

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 20th February 2023
Report for: Decision
Report of: Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration

Report Title

Longford Park ‘People, Place and Nature’ National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) – Delivery Phase Bid Submission.

Summary

The report provides an update on progress through the Development Phase of the project and seeks approval to submit a Delivery Phase bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the restoration of Longford Park alongside a programme of activity to increase its audience and use. The report highlights the proposed scope, timescale, finance, key issues and implications for the Council.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that the Executive:

- (i) Approves submission of the NHLF Delivery Phase bid on 25th May 2023.
- (ii) Delegates authority to the Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration, to finalise the bid and compulsory supporting documents for submission.
- (iii) Notes the need to continue to develop proposals to sustain the project, associated posts and outcomes beyond the period of NLHF funding.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Paul Farrand
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Background Papers: None

Appendices:
Appendix 1 – Longford Park Landscape Masterplan

Relationship to Policy Framework /Corporate Priorities	The project meets the Corporate Plan Priority 'Addressing our Climate Crisis', with strong links to the Council's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (Sport England), VCSFE Strategy, Trafford Locality Plan, Operational Estates Strategy, Inclusive Economy Recovery Plan, draft Local Plan and The Civic Quarter Area Action Plan.
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	The project meets the GM 5 Year Environment vision of a clean, carbon neutral, climate resilient city region with a thriving natural environment, plus draft GM Places for Everyone policy priorities under Sustainable and Resilient Places and Greener Places.
Financial Implications	The NLHF bid is expected to be £2.86m and potentially £3.1m subject to confirmation of funding from United Utilities. The Council's match funding is set out in Section 5, including the creation of two new posts.
Legal Implications	The initial and future operating model for the long barn will need to be the subject of a robust legal assessment ahead of the Delivery Phase bid, whilst amendments will need to be made to the proposed lease for the scouts/shippon to accommodate increased community access and meet NLHF criteria linked to its part-refurbishment via lottery funding.
Equality/Diversity Implications	Equality and Diversity are key aspects of the Audience Development and Activity Plan being prepared as part of the bid and in the consultation and engagement carried out to date.
Sustainability Implications	The project contributes to GM-level work on Biodiversity Net Gain, Green Infrastructure and Nature Based Solutions, with a Natural Capital approach employed throughout the bid.
Carbon Reduction Implications	The project meets Carbon Neutral Action Plan priorities under Natural Environment and Our Buildings and Workplaces. Low carbon measures form part of the designs for the long barn, along with Electric Vehicle Charging Points and LED lighting.
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	Addressed in the main body of the report relating to park buildings and new posts associated with the bid.
Risk Management Implications	RIBA Stage 3 designs are being completed and costed for the bid, with further design and cost refinement up to RIBA Stage 4 in the event of a successful bid. As part of the Risk Register there are risks identified regarding inflation, construction costs, VAT and market conditions.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	Major investment at Longford Park will create a venue for increased levels of physical activity through improved and enhanced facilities alongside a targeted programme of engagement including green social prescribing meeting strategic priorities in line with Trafford Moving and Trafford Locality Plan.
Health and Safety Implications	Securing major capital and revenue investment into Longford Park would enable the Council to address backlog maintenance issues relating to park infrastructure and in particular built heritage assets that

	have continued to decline due to the lack of available funding and sustainable uses.
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1.0 Background

- 1.1 Longford Park is Trafford's largest Council-managed public park, a designated Conservation Area and the former home of John and Enriqueta Rylands, two important figures in the history of Stretford and Manchester. Longford Park became a public park in 1912 following the death of Enriqueta in 1908 and the subsequent sale of the estate to Stretford Urban District Council.
- 1.2 The National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) provides funding of between £250,000 and £5million for "*projects that connect people and communities to the national, regional and local heritage of the UK*". Recognised for its unique and interesting heritage, as outlined above, Longford Park is a prime candidate for NHLF heritage funding, which could be used to repair and restore heritage assets, promote inclusion and diversify the park's user profile, provide new and/or enhanced facilities, offer new skills and job opportunities and assist with long-term environmental sustainability.
- 1.3 A formal expression of interest (EOI) outlining the scope of a project at Longford Park was submitted to and approved by NLHF in April 2019, enabling the project to progress to a Development Phase bid (often referred to as a 'stage one' bid) for additional funding to develop outline proposals over a two-year period up to a Delivery Phase bid (often referred to as a 'stage two' bid).
- 1.4 A Development Phase bid was submitted in August 2019, supported by a draft masterplan produced by consultants AECOM. In line with NLHF requirements, the bid included detailed project costs, timetable, consultant briefs and anticipated match funding for the Development Phase as well as outline proposals for capital works, activities, project outcomes, project management, costs, income, match funding and new posts for the Delivery Phase. In December 2019, the Council received a £120k Development Grant award, supplemented by £55k secured through the Council's capital programme, £20k from the Council's partnership with City of Trees and £25k of monetised volunteer hours. NLHF therefore met 55% of the overall Development Phase costs.
- 1.5 As of August 2019, when this Development Phase bid was submitted, the future anticipated Delivery Phase grant request from NLHF was estimated at c£2.8m, 58% of the overall c£4.8m project costs, composed of c£3.75m capital works and c£1.05m activity, training and management costs. Match funding was estimated at c£2m.
- 1.6 The NLHF Development Grant included several key 'Approved Purposes', which were to develop proposals to:
 - (i) Repair and convert the shippon complex into a volunteering, activity and skills hub
 - (ii) Repair and restore the portico, walled gardens and key historic features including the ha-ha, rockery and art deco shelters
 - (iii) Repair and enhance footpaths, access points, signage, play areas, sports facilities and pet's corner
 - (iv) Enhance soft landscaping, re-introducing Longford Brook and resolving on-site drainage issues
 - (v) Alongside key partners, deliver a two-year programme of activities and events with schools and target audiences, with a key focus on health and wellbeing through sports, conservation and horticultural activities
 - (vi) Establish a training programme for volunteers and recruit a two-year Project Co-ordinator post

2.0 Development Phase Progress

- 2.1 Partial 'Permission to Start' was issued by NLHF in July 2020, recognising the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the project, covering the period up to November 2020, during which time a limited programme of audience development took place via City of Trees and local groups that formed a stakeholder group. The work explored the make-up of current users (audiences) of Longford Park, and how this could be widened and developed over time.
- 2.2 After this four-month period of community engagement activity with City of Trees, project management arrangements were reviewed, and a revised Development Phase funding package and programme aimed at increasing project management capacity was submitted to NLHF in December 2020. This was approved in January 2021 in tandem with the issue of formal Permission to Start.
- 2.3 Audience development work continued during 2021, led by City of Trees in conjunction with the Friends of Longford Park and other local stakeholder groups to support work including a heritage trail, audio trail and walking routes, although events and activities were again limited by COVID 19 restrictions.
- 2.4 In late 2021 The Environment Partnership (TEP) were appointed as Lead Landscape Consultant, with Gardiner and Theobald (G & T) taking on the role of project management lead. People's Voice Media were also commissioned to deliver Community Reporter Training and implementation, involving local people being recruited and trained to interview park users about their views and experiences, captured as a video resource covering a range of themes.
- 2.5 Once these appointments were in place, a series of Project Board Meetings were established with key Council services represented, along with Friends of Longford Park, First Stretford (Longford) Scouts plus Director and Corporate Director attendance as required.
- 2.6 Progress has been reported and monitored to a NLHF Case Officer plus a designated support consultant to advise on all aspects of the project and bid development.
- 2.7 A formal project review was held with the NLHF on 8th July 2022. This review represents a critical aspect of the Development Phase. The purpose of the review was to affirm:
 - that the project is being developed in line with the approved purposes and outcomes
 - costs and partnership funding updates indicate a viable project
 - risks are manageable
 - overall the project still offers good or improved value for money
- 2.8 Following a positive meeting, the project passed this critical review stage, with further areas of focus recommended ahead of bid submission relating to target audiences, training opportunities and new posts.
- 2.9 Following the most recent progress review in September 2022, additional activity planning mentoring and support was provided via NLHF in the form of an allocated consultant with extensive experience in the built and landscape heritage sector (Jane Davies & Associates).
- 2.10 Following this progress review and advice from NLHF, Community First Partnership (CFP) were appointed to develop the Activity Plan, which will set out a programme of engagement and activities to diversify the park's audience, overcome identified barriers to participation and ensure that the community benefits from the NHLF investment are sustained in line with their mandatory outcomes. CFP have also co-ordinated additional stakeholder engagement and have compiled and analysed the results of a visitor observation study which took place over 3 weeks in the park during December 2022.
- 2.11 In December 2022, following collaboration with the Council, The Environment Agency, Mersey Rivers Trust and United Utilities (UU), a bid for £240k was submitted to UU's Green Recovery Fund to support the proposed Longford Brook de-culverting and SUDS creation, with wide-ranging benefits for biodiversity net gain, nature recovery, enhanced natural capital and the delivery of ecosystem services with benefits for people through access to nature, wellbeing

and learning opportunities. The scheme also aims to store more water on site, increasing capacity of the UU system and simplifying maintenance of the brook. The outcome of this bid is likely to be known shortly after submission of the Delivery Phase bid.

Delivery Phase Bid – Key Components and Proposals

- 2.12 TEP have revisited the original 2019 Masterplan produced by AECOM and have recommended a number of key changes to make best use of existing assets, maximising the historic and commercial potential of key elements of the project. A copy of the current Landscape Masterplan is provided as Appendix 1.
- 2.13 The key changes to the masterplan are as follows:
- (i) The relocation of the volunteer, skills development and heritage hub from the shippon to the long barn (approved formally via NLHF in May 2022) with funding allocated to improve the shippon in conjunction with First Stretford (Longford) Scouts, who are taking on a long lease for the whole of the shippon building
 - (ii) Increased water storage and SUDS measures to complement Longford Brook restoration at surface level
 - (iii) A relocated BMX course adjacent to the shippon building and long barn
 - (iv) A reconfiguration of Pets Corner and restoration of an historic route and view to the Longford Hall site
 - (v) An additional footpath from Ryebank Road
 - (vi) An increase from one to two community engagement posts, following advice from the advice of NLHF

Post Creation

- 2.14 The Delivery Phase bid includes the creation of posts to implement the Activity Plan and to monitor and report on its objectives and outcomes, linked to the key NLHF outcome “*a wider range of people will be involved in heritage*”.
- 2.15 Consequently, the broad outcome of these posts will be to have fostered new and strengthened existing relationships with communities and groups, enhancing the audience of the park and acting as a general first point of contact for visitors. The more detailed outcomes are included in the Activity Plan. Outcomes refer to the changes, impacts or benefits that the project would achieve through major investment, engagement and activities.
- 2.16 The Senior Community Engagement Officer would be a full time 3.5-year post which would commence in January 2023 (January 2023 – July 2027), followed by an additional 0.6 FTE Community Engagement and Volunteer Co-Ordinator starting in September 2024 for 3 years (September 2024 – September 2027).
- 2.17 It is currently intended for both posts to be funded as part of the project and hosted by City of Trees as an existing project partner, reporting into the NLHF Delivery Group to be established for the Delivery Phase if the bid is successful.

3.0 Delivery Phase Requirements

- 3.1 The Delivery Phase bidding round is a competitive process governed by an award committee of the NHLF for the North of England. To succeed, projects are measured against the approved purposes along with mandatory and priority NLHF outcomes, which are:
- (i) A wider range of people will be involved in heritage (mandatory)
 - (ii) The funded organisation will be more resilient
 - (iii) People will have greater wellbeing
 - (iv) People will have developed skills
 - (v) The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit

(vi) The local economy will be boosted

The remaining NLHF outcomes are:

(vii) Heritage will be in better condition

(viii) Heritage will be identified and better explained

(ix) People will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions

3.2 The compulsory supporting documents include a Landscape Masterplan, Activity Plan, Business Plan and 10-year Management and Maintenance Plan, all of which have been developed by TEP and CFP. As Project Management Leads, Gardiner and Theobald (G & T) hold responsibility for updating and submitting final versions of the Project Plan, Risk Register and Cash Flow Forecast.

3.3 All of these supporting documents will have been finalised by the time of the intended May submission, following a final review meeting with NLHF case officers and approval from Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration.

4.0 Timescale and milestones

4.1 The table below illustrates the overall indicative timescales for the Delivery Phase of the Longford Park NHLF bid:

Task	Target Date
• Planning application submission	January 2023
• Report to Council Executive	20 th February 2023
• NLHF bid submission	25 th May 2023
• Planning Committee	9 th March 2023
• Decision via Funding Committee for Northern England	September 2023
• Commencement of project including tendering and procurement of capital works	Autumn/Winter 2023
• Senior Community Engagement Officer Appointed	Winter 2023
• Community Engagement and Volunteer Co-Ordinator appointed	Spring 2024
• Capital works start	Summer/Autumn 2024
• Completion of capital works	Summer/Autumn 2025
• End of NLHF revenue funding	Autumn 2027

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 The estimated overall cost of the Delivery Phase was circa £5.4m as of September 2022, comprising £4.2m of capital works to built heritage assets, landscape heritage features and park infrastructure, alongside £1.2m of activity, training and management costs.

5.2 This would require a grant request of £2.86m to NHLF based on a 53% grant percentage to project cost ratio and taking unsecured match funding into account. This would represent a slight decrease from the 55% NLHF grant for the Development Phase.

5.3 Should the UU bid be unsuccessful, the grant request would need to be increased to £3.1m (57%) in consultation with NLHF, or alternative match funding identified prior to Permission to Start being granted by NLHF. Additional funding bids will be developed relating to tree planting and the skatepark ahead of the Delivery Phase bid decision.

Match Funding

- 5.4 To date a total of £917,503.00 Council match funding has been identified and secured to support the Delivery Phase, as set out in Table 5.1 below.
- 5.5 A further c£1.37m (minimum) of unsecured match funding (Table 5.2) has been identified from a combination of the existing approved Capital Programme; Section 106 contributions and CIL payments; monetised volunteer hours; increased revenue generation from events and activities; existing partnership revenue finance; concessions and increased site maintenance contributions. These will be set out in greater detail in the Business Plan that will accompany the bid and be agreed by the Corporate Director, Director of Finance and Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration ahead of submission. It should be noted that the additional £1.37m target is considered to be conservative and achievable when compared with other similar NLHF funded park projects.
- 5.6 S106 contributions and/or CIL payments will be sought from new developments in the vicinity of Longford Park to support the delivery of the proposed improvements.
- 5.7 Tables 5.1 and 5.2 below summarise the funding secured or anticipated before the Delivery Phase bid or anticipated over the course of the Delivery Phase.

Table 5.1: Delivery Phase Secured Capital Match Funding/Income

Source of Funding	Amount
Capital programme (Greenspace)	£75,000
Capital programme (Drainage LLFA)	£50,000
S106 Contributions	£617,503
Environment Agency	£175,000
Total	£917,503.00

Table 5.2: Delivery Phase Unsecured Match Funding/Income

Source of Funding	Amount
Capital Programme bid 23/24 and 24/25 (cash match minimum as per NLHF criteria for Delivery Phase)	£300,000
S106 Contributions/CIL (to be confirmed)	£175,000
United Utilities Green Recovery	£240,000
Lawn Tennis Association (approved in principle)	£34,000
Volunteer Hours	£125,000
Non-heritage council and partner fundraising	£400,000
Commercial/Business/Events	£100,000
Total	£1,374,000.00 (minimum target)

Capital Programme

- 5.8 A capital programme bid was submitted to support the Delivery Phase, seeking £150k in 2023/24 and 2024/25 (£300k total). This allocation has been included in the draft budget to be put forward for approval at the Council's Budget Executive on 15th February.
- 5.9 A further report will be brought back to Executive following the result of the Delivery Phase bid decision by the NLHF award committee bid in September 2023.
- 5.10 The report will also provide full details of the financial implications for the Council in accepting a major grant offer from NLHF (if successful). However, it should be noted that there is no obligation for the Council to accept a Delivery Grant from NLHF.

6.0 Other Key Considerations

- 6.1 Given the nature of the project and physical restoration proposals relating to the buildings in the Park, it is essential that the Council and partners develop sustainable long-term approaches to the management of the park's landscape, facilities, buildings and posts.
- 6.2 In particular, it will be important to develop an appropriate model for the future management of the Long Barn facility prior to the end of NLHF funding after year three (autumn 2027). Work is ongoing with partners in this respect, drawing upon experience of similar examples in Trafford and as part of other lottery and external funded projects. This work will take place in the context of the principles outlined in Trafford's VCSFE Strategy, Operational Estates Strategy and Inclusive Economy Recovery Plan.
- 6.3 Similarly, NLHF funding for the two new community engagement posts will cease after July 2027. The Council and project partners will therefore need to explore ways to secure funding to sustain these roles and project outcomes linked to the Audience Development/Activity Plan, Business Plan and Management and Maintenance Plan.

7.0 Consultation

- 7.1 Activity, engagement and audience development has been ongoing via events supported by City of Trees in conjunction with partners such as the Friends of Longford Park, Longford Park Disc Golf and Longford Community Allotment.
- 7.2 In autumn 2020 City of Trees working with People's Voice Media led a programme using Community Reporting as a tool for gathering the stories of people who live and/or work in Trafford about their use and perceptions of Longford Park, collected as a written report and online video resource to support the bid.
- 7.3 A major public consultation event was staged in the park on 28th May 2022 at which the masterplan proposals were displayed, supported by an online consultation over a four-week period, with displays located in the park café, Stretford Public Hall and Trafford Town Hall. The consultation attracted over 400 responses, which have been analysed in order to refine proposals and activity planning.
- 7.4 The results of the consultation demonstrated strong support for the masterplan proposals, with over 300 respondents in favour of the proposals for the Long Barn, former Longford Hall footprint, Longford Brook restoration, sports facility improvement and new footpath creation individually. Fewer than 50 respondents were against these proposals in each case. However, opinion was divided on the BMX course, with 222 in favour and 109 against. Detailed analysis of the consultation will be contained within the Activity Plan.

8.0 Wider Corporate Links

The project meets the Corporate Plan Priority 'Addressing our Climate Crisis', with strong links to the Council's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (Sport England), VCSFE Strategy, Trafford Locality Plan, Operational Estates Strategy, Inclusive Economy Recovery Plan, draft Local Plan and The Civic Quarter Area Action Plan.

9.0 Other Options

- 9.1 No alternative viable option exists to secure the necessary levels of capital and revenue funding to realise the park's environmental, social and economic potential. A do-nothing option would fail to seize the opportunity to regenerate a major cultural and heritage asset beyond that which could be achieved within current available resources for park maintenance and development, whilst failing to unlock the potential of the site to achieve cross-cutting benefits for local residents, visitors, partner organisations and businesses.

10.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 10.1 The Longford Park 'People, Place and Nature' project has the potential to contribute significantly to a number of key Council strategies and priorities relating to physical and mental wellbeing, sport and physical activity, biodiversity and access to nature, climate change adaptation and mitigation, skills development, green economy and volunteering.
- 10.2 The project also complements major local place shaping at Stretford Town Centre and The Civic Quarter, providing the primary major public park to meet the needs of planned residential growth, with strong physical and partnership links to the countryside of The Mersey Valley.

Key Decision Yes

If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given? Yes

Finance Officer Clearance *(type in initials)*.....**PC**.....

Legal Officer Clearance *(type in initials)*.....**TR**.....

[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE *(electronic)*..... 

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To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Corporate Director has cleared the report prior to issuing to the Executive Member for decision.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Longford Park Landscape Masterplan