

Background

- 1) In 2016 Berwick Town Council supported a successful bid to the Coastal Revival Fund for £48,000 to fund a study into the feasibility of developing the Barracks as a destination tourist attraction for the town.
- 2) That study envisaged a Heritage Hub telling the story of Berwick and the Eastern Borders. This would incorporate and expand the Berwick Museum, Berwick Archive and Record Office, Gymnasium Gallery and KOSB Museum, and provide additional facilities including a café/restaurant and enlarged shop. Market research indicated that this would be capable of attracting upwards of 60,000 visitors a year, compared with around 10,000 a year currently. Berwick Town Council has declared its support for this project, which according to the feasibility study will cost about £15m to complete.
- 3) Since the report was published in March 2016, the project partners have been discussing how they can work together to bring it to fruition. They are now all committed to the project and to raising the necessary funding. In recognition of the present funding climate and the complexity of the project, it is likely that the most realistic and practicable approach will be to fund and implement it in stages.
- 4) The next step is therefore a major programme of work to prepare the plans and evidence required by a range of major funders in the public and private sectors. These include detailed architectural, design, development and business plans to RIBA Stage 1 standard, including dividing the project into a succession of individually fundable modules, strategically structured so that each advances the project towards its overall goal in a rational sequence that avoids duplication of effort or cost. The cost of this work has been estimated at £90,000.
- 5) NCC sees the project as being vital to the future success of Berwick's economy. It has committed £15,000 towards the work now required, as a dedicated element of its funding for Berwick's new Coastal Community Team. The Freemen have agreed to match any funding Berwick Town Council provides, up to £10,000. The Heritage Hub project team is asking the Town Council to contribute up to £25,000. It is also energetically pursuing contributions from the project partners and a number of trusts and foundations.
- 6) In the meantime, English Heritage has already committed to incremental improvements designed to attract greater numbers of visitors to the Barracks in 2017 and beyond. These include working with local partners to open a pop-up café facility, staging special events in 2017 including a re-enactment weekend and a family-focused half-term event, a film screening programme as part of the 2017 Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival, and increased marketing activity.
- 7) The project partners continue to believe that the revitalised Barracks will provide the destination attraction that Berwick needs, giving our tourism offer greater focus, visibility and year-round appeal. As well as the jobs created on-site, it will bring significant benefits to businesses across

the town by attracting many thousands of additional visitors. The project sits at the core of the emerging Economic Plan for the town. The case for providing significant financial support is therefore clear.

- 8) We have had sight of the constitution of a charitable incorporated organization, the Berwick Barracks Heritage Trust, which establishes the CIO and vests power as to the direction of the trust in three Trustees. The proposed objects of the trust are the advancement of the Arts, Culture, Education and Heritage, in particular by the preservation and promotion of Berwick Barracks as a centre celebrating the history and heritage of Berwick-upon-Tweed and its surrounding area and as a focus for artistic and cultural activities, and through such other related activities as the Trustees shall from time to time determine.
- 9) The proposed activities of the Trust are
 - a) The preservation and development of Berwick's Grade 1 listed Barracks as a suitable centre for a proposed Heritage Hub, which will house an integrated museum experience telling the story of Berwick and the Eastern Borders.
 - b) The improvement of the internationally recognised Gymnasium Gallery on the site to house additional artistic exhibitions and cultural activities.
 - c) The sympathetic provision within the site of suitable facilities meeting contemporary standards to house Berwick's own Burrell collection and Berwick's unique archival collection going back to Tudor times.
 - d) The provision on the site of other educational and cultural activities and events focussing on the history and heritage of Berwick and its surrounding area.
- 10) Papers circulated by the Trustees suggest that the Trustees should be assisted in their work by an advisory group drawn from
 - English Heritage
 - Berwick Visual Arts
 - The Trustees of the Museum of the KOSB
 - The Woodhorn Trust
 - Northumberland County Council
 - Berwick Town Council
 - The Guild of Freemen of Berwick-upon-Tweed
 - Berwick Archives and Museum Action Group (BAMAG)

Issues

- 11) The Town Council is able to provide up to £25,000 from its unallocated reserves for this project and given the potential benefits to the town such an investment would seem prudent. If members were so minded, your RFO would recommend that payments be made in stages of £10K, £7.5K and £7.5K, with authority to release payments delegated to your RFO, in order to ensure that not all the sum committed is lost should the work not be completed for any reason.
- 12) Members will note that the proposed constitution includes the usual clause enabling the Trustees to undertake such other related activities as the Trustees may determine. Whilst such a clause is mundane, members may wish to consider whether the proposed advisory group will have sufficient influence over the trustees as to ensure that the Trustees are well informed as to the Town Council's priorities and perspective upon the needs of Berwick. The proposed advisory group is made up of organizations who have a strong commitment to the history and heritage of

Berwick upon Tweed, but the lines of accountability to the people of Berwick upon Tweed of the trustees are less clear. Your officers would invite you to consider whether a stakeholder group made up of officers representing those organizations with a democratic remit (e.g. NCC and BTC) might not be an appropriate way of ensuring the Trustees are well advised about wider engagement with the people of Berwick upon Tweed.

Recommendations

- 13) Members are recommended to indicate their preference with regard to the issues raised in paras 11 & 12 above, and to delegate responsibility to the Town Clerk / RFO accordingly.