

Central Dudley Area Committee - 22nd January 2008

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Priory Park – Stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund bid

Purpose of Report

1. To advise the Committee of progress on the Council's preparation of a Stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Priory Park
2. To invite the Committee's comments on the proposals prior to the submission of the Stage 1 bid

Background

3. The Committee considered a report on the 5th September 2006 which set out the Council's aims, priorities and current initiatives for economic regeneration within the central Dudley area.
4. These initiatives included:
 - Netherton Regeneration Centre (The Savoy Centre)
 - Prince's Trust
 - Dudley Borough Business Crime Partnership Initiative
 - Wren's Nest and Seven Sisters Heritage Experience (Since renamed Strata) – part of A Million People: Black Country as Urban Park project
 - Liveability
 - Area Development Framework (ADF) for Dudley Town Centre
 - Castle Hill
 - Dudley Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)
5. The above projects form a package of complementary regeneration initiatives which will bring real economic, social and environmental benefits to the borough as well as to the community of the central Dudley area
6. Reference to Priory Park was made in the above report, noting the successful delivery of improvements to the park via Transforming Your Space, Liveability and Section 106 funding. Reference was also made to the successful Groundforce programme which,

via Future Skills Dudley, has allowed trainees to gain qualifications and work experience through secondments to the Council's Greencare service.

7. The historical significance of Priory Park may be summarised as follows:
 - It is a Grade II listed park
 - Priory Hall is a grade II listed building of special architectural or historic interest
 - The site includes the ruins of The Priory of St James — these, and a considerable area around them, including medieval fish pond earthworks, are scheduled as an ancient monument
 - Much of the park is included in the Castle Hill Special Landscape Heritage Area
 - The park contains formal gardens, pleasure grounds, children's play provision, and multi use games area, tennis courts and former bowling greens
 - The lily pond is a designated Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation
8. In 2004 a Masterplan for Priory Park was completed through the Liveability Programme, the preparation of which was accompanied by extensive community engagement in close liaison with the Friends of Priory Park
9. In 2004 the Friends of Priory Park received a project planning grant award from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This grant was used to undertake a number of studies and produce certain key reports, with the intention of the submission of a Stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The work was completed in January 2006 and included a series of recommendations on further work that would be required should a bid for grant funding be prepared. However, following a change in HLF grant programmes in early 2006 it was decided not to make a submission at that time.
10. In August 2007 the Council appointed heritage consultants The Conservation Studio to prepare a Stage 1 application to the HLF Parks for People Programme, for submission to the March 2008 bidding round. The Conservation Studio have an excellent track record in securing successful HLF grant approvals, and advised on the Council's successful Stage 2 grant approval for the Dudley Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative
11. An officer team, which is attended by representatives of the Friends of Priory Park, is co-ordinating the preparation of the Stage 1 bid. The following documents being prepared in support of the bid are as follows:
 - Conservation management plan including masterplan and costs
 - Audience development plan
 - Access plan
 - Outline 10-year management and maintenance plan
 - Evidence of community engagement
 - Training plan
12. A key element of the preparation of the bid is that of community engagement. Officers are mindful of the need to seek effective community engagement in the preparation of the proposals, but also that this has taken place extensively via the preparation of the 2004 Liveability masterplan and the 2006 studies undertaken by the Friends of Priory

Park. It has therefore been considered appropriate to carry out a focussed and proportional consultation exercise which acts to update the community on the proposals and seek their views, whilst, with the evidence of the previous consultation activity carried out, acts to assure the HLF of effective community engagement

13. A consultation exercise has therefore been launched which takes the form of a staffed exhibition at a range of venues, with invitations sent to local residents and stakeholders, and with information posted on the websites of the Council and Friends of the Priory Park. This consultation is due to close on the 25th January 2008
14. A presentation will accompany this report on the proposals arising from the preparation of the Stage 1 bid and a verbal update will be given on the progress of the consultation to date
15. Subject to the approval of the Cabinet on the 13th February 2008 it is intended to submit the Stage 1 bid to the HLF before the end of March 2008

Finance

16. The costs involved in preparing the Stage 1 bid will be met from resources within the Directorate of the Urban Environment

Law

17. The Council may do anything which they consider is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000. This general power together with other statutory powers including the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Public Health Act 1875 will enable the Council to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

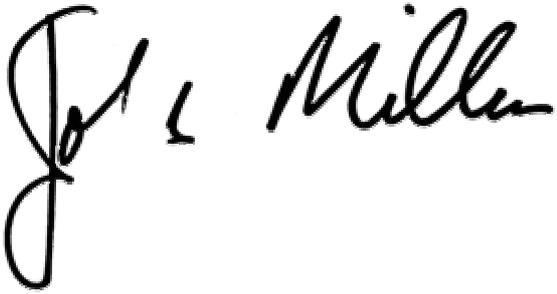
Equality Impact

18. The activities that are listed in this report accord with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
19. The consultation activities referred to have had direct regard for the needs of young people.
20. Access in Dudley have provided recommendations on improvements to the park to improve accessibility for all users

Recommendation

21. It is recommended that:
 - The Committee note the progress made in preparation of a Stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Priory Park
 - The Committee is invited to comment on the proposals for a Stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Priory Park

- The Committee recommends that the Cabinet authorises the submission of a Stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Priory Park



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List of Background Papers