

25th April 2017

Agenda Item 6 (b)

Hermitage Park update

Summary

Hermitage Park in Helensburgh is an important heritage asset and includes the town's 'A' Listed war memorial. The Hermitage Park project aims to create an attractive and sustainable park for residents and visitors to the area and a resource for the local community. It aims to deliver outcomes related to the economy, health and wellbeing, culture and heritage, and enjoys widespread local support.

The park was successful in its stage two funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund Parks for People (HLF) and other funding sources, including a council commitment of £280,000 adding up to a total project spend of £3,375,587.

As part of this a five year Activity Plan will run alongside the main construction period. The aim of which is to engage with the local community through a series of events, projects and training and development opportunities, all of which will encourage the community to get on-board with the project and 'Grow our Park Together'

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update of the delivery stage of the Hermitage Park project and highlight its role in delivering the SOA outcomes and wider government policy.

2. Recommendations

The Helensburgh and Lomond Community Planning Group note the content of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 Hermitage Park in Helensburgh is an important heritage asset, however, the park has deteriorated significantly over the years due to reducing resources and reprioritisation. This has had a negative impact on the infrastructure of the park and the services and facilities on offer to communities. The Hermitage Park project will significantly improve the capital infrastructure and the services on

offer to the community. It aims to create an attractive and sustainable park for residents and visitors to the area and a resource for the local community and through this deliver outcomes related to the economy, health and wellbeing, culture and heritage. The project enjoys widespread local support.

- 3.2 The park was successful in its stage two funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund Parks for People (HLF) and other funding sources, including a council commitment of £280,000 adding up to a total project spend of £3,375,587. All match funding is now in place, subject to funding conditions being met.
- 3.3 As part of the programme of works a five year Activity Plan will run alongside the main construction period. The aim of which is to engage with the local community in its widest possible sense. Through a series of events and activities it will provide training and development opportunities for the community, all of which will encourage the community to get on-board with the project and 'Grow our Park Together'
- 3.4 A ten year Management and Maintenance Plan will bring a new way of working based on more sustainable regimes, and working in partnership with a range of organisations and groups, such as Duchess Wood, to share and develop resources and the towns green network. Similar ways of working have been embraced elsewhere in order to stem the decline of public parks and this is highlighted in the published HLF document, "*State of UK Public Parks, 2014: Renaissance to Risk?*"

4. Detail

- 4.1 Hermitage Park is currently underused primarily due to its current state of disrepair, but has huge unrealised potential. Whilst use of the park has declined visitor figures for 2016 (over 76,000) show it is still valued. The project has wide community backing and involvement and has been driven from the ground up. The community and local groups have demonstrated how important it is through their commitment to the project and it was their determination and vision that led to the application to HLF, which was instigated by the Friends of Hermitage Park Association. There is an established users group which has sixteen active member organisations and growing, these groups reflect the diversity of the community and include schools.
- 4.2 The project will conserve and interpret the heritage and encourage visitors to learn about it; reconfigure part of the recreational facilities and provide a number of flexible events spaces together with an events loop to facilitate this; provide a kitchen garden that will offer opportunities to grow, cook and eat healthy food; at provide a dynamic hub through the development of a new pavilion and engage with people through working in partnership to 'Grow Our Park Together'.

- 4.3 The project is split into two lots Lot one the new pavilion works will start in summer 2017 and Lot two Landscape and conservation works started in February 2017. The main construction phase is due to be complete Summer 2018.

LOT One The Pavilion

- Appoint building contractor and start works - June 2017
- Completion of the pavilion – Summer 2018

LOT Two The Landscape and conservation works

- Landscape works which include a new drainage system, improvements to paths including new lighting loop, major tree works to open the park up and repairs to bridges, developing a kitchen garden, improvements to plantings throughout the park and adding interpretation – March 2021
 - The restoration of the following features A Listed war, memorial, pool and walls, hermitage wishing well and mill remains – Summer 2018
 - The redevelopment of the recreational elements including the play areas, adding a demonstration area, fountain plaza and other play spaces – Summer 2018
 - Improvements to the natural heritage of the park and opportunities for reducing carbon emissions, guided by the Hermitage Park Environmental Assessment – March 2021
 - Activities and engaging with visitors and volunteers, skills and training, as set out within the five year Activity Plan – March 2021
 - Project completion date – 30th April 2021
- 4.4 Hermitage Park is in the Helensburgh Conservation Area and contains nationally important heritage assets. It also has a key role as a focus for both community outdoor recreational activity, and as an area of important green space, as well as providing an offering for visitors to Helensburgh. The Park therefore makes a significant contribution to the attractive townscape of Helensburgh and plays a strategic role in the regeneration of Helensburgh, delivering a revitalised Helensburgh town centre and waterfront, alongside CHORD developments. It is aligned with the council's SOA, Economic Development Plan, Scottish Government economic and health strategies, and has significant local community involvement and support.

- 4.5 The overall vision for the park reflects the Local Development Plan and Economic Development Plan objectives of protecting the quality of our heritage and environment as an asset for sustainable economic growth thereby enabling us to deliver a positive economic impact within Helensburgh, building on the investment already made by the council into the public realm. This is captured in the developing Helensburgh Green Network which recognises the ecological and wider importance of Hermitage Park.

The Economic Development Action Plan identifies the importance of investment in the heritage within our key towns to secure economic regeneration. In addition the Helensburgh and Lomond EDAP 2016/17 recognises Hermitage Park as a key project.

4.6 The project aligns with the key objectives of the Governments Economic Strategy, the Town Centre Action Plan, and the NHS Health Scotland's Delivery Plan, which has a strong focus on Place and seeks to secure the enhancement of the quality of our areas as places to live and work by improving the overall quality of life in our communities. This is dependent upon the quality and accessibility of the facilities and environment - both physical and natural – within our communities which also contributes to our ambitions for a healthier Scotland

5. Conclusions

The park, as demonstrated by the level of community engagement, is an important area of green space within the town that provides a much needed leisure and recreational asset for those living, working and visiting Helensburgh. The investment and demonstrable community support will significantly improve the capital infrastructure and the services on offer to the community. The project provides an opportunity to create a sustainable park for residents and visitors alike and fits well with strategies for the area, and will enhance residents and the visitor experience by building on the investment in the town centre public realm and adding to the existing portfolio of attractions within the town including the Hill House and the Tower.

6. SOA Outcomes

Outcome 1: The Economy is Diverse and Thriving

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