

Agenda Item No:

Report to: Charity Committee

Date of Meeting: 20th July 2015

Report Title: White Rock Promenade Improvements

Report By: Monica Adams-Acton
Head of Regeneration and Planning Policy

Purpose of Report

The report provides a background for the proposed scheme of promenade improvements at the White Rock and provides an explanation of the funding package and requirements

Recommendation(s)

- 1. Support is given to the proposed improvements subject to planning consent.**
- 2. An additional £18k is approved to supplement the existing business plan allocation towards the scheme for surfacing costs;**
- 3. An option to improve the White Rock Water feature is considered after the tendered prices are received and there is more certainty over the Trust's financial position.**
- 4. An option for invest to save funding for a kiosk is considered after an independent commercial appraisal and marketing exercise.**
- 5. Delegated authority is given to the Ass. Director, Financial Services and Revenues, in consultation with the Chair to proceed with recommendations 3 and 4 once the position is confirmed.**

Reasons for Recommendations

Hastings Borough Council successfully bid for Coastal Communities Fund grant funding for a range of initiatives to promote a cultural trail and support economic growth along the seafront.

The bid included a proposed scheme to make improvements to the public realm on the promenade area of White Rock to support the ongoing investment in the White Rock Baths and Hastings Pier.

Support is required from the Foreshore Trust for the proposal and to provide match funding for parts of the scheme.



Introduction

1. The re-opening of a restored high profile Hastings Pier in 2016 and a refurbished White Rock Baths as a world class BMX and Skateboard park will focus attention on the area of promenade between Bottle Alley and Robertson Street.
2. A range of repairs and improvements are needed to refresh the built environment of the promenade and the Coastal Communities Funding offers an exciting opportunity to introduce carefully designed features and additional facilities that will improve the area visually, encourage greater community use, increase animation and contribute to the economic regeneration of this part of the seafront.

Public Realm Repairs

3. The existing promenade surface is in poor condition, particularly in the well-used areas around the pier entrance, along many of the expansion joints and along the current designated cycle lane. It was originally intended to use resin bound aggregate to resurface but this has proved unsuitable and prohibitively expensive so we are intending to revert to red tarmac to match the existing promenade. The opportunity of the grant from the Coastal Communities Fund greatly enhances the scale and scope of improvements that we may be able to make.
4. The scheme's impact will also rely on the coordination of a range of refurbishment and redecoration of built structures and street furniture, i.e. repainting of White Rock Baths entrance building and walls, railings, and reducing and rationalising signage where possible. ESCC has also indicated that all of the street lighting columns in this area will be replaced in time for the completion of the project.
5. It is of course vitally important that the works are carefully coordinated with the Pier works, the White Rock Baths refurbishment and the repairs and redecorations to Bottle Alley. These public realm improvements are complementary and will support the revitalisation of this area.

Cycle Route

6. At the same time, we are also proposing to change this area to shared use for pedestrians and cyclists because of the expected increase in use, and in line with DfT and Sustrans guidelines.
7. Initial site meetings have been held with ESCC traffic engineers and a proposed draft layout for the shared space has been submitted. This will be subject to a full ESCC safety audit and further consultation with stakeholder groups, and may require a Traffic Order to be submitted.

Proposed Layout

8. We are intending to provide three new areas of activity. The proposed new structures all take their form and siting from existing promenade buildings and structures to which they are adjacent or attached.
9. A decking area and kiosk opposite Robertson Street, and a decked area with provision for pop up trading stalls and street food opposite the White Rock Hotel. The third area will focus on the water feature and we would like to install a modest cascading feature and also to provide a small stage area. All three areas will be constructed of sustainable Balau timber with a life of 30/40 years and will feature integrated seating, litter bins, shelter and cycle stands.
10. A new set of access steps in a similar design to the existing will be provided to the beach opposite Robertson Street. This will also incorporate a small viewing platform towards the pier, additional seating area and possibly a public art feature.
11. Visual improvement will also be made with the addition of up to ten large tree species that will be grown in timber planters. We are currently investigating suitable species but these are likely to be palms, cordylines or maritime pine.
12. The proposed kiosk and small scale trading areas would be situated on land owned by the Foreshore Trust that is covered by the Hastings Act. Certain types of activity are allowed including catering, but these may be restricted.

Consultation , Planning and next steps

13. Extensive consultation has been undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders and key groups. The proposals have been shared in local papers, websites and social media and a public exhibition event was held at the White Rock Hotel.
14. In total, over 300 hundred comments were expressed from a variety of sources, and more than 90% of these were supportive of the proposed scheme. The Coastal Users Group also gave its unanimous support to the proposals.
15. As a result of the consultation the designs have been revised to include, for example, additional cycle storage, protected views from the White Rock Hotel, reduced clutter around the pier entrance and an enhanced setting for the listed Boer Memorial.
16. Many people also offered constructive suggestions for further improvements. These included some form of water play/fountains, additional lighting around the water feature and particularly improvements to pedestrian safety and traffic calming (there have unfortunately been two deaths on this section of road during the past 12 months).
17. It is intended to submit a full planning application in early July and we would hope for a decision by the end of August .
18. We expect to tender the works through the East Sussex Procurement Hub at the start of September, with works starting on site in early November.

Financial Implications

19. The total budget estimate for the scheme is approximately £300k, broken down as follows:

	£k
Western Deck	38
New Steps/platform	10
Eastern Deck	24
Water Feature	20
Palms/planters	12
Tarmac surface	106
Ancillary	15
Redecorations	15
Total build	245
Prelims/contingency	55
Total budget	300

20. The Coastal Communities Fund grant is for a total of £135k. We intend to use £30k of existing HBC revenue budget. There is currently £97k allocated within the Foreshore Trust business plan for 2015/16 and we are requesting an extra £18k to cover the cost of surfacing and to consider an option of a further £20k for the water feature if funding allows

21. We intend to tender the package of works as a series of options and will be under no obligation to complete all elements of the work at the same time. After the tenders are received and evaluated we will hopefully also have a clearer view on whether the Foreshore Trust's financial position would allow them to undertake all of the options.

22. In addition to the works and improvements described above, the proposal also includes the construction of a small kiosk on the eastern platform. The budget cost for the construction is £50k, and it is proposed that the Foreshore Trust considers funding this on an invest to save basis as the kiosk could provide an additional ongoing stream of income for the Trust.

23. The kiosk site on the promenade is close to the town centre, making it potentially attractive to potential operators, and we have already had interest from several local sources. The proposition would need an independent market appraisal by commercial agents through the Estates Manager and we propose to advertise publicly for expressions of interest to lease.

24. The construction of the kiosk would also be tendered as an option within the overall package and would only be undertaken if a tenant was secured who offered lease income and terms that provided a satisfactory return on the Foreshore Trust's investment.

Wards Affected

Castle

Area(s) Affected

Central 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)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	Yes

Background Information

Officer to Contact

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