

CANNOCK CHASE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

19 OCTOBER 2006

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO LEADER – ACCESS TO SKILLS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CHASE HERITAGE TRAIL - APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO SPEND

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet of progress to date in respect of the plans to create the Chase Heritage Trail, (CHT) across the District and carry out extension construction and fit out works at the Museum of Cannock Chase.
- 1.2 To seek approval for permission to spend to be granted in relation to these works, subject to Planning Application approvals being obtained in respect of certain sections of the trail itself.

2. Recommendations

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| 2.1 | That Cabinet note the current progress position relating to the entire Chase Heritage Trail project. |
| 2.2 | That, subject to further Planning Control Committee approvals, and the cost of the project being within budgetary provision, Cabinet grant permission to spend to enable the project to move forward to the next stages. |

3. Key Issue – Permission to Spend

- 3.1 In order for the entire Chase Heritage Trail project to move forward to the next stages, it is now necessary for Cabinet to consider the granting of permission to spend approval.

4. Key Issue – Grant Draw Down

- 4.1 Draw down of Heritage Lottery Grant was achieved on 18 August, 2006. However, in respect of the Trail this only relates to the original baseline route. Work is now progressing to have the definitive route approved within the existing works budget.

5. Key Issue – Partnership Funding

- 5.1 A Finance Officer is currently liaising with other partners involved in the project to ensure that their funding is confirmed and is within their approved programmes for the appropriate financial years. A meeting has recently been held with a Staffordshire Environmental Fund representative to provide an update on project progress, and seek confirmation of their financial contribution.

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Section 1

Background

The concept of the Chase Heritage Trail project to create a foot / cycle / bridle way across the District linking various heritage sites of interest has existed for a number of years, and is included in the Council's General Fund Capital Programme for 2006-07.

The Council was notified by the Heritage Lottery Fund, (HLF) in June 2004 that a bid for core grant funding for this scheme had been successful. Since that time Officers have been working towards achieving this grant draw down. This was confirmed on 18 August, 2006.

The total budget provision for this initiative is £1,446,700.

The Council has previously ratified the appointment of this Authority as the Accountable Body for this project, and formal agreements are now in place with the other main partners involved, these being Staffordshire County Council and the Forestry Commission.

The definitive route that the trail will actually take is still to be determined as certain physical aspects along the original, (baseline) trail that was submitted with the original bid have changed over time. Furthermore, as additional trail research has been carried out, alternative route solutions are also being proposed.

Once the definitive route is approved by HLF, the works on certain sections of the trail will be subject to Planning Applications, which will be considered by Planning Control Committee.

Further details of the main elements of the project, The Trail and the Museum Extension are reproduced at Annex 1.

It has always been envisaged that from the point at which grant draw down was triggered that the project would take up to two years to complete in entirety. The Project Plans currently reflect the project to conclude during Spring 2008. For information, the Outline Project Timetable is shown at Annex 2.

Section 2

Details of Matters to be Considered

The matter requiring consideration at this point is the application for permission to spend for the entire Chase Heritage Trail project.

Section 3

Contribution to CHASE

These additional, extended and updated community facilities as outlined in the report will further support the aim of the Council to develop a healthier and more active community. Features to enhance the feeling of safety and inclusion have been incorporated into the project. The facilities will enable greater use by various age groups within the community.

Section 4

Section 17 Implications

As part of the required future Planning Applications for works on certain sections of the trail construction, consultation will take place with the appropriate Architectural Liaison Officer from Staffordshire Police.

Section 5

Human Rights Act Implications

Where there are pending Planning Applications, it is imperative that the Council adheres to its Policies and ensures that all applicants and others entitled to address the Planning Control Committee have a 'fair hearing' as required under Article 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Section 6

Data Protection Implications

There are no identified implications in respect of the Data Protection Act.

Section 7

Risk Management Implications

There are two risks to the completion of this scheme. Firstly, partners could withdraw funding commitments because of the delayed scheme start. Secondly, the scheme is not completed by the Heritage Lottery Fund June 2008 funding deadline.

If partners withdraw funding for the scheme and alternative funding could not be found then the scheme would not be viable in its existing form. Either a new revised scheme within a reduced budget would be required or the scheme would have to cease.

Heritage Lottery Fund have verbally confirmed that they do consider project overrun situations but consider each scheme on its merits. The scheme should be project managed so that this situation does not arise.

Section 8

Legal Implications

The Council has embarked upon this project and has entered into a contractual relationship with other partners. The Council will be subject to various contractual obligations and liabilities as the Accountable Body and a party having responsibility to progress and implement the project. Accordingly, it must ensure that it is in a position to discharge all contractual obligations. Failure to do so may expose the Council to possible claims.

As the Accountable Body, the Council will be required to ensure that a clear audit trail exists in relation to monies expended and that the fund is used for the purposes for which it has been provided. It is the Council's responsibility to be in a position at all times to account for the use of the Fund and show its

has used the Fund for its intended purpose. Failure to do so could result in the Council being exposed to liability.

There are other legal issues that will need to be addressed, such as the requisite planning consent being obtained, the Council will not be able to progress this project unless such legal issues are addressed.

For certain aspects of the project the Council may need to comply with its tendering process. This is to ensure that any contract awarded is awarded through a process that is transparent and free from any allegation of bias or favouritism.

The Council is under a legal obligation to ensure that it complies with its own Contract Procurement Policy, EU Regulations on Procurement (where applicable), other relevant statutory provisions and contract principles when offering and awarding contracts.

Failure to comply with our own Policies, EU Regulations, other legislation relating to Procurement and other relevant contractual obligations, could render any offer and award of a contract unlawful thereby causing delay and possible claims for contract damages.

Moreover, all projects must be approved and authorised by the Council. Officers' actions must remain within the remit of the approval / authorisation given by Council in respect each specific project.

Section 9

Financial Implications

These amended financial implications are draft and have not been cleared by the S.151 Officer. Cannock Chase District Council received notification in June 2004 that core funding had been granted from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Drawdown of the funding has been confirmed on the 18th August 2006. Changes to the budgeted expenditure and funding have occurred in the intervening time. The revised budget and funding is detailed below:

Budget			
Chase Heritage Trail	Original Budget £	Approved Budget £	Revised Budget £
Total Budget (see funding below)	1,362,160	1,437,060	1,446,700

Funding & sources			
Chase Heritage Trail	Original Funding £	Approved Budget £	Revised Funding £
Heritage Lottery Fund	946,730	946,000	946,000
Staffordshire County Council	165,480	215,480	215,480

Forestry Commission	22,000	22,000	22,000
Cannock Chase District Council	154,080	133,140	132,490
Section 106	73,870	70,440	80,730
Staffordshire Environment Fund	0	50,000	50,000
Other (sought)	0	0	0
Total Funding	1,362,160	1,437,060	1,446,700

The revised Capital Budget required to deliver the scheme will be £1,446,700. Due to the nature of the fixtures that will be on Cannock Chase District Council Trail land along with IT equipment to be installed there will be some future revenue costs. Any fixtures costs will be met from existing revenue budgets but an assessment is needed of any on going revenue costs associated with the installation of IT equipment as no revenue budgets exist to meet future costs. Once an assessment of costs are calculated a supplementary estimate will be required to meet any on going IT revenue running costs. The total capital project including any trail variations must be delivered within the revised Capital Budget.

Partnership Funding

Partners have previously confirmed their project funding in writing. Re-confirmation of partnership funding and contributions are now being sought. The partners have been notified of the Heritage Lottery Fund draw down date and the proposed project commencement 1st April 2007 and end date 30th June 2008. They have been asked to confirm:

- the previously agreed funding amounts;
- to note the proposed commencement date and end date of the project ;
- that profiling of funding is acceptable and available between the these dates;

On the 26th September 2006 notification was received from Staffordshire County Council that £20,000 of funding they profiled to be spent in 2006-07 can not be rolled forward to 2007-08 to match the scheme proposed start date. Officers have since explored an option with Staffordshire County Council whereby expenditure incurred to date on Heritage Lottery grant funded elements could be offset against the £20,000 but unfortunately Staffordshire County Council confirmed 28th September 2006 that this option is not acceptable.

Officers are currently looking at other options to address this issue. Options available are to:

- to bring forward Staffordshire County Council Heritage Trail planned expenditure items that would be funded by the 2006-07 £20,000 allocation;
- to reduce the specification of the scheme to the value of £20,000;
- to increase the Council funding into the project by £20,000 (up to £155,000 approved)

- to request that Heritage Lottery Fund allow the Council to utilise client contingency money available in the agreed cost plan to fund the £20,000.

Officers are working towards determining if there are any further funding issues and addressing the issue regarding the changed status of the £20,000 Staffordshire County Council.

Section 10

Resource Implications

The implementation of the Chase Heritage Trail project is being co-ordinated by two dedicated Officers from the Strategic Projects Team within the Culture and Major Projects Division.

Section 11

Conclusion

That Cabinet consider all the information provided within the report, and determine if permission to spend approval for the entire Chase Heritage Trail project should be granted.

Section 12

Background Papers

Stage 2 Submission to HLF

Bucknall Austin PM1 Documentation.

Report of Chief Executive to Cabinet – 29 July 2004 – The Chase Heritage Trail – Update Report.

Report of the Head of Culture and Major Projects to Cabinet – 15 September 2005 – Chase Heritage Trail – Outstanding Issues.

Annexes

Annex 1

Chase Heritage Trail (Heritage Lottery Fund Project Reference – HF-01-00431/2)

Summary

The Chase Heritage Trail is a proposed prestigious long distance cycle route / footpath, crossing the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty linking the towns of Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley, and passing near to sites of historical interest (nodes) along the way. One of the nodes is the Museum of Cannock Chase where it is intended to extend the gallery space. The construction of the trail and extension at the Museum offers the opportunity for tourist potential and associated income generation for the District.

The scheme has been developed in partnership with Staffordshire County Council and the Forestry Commission and is supported by funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Staffordshire Environmental Report-Chase Heritage Trail-v9

Fund, Cannock Chase District Council and the partners. Contributions from Section 106 accounts have been identified as part of Cannock Chase Council's contribution.

The concept of the Chase Heritage Trail has been developed over a number of years, and the HLF grant was awarded in 2004.

The Trail

The Trail is a cycleway / footpath linking the major towns in the District. It is approximately 10 miles long, and presently comprises 65 separate sections:

- i. 38 sections traverse land owned by Staffordshire County Council;
- ii. 14 sections traverse land owned by Cannock Chase District Council;
- iii. 7 sections traverse land owned by the Forestry Commission; and,
- iv. 6 sections traverse land in private ownership.

Every opportunity has been taken to route the trail away from the highway.

Staffordshire County Council will have responsibility for trail construction and future maintenance of the trail on all sections of the trail traversing land in its ownership. Some of these sections are on the highway and the others are on SCC-Countryside and SCC-Education land. Similarly the Forestry Commission will have responsibility for trail construction and future maintenance of the trail on all sections of the trail traversing land in its ownership. Finally, Cannock Chase District Council will have responsibility for trail construction and future maintenance of the trail on all sections of the trail traversing land in its ownership and also on those sections of the trail on land in private ownership, other than public footpaths.

The health benefits of this project are well known, and the project provides a unique opportunity to undertake such exercise whilst at the same time giving access to an historical educational experience by pointing out the historical landmarks along the trail. There is also potential for those who are excluded from other forms of recreational activity to benefit from the free trail, as well as the tourist potential afforded by such a large HLF funded project. The trail will be built to effect physical access through walking, cycling and wheelchair access. It will offer the opportunity for walking and safe cycling with the promotion of healthy lifestyles. The trail offers the opportunity for gentle exercise, a benefit for all, in an area with a high incidence of cardiac disease.

There will be spurs from the trail to three main visitor centres:

- i. Birches Valley visitors centre
- ii. Marquis Drive visitors centre
- iii. Museum of Cannock Chase

It is intended that IT equipment and electronic educational material will be installed at each of the three main visitor centres.

Sites of historical interest (nodes) include Conduit Head, St Luke's Church, Our lady of Lourdes Church, the Museum of Cannock Chase, Brindley Pools, Slitting Mill Ironworks, Rugeley Clock Tower, St Augustine's Church and Rugeley Chancel Ruins.

The trail will be supported by various types of interpretational signage including single and double sided panels on posts, single sided panels on lecterns in rural and AONB areas, waymarkers and mileposts. In addition, there will be three main information boards, one at Cannock to mark the start and end point for the trail, one at Rugeley to mark the start and end point for the trail and one in the middle at Hednesford.

A package of route variations to enhance the trail is currently under consideration.

The Museum

One of the key project objectives is to enhance the Museum of Cannock Chase which is at the centre of the trail, through the creation of a new local history gallery and an enlarged reception and information point. The project will revitalise and enhance the Museum, providing a focal point for the area's rich industrial heritage.

In addition to the collections currently on display, the Museum holds many items in storage. Due to the limitations in space it has not been possible to display these items to the public. A permanent local history gallery will be established in the space freed up by the building of a new reception area. The Museum has limited space and has thus far not been able to fully reflect the local history of the area. The provision of the gallery will enable the museum to further its mission of providing a sense of place and allow a greater percentage of the reserve collections to be available to visitors. Additional gallery space in the main body of the building will allow previously inaccessible artefacts to be displayed using a variety of modern and sophisticated interpretational techniques.

As part of the planned improvements to the Museum and its incorporation into the heritage trail, there will be new and upgraded interpretation to the level now expected by an increasingly sophisticated audience. This will include the use of new technology to provide information about the trail, conservation and the sustainability of the environment.

In addition, as part of this scheme, it is intended that the front of the Museum is extended to house a new reception and Tourist Information Point. The Museum element of the project is integral to the Chase Heritage Trail project, providing a base for the physical and intellectual exploration of the area's heritage. The improved reception and Tourist Information Point will provide orientation for visitors from outside the area, thus increasing accessibility to heritage sites in and beyond the District boundaries.

Planning Permission for the museum element of the scheme and associated landscaping was granted on 07/11/2003 and Building Regulation Approval was obtained on 28/07/2005.

Annex 2Chase Heritage Trail – Outline Project TimetableTrail

	<u>Milestone</u>	<u>Date</u>
1.	Trail variations agreed, and revised definitive route agreed and costed by the Quantity Surveyor.	October 2006
2.	Definitive route signed of by Heritage Lottery Fund & Bucknall Austin	November 2006
3.	Commencement of Planning Permissions	January 2007
4.	Commencement of Cycleway Orders	January 2007
5.	Commencement of CCDC, SCC and FC Trail Construction works	April 2007
6.	Interpretation Signage Specification complete	June 2007
7.	Signage Development Contractor appointed	September 2007
8.	Completion of CCDC, SCC and FC Trail Construction works	December 2007
9.	Signage Development and Installation complete	March 2008
10.	Opening Ceremony	April 2008

Museum

	<u>Milestone</u>	<u>Date</u>
1.	Researcher Appointed	January 2007
2.	Extension Build Contractor Appointed	January 2007
3.	Extension Build Works Complete	Early May 2007
4.	Fitting Out Works Contractor Appointed	July 2007
5.	Gallery Design Complete	October 2007
6.	Commencement of Museum Fitting Out Works	October 2007
7.	Museum Fitting Out Works Complete	December 2007
8.	IT Installation Complete	December 2007
9.	Opening Ceremony (Mini – if required)	January 2008
10.	Opening Ceremony (together with Trail)	April 2008