



Report to: Cabinet Meeting - 31 October 2023

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Rowan Cozens, Heritage, Culture & the Arts

Director Lead: Matthew Finch, Director - Communities & Environment

Lead Officer: Carys Coulton-Jones, Business Manager - Heritage & Culture, Ext. 5773

Report Summary	
<b>Type of Report</b>	Open Report, Key Decision
<b>Report Title</b>	Newark Castle Gatehouse Project - Delivery Phase Application
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To update on the progress and revised costs of the Castle Gatehouse Project and request approval to submit the delivery phase application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) approve the submission of the delivery phase application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund by 16 November 2023;</li> <li>b) subject to the outcome of the Heritage Fund bid and approval of the Towns Fund Full Business Case, agree that a report be brought back to Cabinet to consider the increase to the capital programme budget from the Heritage Fund and to add additional staff to the establishment, funded by the project; and</li> <li>c) approve the preferred charging model.</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>	<p>No alternatives are considered appropriate at this time. Without the project, the District Council would still have the responsibility to preserve and conserve the fabric of the building which is an ancient scheduled monument and requires significant investment, but without the wider benefits this project will offer. The Gatehouse Project is significant in the redevelopment of the town's visitor offer and as a key driver for the visitor economy, and further offers residents improved access to their heritage and to the gardens, supporting improved wellbeing and health and offering numerous opportunities to participate in cultural activity. The proposed charging model reflects the best option for the economic sustainability of the project whilst providing residents with this significantly improved offer.</p>

<p><b>Reason for Recommendations</b></p>	<p>The Heritage Fund is vital to securing the match funding for this project, and any delay to the delivery phase submission risks the timescales for delivery of the Towns Fund element.</p> <p>This project supports the community plan objectives of enhancing and protecting the District’s natural environment through a more biodiverse planting scheme and landscaping development, preserving the green space within this historic site. It will deliver sustainable economic growth through delivery of a destination attraction for the town, and will support residents and local communities through co-creation, participation activities and opportunities to support improved wellbeing.</p>
--	---

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 In March 2022, NSDC were awarded development stage funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to progress the Newark Castle Gatehouse Project. The project is also funded through Newark’s Towns Fund deal and by a contribution in the capital programme, and the Towns Fund element is subject to approval of a Full Business Case.
- 1.2 The project will reinstate the original Romanesque Gatehouse as the entrance to the Castle, create five gallery spaces plus a tower-top viewing platform and enhance the gardens through new planting, improved biodiversity and accessible paths. The project represents a unique opportunity to develop:
- An iconic, flagship destination attraction at the gateway to the town which will increase footfall and dwell time within the town, benefiting businesses, residents and visitors and boosting the local economy
  - An innovative platform for Newark’s rich and dynamic history and a unique backdrop for events, adding value to the Cultural Heart of Newark project
  - A catalyst for improved social inclusion and civic pride through access to heritage and culture
  - A driver for increased social value as a safe, vibrant and inclusive community green space with potential to reinvigorate the early evening local economy
  - A flexible space for inspirational education services and community co-creation
- 1.3 The project will develop and deliver inclusive, community co-created interpretation of the new galleries and spaces inside the Castle Gatehouse visitor attraction, delivering impact and appeal for the tourism market, linking to the National Civil War Centre through joint ticketing and supporting local businesses by moving footfall around the town. It will connect local communities and disadvantaged groups to their local history through participatory activity and events, and will strive to remove physical, economic and social barriers to accessing their heritage. A key aim is to promote the historic gardens as a safe and welcoming biodiverse green space, using lighting to enhance key architectural features as well as social and heritage significance, elevating the ‘after darkness’ experience to extend access times and support the early evening economy.

- 1.4 A key risk to the project is the timescale for delivery. The project is obliged to work within two sets of prescribed timescales to meet the requirements of both the Heritage Fund and the Towns Fund, as follows:



This demonstrates the importance of being able to submit the Delivery Phase application to the Heritage Fund in November 2023, alongside the development of the Full Business Case for the Towns Fund, to maximise the time available for construction before the Towns Fund spend deadline.

- 1.5 The project is subject to both planning permission and Scheduled Monument Consent. Extensive consultation has been undertaken with Historic England as a key stakeholder, in relation to the existing planning application (submitted in December 2021 to support the Outline Business Case, and paused, pending development of the landscape designs) and Scheduled Monument Consent, which was granted, subject to conditions, in March 2022.

## 2.0 Proposal/Details of Options Considered

### 2.1 Heritage Fund Delivery Phase Application:

- 2.1.1 Over the last 12 months, the project is progressing to RIBA3 design stage, as required by the Heritage Fund. A sample of the designs can be found in **Appendix A**. During this time DBA Consulting have undertaken a significant amount of consultation, focus groups and workshops to inform the plans. Through this development phase, a number of key documents have been commissioned:

- A Conservation Management Plan
- Architects plans to RIBA3/4
- Interpretation plans to RIBA3
- Landscape and Lighting plans to RIBA3
- A Management and Maintenance Plan
- A Communications and Marketing Plan
- An Environmental Sustainability Plan
- An Activity Plan and Consultation Report
- A Business Plan
- A Cost Plan
- A Project Programme
- An Accessibility Audit

- 2.1.2 These documents will form part of the application to the Heritage Fund. The application also includes funding for key staff roles including a project delivery manager for 2 years, and a learning and participation officer for 4 years.
- 2.1.3 The most recent cost plan shows the full project cost as being £5,397,505 (excluding the current Heritage Fund development stage). This cost includes both capital and revenue costs for delivery, including the project staff team and the activity plan. With £3million Towns Fund allocated to this project, £1,025,150 secured within the capital programme and a further £50,012 committed to the Change Management Reserve, it is proposed to apply to the Heritage Fund for Delivery Phase funding of £1,322,343 in November 2023. It is likely that there will be some minor adjustments to this figure as costs are still being finalised; any increase to the cost plan would result in an uplift to the Heritage Fund bid and will not impact on the council's contribution.
- 2.1.4 The project is subject to both a successful Heritage Fund bid and the development and approval of the Full Business Case for the Towns Fund, both of which will be resolved in March 2024. Following this it is proposed to update Cabinet with a further report and to adjust the capital programme with the uplift from confirmed funding streams.

## 2.2 Charging Model:

- 2.2.1 The Business Plan has been developed by heritage consultants DBA, in collaboration with the Business Manager - Heritage & Culture and the wider Heritage & Culture team. A vital part of the new offer will be substantial free-to-access interpretation and activity. This includes the gardens, which remain free to the public, the ground floor exhibition space in the North-West Tower, and a programme of community participation events and workshops, all of which will benefit residents and under-represented groups and communities. The remainder of the offer (1<sup>st</sup> floor North-West Tower and Gatehouse Tower) will sit behind the pay barrier. Volunteer-led guided tours will offer hidden history tours to the other parts of the Castle, including the debtors dungeon, South-West Tower and undercroft.
- 2.2.2 The Business Planning team has modelled options for ticket pricing that reflects both the tourism value of the offer but also NSDC's approach to increase access to heritage for residents. **Appendix B** illustrates the preferred model, alongside a sample of benchmarking undertaken to understand the most sustainable pricing and demand. Mindful of the need to develop a scheme that is economically sustainable, the preferred model will offer residents half price entry, with free return during the year, encouraging repeat footfall and opportunities to upsell activities, events, tours, and the wider cultural offer across the town and district. The business plan also describes opportunities for commercial activity, including an increase in weddings and a new offer for events and celebrations on the terraced lawns and multi-function space.

## 2.3 Enhanced Lighting Scheme:

- 2.3.1 The current cost plan includes the cost of lighting scheme option 1 (**Appendix A**), ensuring that the scheme remains affordable. However, more ambitious proposals have also been designed – an architectural scheme which highlights key historic features, colour options enabling the site to be lit in a variety of colours, perhaps linked to key national and / or charitable initiatives, and large-scale projection on the curtain wall which would provide a new outlet for events and light shows and has potential for

commercialisation. These ideas sit beyond the scope of the Heritage Fund proposal but would complement and enhance the work being undertaken across the town to illuminate the town, improve safety and enhance the visitor experience. It is therefore proposed to allocate £5,000 from the capital feasibility reserve to explore these proposals in more detail, co-ordinate with the work of the Economic Growth and Public Safety teams and ensure the infrastructure and cabling specified for the Gatehouse project futureproofs the site to facilitate the potential delivery of these aspirational plans. Delivery of these plans would be subject to a future cabinet report and would also explore suitable potential external funding streams.

- 2.3.2 The project supports the community plan objectives of enhancing and protecting the District's natural environment through a more biodiverse planting scheme and landscaping development, preserving the green space within this historic site. It will deliver sustainable economic growth through delivery of a destination attraction for the town, and will support residents and local communities through co-creation, participation activities and opportunities to support improved wellbeing.

### **3.0 Implications**

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding, Sustainability, and Crime and Disorder and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

#### **Financial Implications (FIN23-24/7887)**

- 3.1 The Castle Gatehouse project is in the Capital Programme with a budget of £4,025,150. This is financed as follows:
- |                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| Towns Fund      | £3,000,000 |
| NSDC Borrowing  | £1,000,000 |
| Capital Reserve | £25,150    |
- 3.2 The Change Management Reserve has a commitment of £50,012 for the Gatehouse delivery (with £21,857 already committed to the development phase), which is currently expected to be part of the revenue costs.
- 3.3 As per Paragraph 2.1.3, the costs of delivering the project is estimated to be £5,397,505, which includes both Capital and Revenue elements of the project which will need to be split out, the details of which will be finalised as part of the submission to the Heritage Fund. The value of the bid will cover all additional assumed costs, therefore at this stage there is no additional funding requested from the Council.
- 3.4 Once the outcome of the Heritage Fund bid is received and the Towns Fund Full Business Case is approved a report will be brought back to Cabinet to update and seek approval to increase the Capital Programme budget accordingly, the financial implications of which will be detailed at that point.
- 3.5 As per paragraph 2.3.1, it is anticipated that the cost of exploring the enhanced lighting scheme will be £5,000 which can be funded from the Capital Feasibility Reserve. A further report will be brought back to Members with the outcome of the work, including the costs of the scheme and whether any external funding can be sourced to fund the cost.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Report to the Policy & Finance Committee – 25 November 2021](#)