

**Decision Session – Executive Member for
Economy and Strategic Planning**

22 July 2019

Report of the Corporate Director Economy and Place

**York Conservation Trust’s Expression of Interest to the High Streets
Heritage Action Zone Fund**

Summary

1. The Executive Member is asked to note that York Conservation Trust (YCT) has submitted an Expression of Interest (Eol) to the High Streets Heritage Action Zone Fund, a central government funding opportunity to tackle the challenges facing historic town and city centres. The bid is focused on Herbert House, Lady Peckett Yard and Pavement. As part of the funding criteria the support of the council was required as a co-signatory. However there is no commitment of council capital funding towards the proposal which will be funded by YCT and other partners. This is an information only paper and requires no decision.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member is asked to note council’s support as a co-signatory to York Conservation Trust’s Expression of Interest to central government’s High Streets Heritage Action Zone Fund.

Reason: In order to be updated on York Conservation Trust’s submission of an Expression of Interest to the High Streets Heritage Action Zone Fund.

Background

3. In December 2018 the government launched the Future High Street Fund, an opportunity for local authorities to bid for a share of £675m to help respond to the challenges affecting town centres and high streets across the country. The council submitted an Eol to that funding round in March 2019 outlining a proposal for a multi-layer response to tackling the issues facing Coney Street, with a particular focus on reconnecting the

street with the river. Unfortunately that submission was unsuccessful, with all of the funding being allocated to authorities or areas that are experiencing far worse market failures of their retail environments. However, the process was hugely beneficial in drawing together all of the city centre's key stakeholders and articulating the challenges facing York which will shape future workstreams.

4. As part of the £675m Future High Street Fund £44m was set aside for High Streets Heritage Action Zone funding to be administered through Historic England. The bid criteria for this funding stream was made available in March and was again based on an Expression of Interest format to determine which successful bids would proceed to the next stage. The deadline for submissions was 12 July 2019. The 4 essential bidding criteria were:
 1. delivered by a partnership, including the local authority as lead or a partner;
 2. High streets that are also within designated conservation areas;
 3. have demonstrable support of the local community and;
 4. be capable of delivery in four years (April 2020 – March 2024).
5. The key criteria to note, clarified with Historic England, is that the local authority can act as the lead or as a partner - effectively sponsoring a submission as a co-signatory. Due to the funding round falling during the local election period and the tight timescales for submission the council sought to work with key stakeholders to identify and support a bid rather than taking the lead or looking to fund a project. The council discussed with a range of stakeholders to identify parties who would be interested in putting forward a submission. Having considered options through the National Trust, York Minster and YCT it was agreed that YCT's proposals was the best strategic fit for the criteria and most likely to secure funding.

Consultation

6. The Future High Streets Fund EoI was prepared and submitted with a whole range of stakeholders including the York Retail Forum, the York BiD, Make It York, and Indie York. As part of that process a new group was established by Indie York to consider opportunities for unlocking vacant spaces above shops in the city centre. This group has continued to meet regularly with representatives including all of the above. They have been instrumental in considering the bid criteria, potential options, and advising YCT on the preparation of the EoI.

Analysis

7. The YCT proposal focuses on the Pavement area of the City, and is anchored by the restoration of the grade 1 listed Herbert House to its former glory. The building was until 2018 occupied by Jones the Bootmaker and currently houses a pop up gin shop. With 1,000 sq metres of accommodation (the majority of which was, and remains, unused), the building complex is a significantly under-utilised asset of significant historic and architectural importance. The bid would also see the restoration of the adjacent Lady Peckett's Yard, creating a safer and more welcoming thoroughfare between Pavement and Fossgate. The proposals would establish a fund to allow other landlords and organisations to deliver improvements to buildings and spaces in the area. This would complement the Council's recent significant investment in street improvements in the local area, focussed on Fossgate.
8. The submission proposes a significant amount of community engagement activity, incorporating a schools engagement programme, and activity focussed on adults with learning difficulties. The activity will help to reveal the significance of the building and area to a broader audience, and establish a strong legacy from the programme.
9. The total cost of the project would be defined at full business case but the level of Heritage High Street funding cannot exceed £2m, and any funding ask would require 50% match funding. The majority of this match funding would be provided by YCT, with assumed contributions from other city centre stakeholders.
10. There is no council funding commitment associated with the bid. Should any complimentary highway or public realm improvements be identified at business case stage then there may be the possibility of existing highway maintenance budgets being applied, but this would be considered on its merit at that time through the appropriate decision making process.
11. If successful the YCT funding bid will secure significant national funding in to the city - matched by a third party - to restore and bring back in to full use a hugely important existing heritage building.

Council Plan

12. The funding would assist in achieving the council plan objectives through the creation of a Prosperous City for All, and the vision to be a council that listens to residents, particularly by ensuring that:
- Everyone who lives in the city can enjoy its unique heritage and range of activities
 - Visitors, businesses and residents are impressed with the quality of our city
 - Local businesses can thrive
 - We are entrepreneurial, by making the most of commercial activities
 - We engage with our communities, listening to their views and taking them into account

Implications

13. The Expression of Interest has no implications for the council. It is a YCT led submission which the council have supported in principle with no commitment to provide any future capital funding should it be successful.

Risk Management

14. To ensure there is no reputational risk to the council key stakeholders have been involved in assessing the bid criteria and identifying the most appropriate opportunity for the council to support. YCT will be responsible for preparing the full business case, and if the decision was taken not to proceed to full business case then there are no consequences for the council.

Contact Details

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Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

**Chief Officer's name
Neil Ferris
Corporate Director of Economy and Place**

Report **Date** 11/7/2019
Approved

Wards Affected: Guildhall

All **Tick**

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

None

List of Abbreviations Used in this Report

YCT – York Conservation Trust
Eol – Expression of Interest