

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Board **Date:** 12 February 2020

Cabinet Date: 20 February 2020 Council Date: 27 February 2020

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: Torre Abbey Restoration Project – Phase 3 National Heritage Lottery Fund

Bid (NHLF)

Is the decision a key decision? Yes

When does the decision need to be implemented? May 2020

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1. Proposal and Introduction

- 1.1. This report seeks Cabinet approval to re-submit a Phase 3 Round 1 bid to the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) in May 2020 in respect of the Torre Abbey Restoration Programme. Whilst we were unsuccessful with our first Phase 3 Round 1 bid in June 2018, we were encouraged by NHLF to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for Torre Abbey in respect of the re-launched Heritage Lottery funding programme. This most recent EOI was successful and as a result, in 2019, the NHLF invited us to submit a Round 1 application for Phase 3 of the Torre Abbey restoration project.
- 1.2. In previous rounds the Council, supported by the TDA, have successfully obtained HLF funding in excess of £7m which has been matched with funding contributions from Torbay Council, the Friends of Torre Abbey (FOTA) and others to reach a total investment of circa £11m for the two earlier Phases of restoration and redevelopment (2006 ~ 2013).

2. Reason for Proposal

2.1 Having undertaken Torre Abbey Restoration Phases 1 and 2 it is clear, following liaison with Historic England and the NHLF, that securing further Lottery Funding is crucial if Torre Abbey is going to be become a premier heritage attraction in the South West and a vibrant cultural hub. Such funding will also allow the Abbey to benefit and contribute fully to Torbay's wider Great Places Scheme, a programme

supported by the Arts Council and HLF, which develops culture and audience growth.

- 2.2 A successful Torre Abbey Restoration Phase 3 project will help to protect the Abbey, a scheduled ancient monument, for the benefit of the local community and our visitors. The project would allow the Council to carry out urgent fabric repairs and improvement works to the Gatehouse, the west & east wings of the south range and the Spanish Barn. This NHLF application also supports the Corporate Plan by helping to ensure that we deliver the vision of 'Thriving People' by making greater use of our cultural offer, as well as being consistent with the Council's wider policy framework. This includes 'use of reducing resources to best effect'.
- 2.3 The Torre Abbey building complex was considered at risk when a scheme of comprehensive repair work commenced in 2005. Following further programmed works in 2006 and 2011 much of the fabric has been repaired and its condition secured for several decades to come. However, the poor state of the remaining elements of the building present a risk and ongoing liability and in these areas the asset continues to decline with rainwater leaking into the fabric.
- 2.4 Undertaking Phase 3 of the restoration/redevelopment programme at Torre Abbey will see the destination positioned as a premier heritage attraction in the South West and a vibrant cultural hub, encouraging wider audience participation and bringing new life into the historic venue. Improvements to the Abbey will also expand existing operations by upgrading and enhancing facilities, in turn augmenting opportunities for income generation and repeat visits to the venue. New and improved on site catering facilities will enable the Council to increase the number of events hosted on the site and the associated income. Proposals to enhance the landscape could remove physical barriers south of the main building, which could enable better access routes, provide for softer landscaping closer to the buildings and deliver greater interpretation of the wider Abbey complex through the landscape. This element of the scheme remains a matter for wider consultation with the various stakeholders.
- 2.5 A Phase 3 restoration and investment project (circa £1.7m) will protect the at risk elements of the buildings by preventing water entering the external fabric, which is exposed to the weather. As a consequence the designated museum collections will also be protected. Of particular concern are the elevations of the south-east and south-west wings, the north elevation of the west range, the gatehouse and the courtyard boundary walls. Also, comprehensive repair to the Spanish Barn roof structure is required. At the end of the restoration and redevelopment there will be a 15-year management and maintenance plan, which will help protect the fabric of Torre Abbey for the foreseeable future.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

The Cabinet recommends to Council:

3.1 That the Director of Place be authorised to submit a National Heritage Lottery Fund (Round 1) application for £4.875m for Phase 3 of the Torre Abbey Restoration Programme as described in the submitted report.

3.2 That Council agrees to borrow up to £1.7m to provide the financial commitment outlined in this report and underwrite any possible shortfall in the third party matched funding element of the package.

Appendices:

None

Background Documents

Report No. Ed/24/03 ~ Torre Abbey Phase 1 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Business Plan - outlining 3 phased redevelopment programme

Torre Abbey Phase 3 - Draft Activity Plan & Draft Business Plan (still to be developed)

Torre Abbey Phase 3 - Project Risk & Issues Register (still to be finalised)

Section 1: Background Information

What is the proposal / issue?

Torre Abbey is a building at risk, it is located, most unusually for a medieval monastery, on the sea front. It comprises two Grade I listed buildings, four Grade II listed structures and ancillary buildings, as well as an undesignated formal walled garden, all set in a Scheduled Ancient Monument, 8.8ha in extent (NHLE No. 1009302).

The surrounding parkland contains earthworks and the remains of the Abbey's precinct buildings, including a mill, stables, two watercourses (still flowing), and evidence of 18th/19th century landscape work. Torre Abbey today is the most complete medieval monastery in Devon and Cornwall, and one of the best-preserved Premonstratensian houses in the UK. The Spanish Barn is the only surviving prison for sailors of the Spanish Armada, which in 1588 united the country against Catholic Europe (hence its name).

Exposure of this history, and its interpretation, could be a vital part of the landscape work in this 3rd phase of redevelopment, especially the proposal to reconnect the Abbey with its wider setting towards the seafront. This element of the scheme remains a matter for wider consultation with the various stakeholders.

The Abbey re-opened to the public in July 2013 at the end of the 2nd phase of redevelopment. At the time of re-opening it was identified that further work to the fabric of the building (repairing the elevations of the south-east and south west wings; north elevation of the west range; gatehouse and courtyard boundary walls) would be required and ongoing deterioration was a concern.

Although the Council were unsuccessful with our first Phase 3 Round 1 bid in June 2018, we were encouraged by NHLF to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for Torre Abbey in respect of the re-launched Heritage Lottery funding programme. This most recent EOI was successful and as a result, in 2019, the NHLF invited us to submit a Round 1 application for Phase 3 of the Torre Abbey restoration project.

Following several meetings and discussions with NHLF they consider Torre Abbey to be a priority heritage project in Torbay and the project team have received firm encouragement from them several times to build on our previous success and to re-submit a further phased bid NHLF application.

Recent meetings in the past couple of months with NHLF have once again encouraged the Council to re-submit another application picking up on the NHLF feedback provided to us when the first Round 1 bid failed to achieve funding. Feedback was:

- Proposals for activities and engagement were not sufficiently developed and based on consultation with target audiences. We need to identify communities that need support and target them
- We need to develop both the Activity Plan and Business Plan in more detail

- If there are any job roles as part of the NHLF development we need to give clear job descriptions for the key roles
- Ensure briefs are provided for all key pieces of work (using NHLF templates)
- There was concern at the current level of operating deficit and we need to address long term sustainability and describe how the Council would provide support
- We need to give a clear project evaluation, describe how this would be approached and show a separate budget for undertaking this
- Further context to the landscape proposals was required

Failure to proceed with Phase 3 puts the heritage building, ancillary buildings and regionally important collections at risk and will threaten the previous investment undertaken during Phases 1 & 2.

If successful with the HLF Round 1 bid application the Phase 3 NHLF funding bid of £4.875m will complete the final phase of a 3 - Phased redevelopment programme and it will also improve commercial opportunities at the Abbey, which will help with the ongoing operating costs.

The Phase 3 programme of restoration/redevelopment would consist of :-

Major elements of building work to protect at-risk buildings and collections by completing urgent fabric repairs:

- Comprehensive repair to the Spanish Barn roof structure, opening up the full barn interior for improved event space.
- Comprehensive repair of the Gatehouse. Masonry and render will be consolidated and repaired, roof and guttering renewed, windows made operational. The large lime tree and its roots removed to prevent damage to the building. Some underpinning of the gatehouse wall may be required.
- Removal of cement render and renewal in thrown lime, to the southeast wing, south-went wing, and north end of the chapel, including window and lintel repairs.
- Stripping cement render and making structural repairs to the courtyard walls. (Courtyards 1, 2 and 3)
- Renewal of 1930s structural tying of the south-east wing.
- Repairs to the tower and courtyard walls to the Courtyard 4. (education suite area)
- Ground works to reinstate original levels of Abbey spaces within ruins and enhanced interpretation, together with reinstatement of steps at relevant positions and unblocking of a historic doorway to the former slype.

Upgrading of existing facilities and operations to improve income generation opportunities:

Introduction of a new permanent café in Courtyard 3 and new seating

area (incorporating the current temporary café kitchen area) – opening up the gate at the north end of the courtyard increasing visitor footfall as it becomes accessible beside the main visitor entrance.

- Introduction of a new service building to provide 'back of house' facilities for revenue generating events in the Spanish Barn.
- Introduction of a new storage facility to support events held in the Spanish Barn.
- Introduction of a new mobile serviced 'pod' within the Spanish Barn as servery/bar/reception/display.
- Construction of various features within the gardens north of the Abbey, including a new access from the east, a viewing platform and new garden building on the site of the former peach house.
- · Clearer interpretation.
- Introduction of a glazed internal lobby within the front room at ground floor, south elevation, to improve draft proofing when the south door is used for events.
- Introduction of a new pathway from the seafront leading up to the Abbey, this new access path to the Abbey precinct will travel from a symmetrically placed path and viewing point to the slot running alongside the tithe barn, bringing visitors to the gatehouse and a logical route to the west entrance to the Abbey. This allows an experience of the Georgian landscape and the south façade. Small new groups of planting amplify the symmetry and Arcadian quality of the park area, and the good 19th century estate railings used around the pitch and putt area will be repaired to make the boundary to the west side. This element of the scheme remains a matter for wider consultation with the various stakeholders.

2. What is the current situation?

Torre Abbey is suffering quite badly with water ingress on the two south wings as a result of cracked lime render and badly fitting windows. This causes a huge risk to the museum collections and the regionally important art collections being the third largest art collection in Devon (after those of Exeter & Plymouth museums). Nationally important works, such as William Holman Hunt and Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones along with beautiful sculptures, plaster casts and drawings by Frederick Thrupp (the largest collection of Victorian Thrupp works to have survived) are at risk.

Failure to make these essential improvements to the external fabric of the building to ensure the building remains weather resistant and protect the internal works of art, furnishings and archaeological finds will impact on the Abbey's re-accreditation for Museum status and ultimately have a knock on adverse effect on visitor numbers. Undertaking the Phase 3 works will protect at risk buildings and collections by completing urgent fabric repairs (circa

£1.7m) and protect the designated museum collections.

It is generally acknowledged that since reopening in 2013 visitor numbers have not increased as forecast due to a variety of factors. Insufficient resources have contributed to an inadequate staffing structure, the lack of a clear Marketing Plan and inconsistent strategic leadership at a service level. Notwithstanding these challenges Torbay Council does recognise the value of Torre Abbey and how it supports the aspiration of its various cultural development plans. Certainly, culture is a driver for change and therefore investment in the Abbey for partnership working and new initiatives such as the Great Place Scheme will help to promote this asset as a quality visitor attraction. Placing the Abbey at the heart of this scheme will demonstrate good strategic and marketing 'fit' and maximise cultural engagement for community well-being.

A draft Activity Plan has been drawn up that sets out core strategies of improvement that will be produced as part of this Phase 3 regeneration programme. This plan will have various actions to position Torre Abbey as the 'cultural hub' of the Bay, which in turn will increase visitor numbers. The Activity Plan will include various initiatives such as, aiming to target harder to reach lower income families, pupils with special needs (primary & secondary), young people 16+ and children in care, along with older people and the Plan also enables further development of the learning offer. Connections with other educational organisations will help to support the delivery of Torbay's wider Great Places Scheme. An enhanced programme of activities will enable the Abbey to satisfy the interest of a wide range of audiences and a concerted effort to increase membership will also increase income, which would reduce the need for the Council to subsidise this service area.

Undertaking Phase 3 will provide the opportunity to increase footfall (especially walking visitors) as the current facilities are not meeting the needs of the modern intellectual up-to-date visitor. Making improvements will encourage a wider usage of the facilities making a significant contribution to life-long learning and drive return visits and overall footfall throughout the year, not just in the holiday season. Providing clearer public understanding of the medieval estate through better augmented interpretation encourages wider participation bringing new life into the historic venue.

Improving visibility of Torre Abbey from the seaward side by introducing a new access path, and careful tree management, will improve linkages with the main thoroughfare across the seafront area which will in turn improve footfall. This element of the scheme remains a matter for wider consultation with the various stakeholders.

At present an overall uncoordinated and detached quality exists in the areas around the buildings, requiring change to respond to the way the site works, bringing appropriate revisions and additions to the landscape, to demonstrate its relevance and original ambitions on this historic site, and generating something practical and enhancing to visitors.

Proposed Programme

Submit HLF Round 1 Bid for Phase 3 May 2020

NHLF Board Decision on Round 1 Application September 2020

April 2021

July 2021

Submit Planning Application Round 2 Application to NHLF

NHLF Board Decision on Round 2 Application October 2021

Tender process for main contractor December 2021

Works start on site May 2022

Handover to Abbey operations team November 2023

Costs

The total costs for the scheme have been estimated at: £6.5m (excluding VAT but including all fees)

The costs will be funded by:

NHLF bid £ 4,875,000 (75%)

Torbay Council £ 1,325,000 Other funders – FOTA, etc. £ 300,000 Total costs £ 6,500,000

To help secure the funding it is important to the funding body (NHLF) that the Council is clearly willing and <u>able to underwrite any shortfall in the matched funding element of the package</u>, as well as its stand-alone contribution. Therefore, the Council need to approve a maximum contribution of £1,625,000 (£1,325,000 + £300,000). A concerted effort will be made to obtain funding from appropriate 3rd parties in order to reduce the Council's risk in this respect. Council are asked to approve borrowing up to £1.7m and this will mean that any modest uplift in scheme costs (up to £75,000) will not require a further Council decision.

3. What options have been considered?

The following options were considered in arriving at this proposal:

- To abort the concept of obtaining further investment in Torre Abbey through significant NHLF funding to complete the final phase of the redevelopment programme, which would conserve the asset and protect at risk buildings this was discounted due to the huge risk to the fabric of the historic building exacerbated by water ingress that is ongoing.
- To proceed in line with the original 3 Phased Programme of redevelopment that was outlined in the original NHLF Phase 1 bid and further discussions held with the Council and during various Council/ MEG meetings – this is the preferred option to protect the investment made to-date on the Torre Abbey complex and to obtain

further NHLF support to complete the objectives postponed from previous phases. This will help greatly to conserve the historic fabric and halt further serious deterioration.

 To look into Torre Abbey becoming a Charity Trust. This option is currently being investigated by the Torre Abbey operational team.

4. How does this proposal support the ambitions, principles and delivery of the Corporate Plan?

The Council's emerging Corporate Plan has 'Thriving People' as one of its visions, which seeks to 'make better use of our natural assets and cultural offer'.

The Council's emerging Corporate Plan has 'A Council fit for the future' as one of its visions. To this end the Council will endeavour to ensure, wherever possible, that all Council assets have a more sustainable future.

The timing of the project is critical if Torbay Council wants to benefit from NHLF funding to protect at risk buildings and collections by completing urgent fabric repairs. This scheme also allows the Council to work closely with Torbay's wider Great Place Scheme and the aspiration of these Phase 3 works is to make the Abbey the 'Cultural Hub' for Torbay, which aligns with the strategic direction and thinking behind the Great Place Scheme.

These proposals present the perfect opportunity to implement the final phase of the Abbey restoration set against these wider initiatives of the Bay.

During Phase 3 and thereafter the Council's aim is to encourage more partnership working and to use more integrated approaches with those partners to deliver a broad cultural offer to both locals and tourists. For instance, working more closely with South Devon College and Plymouth & Exeter Universities to promote the Abbey and its offer. It is important that the Council builds on the significant expertise and knowledge that is emerging from the Arts, Health & Well-being agenda in Torbay by working closely with the appropriate council officers so that the Council can encourage more visitors to walk to the Abbey, to use public transport, including use of the land-train service.

Another aim of this project is to strengthen Torre Abbey as a business unit in order to achieve long term sustainability.

5. How does this proposal contribute towards the Council's responsibilities as corporate parents?

This proposal has no direct link to the Council's responsibilities as corporate parents other than to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors to

Torbay, a good percentage of those being children.

Also, if the Council is successful in obtaining NHLF funding it will help the Council to maintain its museum accreditation, protect at risk buildings and collections by completing urgent fabric repairs.

6. How does this proposal tackle deprivation?

As one of the UK's smallest unitary authorities, responsible for the poorest conurbation in the southern half of England, Torbay Council is financially challenged at the best of times. Within Torbay there are serious levels of deprivation and inequality. The local authority area ranks lowest in the South West and 46th out of 325 local authorities in England. Torbay will be doubly challenged by Government's plans to curtail local government expenditure. For Torre Abbey to remain sustainable, it will need to improve its ability to generate revenue by attracting many more paying visitors. Extending the time visitors want to spend in the Abbey, by enhancing the offer, will improve sales in the shop and café. Developing Torre Abbey's attractiveness as a venue for weddings and corporate hire will also expand existing revenue streams. The Abbey must also ensure that it maintains the loyalty and involvement of its Friends organisation (FOTA) and encourage the growth of its small but enthusiastic band of volunteers.

Positioning the Abbey as the 'cultural hub' of the Bay: actively engaging with hard-to-reach, young people, low income families and older people, by linking projects in with annual exhibitions and working with partners such as Play Torbay and other health and wellbeing organisations will help to develop exciting opportunities for the community to engage in creative arts, and further develop the learning offer and connections with other educational organisations, thus supporting the delivery of Torbay's wider Great Place Scheme programme.

These Phase 3 proposal provides the Council with an opportunity to look at the current structure and governance/management of Torre Abbey and may also provide future employment opportunities. Investment in the Abbey and engagement with educational institutions along with improved marketing & promotion will help to reach ALL sectors of the community.

7. Who will be affected by this proposal and who do you need to consult with?

The wider community of Torbay and our visitors will be affected by this proposal as well as local residents, stakeholders, businesses and tenants

For the purposes of submitting this preliminary Round 1 NHLF application it will be necessary to consult with key local stakeholders, Council Cabinet, ward Councillors, the Council's Senior Leadership Team & Transformation Board and Torre Abbey staff. A recent Communication Stakeholder event was held and as result a Stakeholder map produced.

8. How will you propose to consult?

Consultation was undertaken previously and is ongoing, with a briefing to invited local stakeholders followed by circulation of the associated briefing paper.

The Council will consult through a series of meetings with relevant stakeholders. Furthermore the Council we will hold workshops as appropriate inviting discussion of the proposals as they unfold. Local press releases will be issued providing updates on project progress and these will be supported with information on the website as well as social media where appropriate. Various notices will be provided around the Abbey complex explaining the nature of the redevelopment and the areas affected, these will include statutory consent notices.

A communications plan will be produced in the next stage of the HLF bidding process.

Section 2: Implications and Impact Assessment

9. What are the financial and legal implications?

The Council is being asked to provide £1,325,000 as a capital contribution to the proposed NHLF bid and to underwrite the risk of a further contribution of £300,000 from other funding bodies. This represents a total financial commitment of £1.625m but would be at least £1.325m.

The Friends of Torre Abbey have already confirmed a commitment of approximately £75,000 and every effort will be made to secure the further third party funding requirements and this will lessen the risk to the Council. However, to give the NHLF application the strongest possible chance of success the Council will need to give the NHLF the assurance that the Council has underwritten this financial element of the HLF bid application.

In recommendation 3.2 above the Council is asked to borrow up to £1.7m to provide the financial commitment outlined in this report and required for submission of the National Heritage Lottery Fund (Round 1) application for £4.875m indicated in recommendation 3.1. This financial commitment will be met through prudential borrowing and the estimated cost of borrowing is £100,000 per annum over the term of the loan (25 years). The £100,000 revenue costs will be funded by the Torre Abbey business unit service budget, which is forecast to reach an improved position following the restoration and improvement works, with additional income generated through increased visitor numbers and a greater ability to host events, weddings, etc.

The Torre Abbey buildings have a significant outstanding repairs and maintenance liability that will be resolved if the HLF bid is successful and the Phase 3 restoration goes ahead.

10. What are the risks?

A Risk & Issues Register has been created as part of the project management process. This register gives an indicative overview of the risks and it highlights the appropriate mitigations. The high-level risks (Red) for the Financial & Programme sections are extracted below:

- There may be a lack of resource (funds, time or people) to complete the NHLF bid process effectively.
- Council support may not be forthcoming for the NHLF Phase 3 bid process or the associated financial commitment.
- Market failure to provide quotations causes time delays.
- The project may fail to establish financial parameters (capital, revenue) and the scheme may be subject to funding rejection if the programme is not outlined adequately.
- Increase in commodity prices will result in higher costs.
- Uncertain ground conditions could delay the programme resulting in higher costs.
- On site security could cause a delay to the programme and subsequently costs
- The successful contractor's tender price is pitched too low and they seek claims to justify their financial position, leading to budget pressures and time delays.
- Construction inflation calculations may be inadequate and the project costs go over budget.

Upon successful support from Council for the NHLF bidding submission and if subsequently the NHLF approve the Round 1 pass the appointed Project Manager will manage the Risk & Issues Register thereafter ensuring risks are mitigated, managed and closed off as necessary.

11. Public Services Value (Social Value) Act 2012

It will be necessary to procure the main contractor, professional team, (Architectural; Quality Assurance; Project Management; M&E, Structural, etc.), as well as any other suppliers, in line with appropriate regulations. Torbay Council's financial regulations, contract & standing orders and European procurement rules will apply.

12. What evidence / data / research have you gathered in relation to this proposal?

We have referred to the following documents:

Torre Abbey 1st Phase HLF Business Plan Previous Torre Abbey Phase 2 bid application Torbay Corporate Plan Torbay Economic Strategy

Torre Abbey Management Plan

Condition Survey for Torre Abbey & Spanish Barn – structural surveys have been undertaken to assess the repair obligations at Torre Abbey.

13. What are key findings from the consultation you have carried out?

Following a recent stakeholder briefing there was general support for the main aims of the Phase 3 restoration project. Some concerns were raised regarding the proposals that relate to the existing pitch and putt facility but this matter will be the subject of wider public consultation.

Positive support for the plans has already been received from the Friends of Torre Abbey. Upon a successful HLF Round 1 application the Council will produce a Communication Plan outlining what further consultation will be undertaken during the development & delivery stage, including the media that will be uses and the timescales.

14. Amendments to Proposal / Mitigating Actions

No amendments to the proposals or mitigating actions have resulted from the consultation.

It is important to note that this report and the associated recommendations will not commit the Council to every aspect of the proposals as currently drafted and/or designed. It is therefore appropriate to explore all options that might mitigate against the concerns expressed regarding the pitch & putt facility during the next round of the consultation/bidding process. This will include the option not to proceed with this element of the scheme.

Equality Impacts

15 Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people	Yes for younger people - with more collaborative working with South Devon College, Universities etc.		
People with caring Responsibilities	There is an opportunity to work with families with caring responsibilities and provide support activities		
People with a disability	The Abbey currently has good access with lifts etc.		
Women or men			No differential impact as the Abbey has availability to all. Various events are held open to all.
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) (Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)			No differential impact

Religion or belief (including lack of belief)		No differential impact
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual		No differential impact
People who are transgendered		No differential impact
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership		No differential impact
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave		No differential impact
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)		No differential impact
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)	There will be more open air events encouraging all to attend and the Council intends to work in partnership with the Great Places Arts Council scheme	

16	Cumulative Impacts – Council wide (proposed changes elsewhere which might worsen the impacts identified above)	None proposed
17	Cumulative Impacts – Other public services (proposed changes elsewhere which might worsen the impacts identified above)	None proposed