactive website with downloadable documents and gaming apps, a portable exhibition, podcasts, geocaching, bluetooth hotspots, leaflets and walks, the general public will have readily accessible information about BRVP, and how the park is a living, breathing landscape where human activity has shaped the land, in the past, present and for the future. This project will allow visitors to appreciate the rich heritage of BRVP's landscape and take a journey through time to see how human activities have influenced the area. Interpretation facilities will be located in a number of key locations within BRVP. On-line resources and website features will also be available for 'distance learning'. The interpretation for this project will span the entirety of the known history of the BRVP landscape.
- 5.5 The different interpretation media, the information they hold, their accessibility and locations, will be designed to appeal to a range of different user groups to create a wider audience as possible. The Priory Country Park Visitor's Centre will act as a 'key gateway' into BRVP and as such, will be an ideal location for an exhibition which provides a general overview of the Park's heritage. At the other end of the Park, Willington Village will perform the same function. This exhibition and the website will point the way to further and more detailed information on individual sites, buildings, periods and key landscape themes either at physical locations and/or on-line. The website in particular, will have content designed for both adults and children, and educational material which can be used as a teacher's resource. The geocache trail will be designed to be an activity that families can enjoy together. It is hoped to target a number of the listening posts and podcasts at the large number of walkers and cyclists who already use the N51 Cycleway which cuts through the middle of BRVP. A

number of guided walks are also planned for those who would like to be accompanied across the Park and by a knowledgeable guide. For those less physically able, a number of the individual sites where interpretation is planned do have appropriate facilities including disabled access. Priory Country Park has a number of good mobility surfaced access paths leading to 3 of the planned interpretation sites, disabled toilets and parking. The information at each site will be posted up on-line.

6. Summary Of Consultations And Outcome

6.1 The following Council units or Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Head of Legal Services

Head of Finance

Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Environment & Sustainable Communities

6.2 No adverse comments have been received.

Report Contact Officer: *Vanessa Clarke, Senior Archaeologist*
(e-mail: vanessa.clarke@bedford.gov.uk)

File Reference: *None*

Previous Relevant Minutes: *None*

Background Papers: *None*

Appendices: *None*