

Agenda Item No: 8

Report to: Charity Committee

Date of Meeting: 1 July 2013

Report Title: Potential funding of projects in partnership with the Fisheries Local Action Group [FLAG]

Report By: Simon Hubbard
Director of Regeneration

Purpose of Report

To propose the joint funding of projects of benefit to the Foreshore Trust in partnership with the Fisheries Local Action Group [FLAG].

Recommendation(s)

- 1. To agree the expenditure of £205k to achieve the proposals contained in this report.**
- 2. To authorise the development of the projects identified in the report, their submission for FLAG funding and subsequent implementation.**

Reasons for Recommendations

- To draw down European and other investment into improving Trust assets and to assist in securing future investment of European funds for this purpose.
- To promote the better use of the Trust's land by the public it is intended to benefit.

Background

1. Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) are funded by Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF). Targeted at fisheries in decline, Axis 4 funding is intended to support the sustainable local development of fishing industries and their related communities without increasing fishing effort. The EC recognises that fisheries in smaller communities can have a far higher tourist, heritage and social value than the volume of fish landed would suggest.
2. EFF is managed in the UK by the Marine Management Organisation [MMO], a non-departmental public body under the agency of DEFRA. The MMO selected 6 English FLAGs after a two-stage process, and Hastings was allocated £963k on the basis of the strategy and business plan submitted.
3. Hastings Borough Council as the local competent authority signed the framework agreement for this funding on behalf of the FLAG in May 2013. Hastings FLAG is a partnership with representatives from the public, community, voluntary and business sectors including the fishing industry. It has agreed terms of reference but is not a legal entity.
4. The MMO is a young organisation with many new recruits and a staffing structure that is only now reaching its full complement and properly bedding in. This has created problems in the consistency of guidance and the administrative and financial processes for all FLAGs over the last year but the situation appears now to be improving.
5. The MMO has set an intervention rate of 60:40 (EFF:Private match) across each FLAG programme. This is a significant challenge for FLAGs like Hastings where the fishing industry is fragile and there are no large private investors like wind farms wanting to support the sector.
6. The MMO require full commitment of all project funding by the end of December 2013. Spend and project delivery can continue until June 2015. This means project applications have to be approved by the FLAG in good time so they are with the MMO for final eligibility checks and preparation of offer letters before the deadline.
7. A number of actions have been put into place to ensure that the benefit of FLAG funding is maximised
8. Active intervention by Council senior managers to support the development of the programme
9. Consolidating smaller projects into larger ones
10. The setting of firm deadlines and timetabling for the submission of projects
11. This work has enabled a clarification of the potential opportunities for more strategic use of funding. A dedicated FLAG “Animator” has been appointed to support the programme and is in post.

12. There has been some protracted discussion with the MMO about what constitutes “private” matched funding. It is now clear that “non Treasury sources” will be acceptable. Thus matched funding from the Foreshore Trust or a University would be private under this definition. However, funding from a Local Authority or College would be much more difficult to establish as private because of the proportion of income derived directly from the Treasury.

Relationship between the Foreshore Trust and FLAG

13. Clearly the interests of the FLAG and the Charity are not identical. However, the area under the control of the Trust is substantial and includes the fishing beach, much of the Stade and large parts of the foreshore westwards of this point. The purposes of the Charity in ensuring access to the foreshore clearly have a potential overlap with the push from the FLAG to improve the economic opportunities available to the fishing community.

14. The Charity may use the income from its estate to support broadly charitable activity. It is also obliged to apply its funds to the maintenance and improvement of its estate.

15. The implied powers of the Charity include the raising of funds and the co-operation with other charities, voluntary bodies and local authorities.

16. Thus far the Foreshore Trust has committed a sum of £30k to the capital improvement of the Seafood Kitchen. This improves the asset of the Trust and promotes its wider use. However, additional opportunities have been identified where the Trust can benefit by

- Attracting FLAG investment in the assets owned by the Trust
- Promoting the use of the foreshore, improving the quality of what the Trust offers to both the fishing community and visitors

The “Big Beach” Project

17. This project brings together a number of potentially beneficial outcomes

- To enable good management of the foreshore by the Trust and Council
- To improve the safety and security of the Stade area
- To improve the visitor experience and improve the quality and quantity of the visits made
- Improving economic performance, including boosting income in car parks

18. The project would have up to 11 elements, which would amount to a co-ordinated drive to improve the area. The project is divided into two phases. The first phase proposes that mapping is undertaken of the Stade area from number one groyne to the RNL and from the midline of Rock a Nore Road to the high water mark. This will provide a detailed up to date GIS based digital resource for the area. In addition a survey will be carried out which will look at the condition of winch sheds, fuel tanks, the winch road etc. This will enable the specifications for works in the second phase go be drawn up accurately and the requisite quotes and tenders sought.

19. The second phase of the Big Beach project will deliver the works required to provide a sustainable and good quality environment and improved infrastructure for this part of the Foreshore and is intended to include:

- Improving Winch Sheds
- Improving bunding and security of fuel storage tanks to prevent pollution and theft
- An environmental clean up completed with an increased presence for the Stave Warden
- An environmentally sensitive planting scheme to protect vegetated shingle and delineate boundaries and natural barriers
- Improving the surface of the Winch Road and improve the access for pedestrians (particularly those with disabilities or pushing prams) while also supporting the Fishing Industry use of the area
- Improved lighting to promote improved perceptions of safety and security for visitors
- Improved car park and visitor signage

20. The project is a complex one (necessarily so) bringing together as it does a package of improvements which together will provide a substantial impact on Trust property and promote public access to the Foreshore.

21. It is thought the total cost of both phases is likely to be around £360k with an input from the Trust of £173k. In order to secure estimated FLAG investment of £130k and other match of £57k the Chair of the Committee has agreed to allow the Trust to commission the survey work in advance of the Charity Committee meeting on the advice of both Head of Financial Services and myself. This advice was given because of the clear informal support the MMO has indicated for the bringing forward of the project, but also because for the Trust the survey is a most useful management and cultural tool in itself.

Seafood Training Kitchen [revenue]

22. The Seafood Kitchen is at the heart of the Classroom on the Coast. It will provide the training and learning opportunities that will

- Draw private individuals to learn about seafood cookery skills
- Promote the use of seafood and healthy diet with local schools, developing the skills necessary to cook and eat healthy food in young people
- Support local business in developing a skilled workforce able to use local fish creatively
- Generate longer term income for the Trust by a sustained use of the Classroom on the Coast.

All of this activity would take place on the Trust's property and provide the basis for a longer term and more sustainable use of the asset.

Transforming Stade Open Space

23. This project would equip the Stade with the seating, windbreaks, storage facilities and other equipment to maximise its use by the public. The likely cost is estimated at around £50k and the Trust funding of £20k is sought.

Economically sustainable Tourism

24. A project is currently being developed to promote the seafront cycle path (which passes over Trust owned land) as the most environmentally friendly way to experience the maritime environment and heritage, the sustainable fishery, and of course, local fish and cuisine. The scheme would promote cycle hire, beach huts, “glamping” and deck chairs and widely promote the active and beneficial use of the foreshore. This project is currently being developed but is thought likely to cost around £35k with a Trust contribution of around £12k.

Summary of Potential Projects

25. The table below briefly outlines the cost of the approach proposed. These are of course provisional at this stage.

	£ Total	£ FLAG	£ F/T Match	£ Private Match	£ Public Match
1. Big Beach Project	360	130	173	57	
2. Seafood Kitchen (revenue)	175	120		55	
3. Transforming Stade Open Space	50	25	20	5	
4. Environmentally Sustainable Tourism	35	18	12		5
Total	620	293	205	117	5

If these figures are correct the intervention by the Trust would be 33%. Even a less optimistic assessment of a final intervention of £50% represents significant leverage of resources to meet the Trust’s objectives.

Policy Implications

Equalities and Cohesiveness

26. The improvements to the Winch Road, improved facilities in the Stade Open Space and other initiatives will improve the user friendliness of the area to people with disabilities, some older people and those with young families. The Seafood Kitchen work will be partly directed at working with young people from more deprived communities and the eating and health issues that affect them.

Crime & Fear of Crime

27. There will be benefits in terms of community safety as the proposed improvements to lighting and roads, improved security to fishing assets and the increased use of

the area are intended to reduce the fear of crime and its actual occurrence. There is likely to be a higher degree of confidence in visiting the area, particularly in the evening.

Risk Management

28. There are a number of risks identified:

- That the costs may be higher than identified in this report. This is addressed by identifying a specific sum (£205k) for the Trust investment. If costs rise they will have to be found outside the commitment now being requested.
- FLAG approval may not be forthcoming for the projects. This is being mitigated through very close and senior liaison with the MMO and their informal development in project development. The risk cannot be discounted however, but the Foreshore Trust will not be exposed to financial loss as it will simply not spend its money if projects are not approved.
- The actual spend is lower than the funds committed. This will be taken up through frequent liaison through the FLAG with approved projects and the investment of senior management time in delivering them. If expenditure is reduced the Trust's investment would reduce in line with the new total costs.

Environmental Issues

29. The report gives details of the environmental improvements proposed and work to improve access to the superb environment managed by the Foreshore Trust.

Economic/Financial Implications

30. The Head of Finance has confirmed that an investment of £205k is achievable within the current resources available to the Trust. The projects are intended to increase the income to the Trust derived from the Seafood Kitchen and Stade Open Space and provide them with a more sustainable future. All the proposals will contribute to the wider use of the Foreshore and the potential economic benefits that will flow to businesses involved in tourist and visitor related activity.
31. The Government has indicated that there will be a further round of FLAG. This may present the opportunity for a planned approach to the improvement of Trust assets to form part of a future programme.

Consultation with Coastal Users Group [CUG]

32. The CUG meeting on 17th June received a report and presentation on this issue. The following issues arose:-

- A request for more information on the FLAG itself for a future meeting
- Some interest in developing new projects
- A question about the implications for improving Rock a Nore car park

The report presented was accepted by the meeting.

Conclusion

33. It is believed that to invest resources in the way proposed in the report meets the Trust's objectives and is in its interests. The Committee is therefore asked to approve the report's recommendations.

Wards Affected

Old Hastings

Area(s) Affected

East Hastings

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Yes
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Yes
Risk Management	Yes
Environmental Issues	Yes
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	No

Background Information

Officer to Contact

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