

Rothesay TH (Townscape Heritage) – Year 3 Update

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress of Rothesay Townscape Heritage (TH).
- 1.2 As a heritage-led initiative, the focus of Rothesay TH is to regenerate a defined area of Rothesay's town centre, through support to property owners to return historic buildings to a good state of repair. Training to enhance construction skills, and events to celebrate the culture and history of Bute are also integral components of the TH programme.
- 1.3 Rothesay TH will be delivered over a five-year period and will conclude on 31st March 2023. It is a partnership programme with a cumulative value of £2.74m, and which is funded by National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF), Historic Environment Scotland (HES), Argyll and Bute Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), LEADER, and through Smarter Choices Smarter Places. Of the total fund, £2m is being made available to property owners through the offer of grant.
- 1.4 The programme is delivered to NLHF guidelines, whilst taking cognisance of all funder requirements, to ensure due diligence is followed and all relevant criteria is met.
- 1.5 The project is currently in year 4 of 5 and as such substantial progress has been made to date, with 10 training and event projects having been facilitated, 3 window repair grants having been awarded, a double fronted shopfront restored to its classical proportions, the refurbishment of a large-scale tenement and the restoration of the category 'A' listed Discovery Centre. Work is underway to develop repair proposals for a further two tenements and a shopfront.
- 1.6 The project is facilitated by fully funded officer support.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That members of Bute and Cowal Area Committee note and consider the content of the report.

Rothesay Townscape Heritage (Rothesay TH) – Year 3 Update

3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress of Rothesay Townscape Heritage (TH) as the project enters its fourth year.
- 3.2 All project activity is carried out in accordance with that which was agreed with funders when funding was secured, and is delivered to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF) and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) guidelines.
- 3.3 The lockdown measures introduced by Government as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily stalled the construction element of the project, the effects of which has been mitigated by an extension of time agreed by HES and NHLF. The project will now run until 31st March 2023, and will perform a critical function in supporting the town's economic recovery.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That members of Bute and Cowal Area Committee note and consider the content of the report.

5.0 DETAIL

- 5.1 Rothesay TH is primarily a grants administration scheme that involves substantial amounts of dialogue with property owners to see repairs realised. A large component of the programme is also dedicated to raising awareness of the historic built environment and celebrating the heritage and culture of the Isle of Bute.

- 5.2 The project continues to be delivered in accordance with the outputs agreed with funders, and work to date can be summarised as follows.

Priority Building Repair Grant

- 5.3 The full-scale repairs to the roof and ironwork of the category 'A' listed, Isle of Bute Discovery Centre were completed in 2019. This was followed by the comprehensive repair of a tenement property, 73-77 Victoria Street, which has recently completed despite a short suspension of works arising from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 5.4 A third priority project (39-43 Victoria Street) is due to commence on site in autumn 2020 and the fourth (1 Tower Street/37 Victoria Street) is scheduled to start in the spring of 2021.

Shopfront Restoration Scheme

- 5.5 The first shopfront restoration grant was made to the owner of The Electric Bakery, Montague Street earlier this year and as such the full-scale restoration of a double shopfront was completed in September 2020. The second restoration (DC Murray & Co, Argyle Street) is currently on site and due for completion in autumn 2020. A call to encourage additional interest in the shopfront grant will go out in winter and will follow a complementary 'shop local' awareness raising exercise.

Traditional Sash and Case Window Repair Grant

- 5.6 It is an ambition of the programme to support a large number of property owners to refurbish traditional sash and case windows or replace modern plastic windows with timber sash and case. To date, the programme has made three of these grant awards to property owners and will continue to make this grant available. It is also intended to put out a call for interest for this scheme over winter.

Complementary Initiatives

- 5.7 The following projects have been delivered with a view to raising awareness of the historic built environment, to celebrate the heritage and culture of Bute, and to help strengthen resilience within the island's creative, innovative and tourism industries:
- Built Heritage Information Sessions - 244 school pupils learnt about common building problems and the importance of maintenance through a range of educational tools and workshops. A range of practical workshops were also held for homeowners, including the repair and maintenance of timber windows, and working with lime render.
 - Environmental Arts Project – An audio tour of Rothesay, entitled, *If these stones could talk* encouraged an audience of 22 to discover the hidden delights of Rothesay.
 - Audience Development – The work sought to engage with the local community to understand how best to market Bute to visitors. Targeted segments including: heritage, wildlife and active tourism were recommended as a result of the exercise, and which form the basis of a toolkit that is available to businesses island-wide, and which has been shared with Visit Bute as a resource that can be further developed by the organisation.
 - Digital Strategy – Further analysis explored the digital journey that visitors make from first considerations to actually stepping foot on the island, and which resulted in recommendations around the need for a Bute brand, specific digital platforms, and a central organised marketing effort.
 - Artist's Workshop Analysis – A project was undertaken to analyse demand for town centre artists' workshop and studio space using the WASPS model, which houses workshops in restored historic derelict buildings. The study recognised Bute's vibrant artistic community, and suggested there is interest for a shared workshop/studio space, but also illustrated the

difficulties in achieving this due to the variety of art practices, all of which require quite different and specific needs.

- Wayfinding – Areas of the town centre were reviewed with sustainable transport in mind. As part of the TH boundary, options for the Harbour and Promenade area are being developed to detailed design stage and which include potential for enhanced walking and cycling routes.
- The BANK Enterprise Space – Rothesay TH grant funded the full operational costs relating to a popup and co-working space pilot, from which substantial learning was derived, but was unfortunately not found to be a sustainable proposition beyond the grant funding.

5.8 An arts-based community engagement project is currently in progress, and which will deliver mural projects, based on the maritime past of Bute and the colours, textures and materials that make up the townscape. The creative consultants are working with local school children on the projects and have sought to engage with the wider community via a short life dedicated website.

5.9 Scottish Government Town Centre Funding will also serve to complement and add value to the work of Rothesay TH. The Town Centre Funded, Rothesay pontoon project is currently out to tender, and a second tranche of funding, totalling £55,500, will allow for an all-weather canopy to be introduced to the town centre alongside other small-scale initiatives to provide an enhanced welcome to Bute.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 Rothesay TH continues to deliver against the outputs agreed with funders, taking cognisance of all funder requirements, to ensure due diligence is followed and all relevant criteria is met.

6.2 The programme seeks to make Rothesay a more attractive place in which to live, work, visit and invest, and performs a critical function in supporting the economic recovery of Bute.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 **Policy** - The Outcome Improvement Plan, Local Development Plan, Economic Strategy and Economic Recovery Plan support town centre regeneration and a diverse and thriving economy.

7.2 **Financial** - Argyll and Bute Council funding of £200,000 is committed. In addition, Rothesay TH is also made up of the following:

National Lottery Heritage Fund	£1,888,500
Historic Environment Scotland	£500,000
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	£70,249
LEADER	£65,800

Smarter Choices Smarter Places	£21,500
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Of the £2,746,049 budget, £1,990,061 is committed to date. Funding drawn down to date amounts to: £973,859

- 7.3 **Legal** - Grant contracts will be provided to third parties.
- 7.4 **HR** - A dedicated project officer has been recruited for the duration of the project. Staff salaries are included within the project budget.
- 7.5 **Fairer Scotland Duty:**
- 7.5.1 Equalities / Fairer Scotland Duty - None
- 7.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – None
- 7.5.3 Islands – Rothesay Townscape Heritage is a project based in the town of Rothesay, on the Isle of Bute. The project will help to make an improved and lasting difference to the town centre.
- 7.6. **Risk** - That grant schemes are undersubscribed or that projects run over time or budget. These risks will be carefully monitored and mitigation measures introduced on a case by case basis. The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic also presents a risk to meeting project timelines and as such related Government guidance will continually be reviewed.
- 7.7 **Customer Service** - The council is responsible for administering Rothesay Townscape Heritage grants on behalf of National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic Environment Scotland and for ensuring due diligence in the performance of its duties.

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APPENDICES

None