

SUBJECT:	HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE
DIRECTORATE:	COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT
REPORT AUTHOR:	KIERON MANNING, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval from The Council's Executive for entering a contract with Historic England to deliver a High Street Heritage Action Zone for Lincoln, including the creation of a High Street Heritage Action Zone Officer post.

2. Background

- 2.1 Whilst there has, and continues to be, a number of successful outcomes delivered in the city centre and Sincil Bank area, for some time the quality of the environment of the lower High Street has been a concern to the Local Planning Authority. Many of the changes that have occurred do not need planning permission, so the council has been largely powerless to intervene. Whilst the vibrancy and diversity of the area is to be applauded and encouraged, there has been a marked deterioration in the appearance of the frontages of many of the shop units in particular, having a negative impact on the character and appearance of the area.
- 2.2 Therefore officers had initially secured some internal match funding (£60k from the Sincil Bank revitalisation programme and approximately £90k from in-kind staff resource) and were set to submit a bid to Historic England for the creation of a PSiCA (Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas) for a total scheme value of circa £300k. This would have meant the council would act as the responsible body for allocating grants of up to 80% to individual shop owners that qualified for historic shop front renovations within the defined area. However, Government then announced the Future High Streets Fund with around £45m of this fund being allocated to Historic England (HE) for them to allocate to heritage led projects across the country. As a result, officers met with the Regional Director of Historic England and they encouraged the council to expand this scheme into a High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) which includes all of the PSiCA scheme plus an area expanded to include Sincil Street to the north and further south to Sibthorpe Street (to include St. Mary's Guildhall). This scheme works on the same grant funding basis but goes beyond shop fronts and can include residential conversions of upper floors, feasibility studies and possible grant towards developing gap sites and some elements of public realm provided they all deliver heritage outcomes. The City Council would act as the lead partner for the scheme and will Chair the HSHAZ Board but ultimately the Board itself will make the final decision about whether to issue individual grants over a set threshold of £20,000. Any grants below this would be issued under a delegated arrangement to the City council (Assistant Director – Planning) to qualifying schemes that deliver heritage led regeneration and are within the defined area. The scheme requires the appointment of a HAZ Officer as the day to day operational lead and this would be funded from the grant itself.

Applications were invited by HE for schemes with a grant request of between £250k and £2m and as this funding is ultimately allocated through The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) there is also a requirement for a cultural and community engagement output.

- 2.3 Securing Partnerships is a requirement of the scheme as a board will need to be established to make the individual decisions on the allocation of funds. To this end a range of partners have already agreed to form part of the scheme including: Investors in Lincoln, Lincoln BIG, Lincolnshire County Council, University of Lincoln, Civic Trust, Visit Lincoln, Healthy High Streets, Mansions of the Future, as well as a number of individual property owners that have shown willingness to be part of the scheme. The latter being crucial because deliverability is a key requirement with the timescale for spending the funding being between June 2020 and April 2024. Our partners have also committed to contributing match funding either in terms of capital and/or in-kind resource. All the match funding is pooled into a single resource which combined with the grant will be used to allocate the funds to qualifying projects via the board. The only exceptions to this are where the councils' capital funding is earmarked for a specific project as in the case of the Central Market.
- 2.4 The HAZ project replaced the PSiCA within the Remarkable Place strand of Vision 2020 and remains a key project within that strand in Vision 2025. A tight submission deadline at the end of 2019 meant that a concerted effort was required in order to submit a robust bid to Historic England by the end of December, but with the hard work and dedication of the Heritage Team this was achieved. In April 2020 the city council received the news that its bid was successful, and a formal offer of funding was made of £1.682m. This funding is allocated to the three strands of the programme with approximately £200k for the Cultural and community engagement strands including public art, exhibitions and events and approximately £1.4m for physical interventions such as historic shop front reinstatement, public realm and masterplanning for gap sites.

3. Strategic Priorities

3.1 Let's drive inclusive economic growth

Investment in heritage benefits everyone – it is highly visible and improves the look and feel of places that benefit from it, resulting in enhanced values. The Cornhill Quarter is living proof of this, as are countless other examples in the City.

This investment is outstanding value for money, as it provides a long-term benefit from the time it is implemented, delivering permanent improvements to the cultural and physical infrastructure of a place. The evidence is that this then creates a step change in economic activity. This goes from individual businesses to the broader town level. There is also a great deal of evidence that investment in Heritage improves people's sense of general well-being, illustrated by Public Health England in Healthy High Streets.

In the St Mary's/High Street area this is strategically very important. The visual severance that the condition of many buildings creates, and the initial impression people get when stepping off the train is a key factor in how people perceive Lincoln. The severance caused by Wigford Way compounds this. Measures to

address both are built into the HSHAZ program. Spreading the prosperity of the High Street to benefit those poorer communities south of the railway requires targeted investment of this type.

The HAZ project will deliver much needed direct financial resource into heritage led regeneration schemes in the centre of Lincoln and will act as a catalyst for further private investment in the defined area and beyond. This combination will have a significant impact on the quality of the environment. The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) see this initiative as a critical strand in the economic recovery of the High Street, particularly in light of the response required to Covid 19.

3.2 Let's enhance our remarkable place

The physical and environmental enhancements and increased cultural activity together with the strengthened engagement with local residents and businesses will make a significant positive change in the way this part of the city is viewed and used.

4. Organisational Impacts

4.1 Finance

The council is acting as the accountable body for the grant and by transferring the grant onto individual building owners there is no direct investment in the Council's assets and hence no capital expenditure being incurred. The only capital implications for the Council are for those schemes it has identified as match funding which are already financed in the capital programme and will be managed in accordance with the Lincoln Project Management Model. The capital earmarked for Central market/Cornhill will be used for projects that deliver the outcomes required under the HAZ as well as those required under the New Towns deal so these projects are entirely complimentary, use the same resource and deliver similar outcomes

4.2 The HSHAZ requires a level of match funding from the City Council and its project Partners in order to secure the grant from Historic England. The table below shows the match funding, totalling £1.781m, required by type over the 4 year duration of the programme:

Organisation	Amount(£)	Type	Timescale
City Council	200,000	Capital - (Central Market/Cornhill allocation)	Year3/4
City Council	60,000	Capital - (Sincil Bank allocation)	£20k pa
City Council	100,000	In-kind - (Staff Resource)	£25k pa
Investors in Lincoln	5,000	Capital	Year 1
Centre for culture and creativity (UoL)	216,000	Capital via linked match funding	£54k pa
Lincoln BIG	100,000	In-kind - (Staff Resource)	£25k pa
Lincolnshire Co-Op	1,100,000	Capital	£275k pa

4.3 The above table is an initial funding allocation and project timetable and is acknowledged to be subject to change due to a number of factors including changes to the financial position of the Council and its partners. The contract with Historic England is therefore flexible and should priorities change over the 4 year period it does not commit the council to providing the suggested match funding. In such circumstances it would mean that the programme would not be delivered in its entirety. This element of the project will need to be carefully managed and monitored to ensure the Council does not allocate any funding in the absence of appropriate match funding and hence create a liability for itself.. This match funding combined with the grant offered by Historic England would create almost £3.5m of investment in the City for heritage led regeneration at a time when this type of support is particularly necessary.

4.4 The grant from HE will cover the full cost of the HAZ Officer post including a small reserve each year to contribute towards any potential redundancy. The grant is conditional on the creation of this post and due to the nature of the role combined with the salary level of equivalent posts across the country HE expect the salary to be equivalent to SO2 as a minimum. For this reason the post will not be taken through the usual Job Evaluation process and the post would be set at this salary grade based on a contract of 22.5 hours per week and under all of the council's usual terms and conditions of employment. This Officer would report directly to the Principal Conservation Officer. The costs of establishing this new post are as follows:

2020/21 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £
13,580	24,740	25,240	25,740

Although an element of the grant allocation will be set aside for any potential redundancy costs the actual cost will not be determined until the end of the scheme. Should any redundancy cost be incurred that is in excess of the amount set aside from the grant, then this would need to be funded from within existing cash limit budgets.

4.5 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

In order for the scheme to commence, the City Council is required to enter into a legal contract with Historic England. The draft agreement has been reviewed and no issues of concern raised.

4.6 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

The HSHAZ programme will observe these principles on an individual basis for each distinct project that is delivered within the wider scheme by using Equality and Diversity assessments.

4.7 Human Resources

The project requires the appointment of a dedicated HAZ Officer for the duration of the project (4 years) and the costs of this are included in the grant from Historic England. The grant also includes a reserve that is accrued each year to cover any potential pension strain and redundancy costs at the end of the project. The Officer would be employed under the Council's terms and conditions and would report to the Principal Conservation Officer.

4.8 Significant Community Impact

The three strands of this project will have a direct and positive impact on the local community that live, work and shop in this part of the City. In particular, one of the three strands focusses on community engagement and engendering a sense of collective ownership and pride in this part of the City.

5. Risks

- 5.1 The City Council would be the accountable body and as there could be a risk of grant clawback if the monies are not spent correctly, we will mitigate against this by entering into contracts with individual building owners binding them to our terms and conditions and requiring them to repay grants if they breach the terms. The drafted contract ensures the programme is flexible so if there are insufficient match funded schemes then the programme can be ceased without any liability to the Council. As the accountable body the City Council in its role on the Board will ensure that individual projects will not be approved unless there is sufficient match funding to cover it.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 It is recommended that Executive delegate to officers to enter into a contract with Historic England for the implementation of a Heritage Action Zone and to add the HSHAZ project officer post onto the establishment.

Is this a key decision? Yes

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? Yes

How many appendices does the report contain? 1

List of Background Papers:

None

Lead Officer:

Kieron Manning
Assistant Director - Planning
Telephone (01522) 873551