

CABINET

Lancaster Cultural Heritage Strategy 5th July 2011

Report of Head of Regeneration & Policy Service

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| PURPOSE OF REPORT | | | |
| To consider the outcome and recommendations of the final version of the Lancaster Cultural Heritage Strategy prepared by consultants Blue Sail following extensive consultation. | | | |
| Key Decision | X | Non-Key Decision | Referral from Cabinet Member |
| Date Included in Forward Plan | Updated 4 April 2011 - Supplementary | | |
| This report is public | | | |

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILLOR RON SANDS

- (1) **The Lancaster Cultural Heritage Strategy and Action Plan are endorsed as the framework for prioritising actions and investment in the district's cultural heritage assets.**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Historic Towns and Cities in England's Northwest report, produced for NWDA by EDAW and Locum Destination Consulting in October 2006, recognised that Lancaster has significant potential as a heritage visitor destination but currently is not fully "punching its weight". The study set out a vision for the historic core of Lancaster, to "build on its Georgian heritage" and position itself as the "Bath of the North", as a backdrop for stylish and distinctive retail and leisure activity.
- 1.2 However, the analysis was predominantly desk based and not designed to produce a detailed heritage investment strategy. It was only able to conduct limited consultation with key local stakeholders. It also focused on the physical assets of the city, without considering issues related to management and marketing of the destination. A more detailed piece of work was commissioned taking the EDAW/Locum report as a starting point, alongside the framework for the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership, and draws them together to produce an Investment Strategy reviewing the wider heritage of the district. The outcome of the work is intended to provide a strategic framework for future heritage investment decisions and an economic justification to support it.
- 1.3 The main focus of the final version of the Strategy (Appendix 1) and Action

Plan (Appendix 2) is the city of Lancaster, its built heritage, the stories behind it and the way it is interpreted, especially through the museums and other visitor attractions. But the Strategy recognises the value of heritage to the identity of Morecambe and the district as a whole.

- 1.4 Development of the Strategy was overseen by a Steering Group of officers from Lancaster City Council, Lancashire County Council, the Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board and NWDA, to whom the consultants reported.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The study is a component in a comprehensive package of regeneration measures designed to maximise Lancaster's economic potential and achieve a transformational step change in the City's economic and cultural role as a sub regional centre for northern Lancashire and southern Cumbria. It forms part of the economic regeneration framework for Lancaster District, based on work originally conducted by Lancaster & Morecambe Vision Board but now adopted and developed further by Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership (LDLSP).

- 2.2 One of the central themes of the Vision for Lancaster & Morecambe is a belief that the desirability of the District as a place to work, live and locate businesses is inextricably linked to its attractiveness as a visitor destination. The Vision observes: *"it is widely acknowledged that our heritage offering is at least as good as that of Chester or York but that we have been let down by under-investment and a lack of a coherent approach and message"*.

- 2.3 The study directly contributes to one of the five key themes of the regeneration framework: *Place shape Lancaster city and riverside as a regionally significant visitor and shopping destination and a competitive employment destination with an outstanding waterfront*

This is to be achieved through six main strands of work:

- Developing Lancaster as a Heritage City
- Enhancing the City's Public Realm
- Delivering a step-change in the City's retail offer
- Freeing up the visitor potential of Lancaster Castle,
- Developing the City' as a major cultural centre through enhancements to the Duke's and Grand Theatres and the creation of a centre for creative industries in the Storey institute.
- Achieving a major environmental upgrade of the Lune waterfront and vacant and under-used land in the Lune area;

- 2.4 The Strategy was also intended to complement other key projects which are under detailed development or recently completed:

- Lancaster Square Routes - focussing on public realm improvements and connectivity within the urban fabric
- £100 million city centre retail expansion to the NW of the city centre, led by developer Centros.

- Luneside East and Lancaster riverfront – a major mixed use urban regeneration scheme extending downstream and westwards from the city centre and St George’s Quay.
- The recent re-opening of Storey Institute Creative Industries Centre, including the new strategic Lancaster Visitor Information Centre
- In Morecambe, the refurbished Midland Hotel and nearby Winter Gardens Theatre also represent key heritage projects which can benefit from being linked into a district wide heritage strategy.

2.5 The study was undertaken against the backdrop of key decisions and emerging ideas on the following major elements of the ‘heritage product’:

- Williamson Park: the decision to bring park management back ‘in house’ within the city council.
- Museums Service: the ongoing review of the management arrangements between the city and county council’s.
- Cabinet’s decision in February 2011 to:
 - I. Undertake further investigations, and consider a future report, into the conversion of the City Museum to accommodate Lancaster Market;
 - II. Confirm the importance of the King’s Own Royal Regimental Museum as part of any change to the City Museum.
- Lancaster Castle: the announcement that Lancaster Castle Prison was to shut and emerging dialogue between the courts, county council and Duchy of Lancaster on the future of the Castle within the city’s heritage tourism offer.

2.6 Lastly, it has been difficult to define and prepare a strategy in the midst of a dynamic policy and funding landscape. The study took place within the context of uncertainties about the scale and pace of future investment in the heritage arising from:

- The coalition government’s deficit reduction measures, cuts in public spending and the search for efficiencies.
- Abolition of regional agencies such as the NWDA, their associated cultural and heritage based funding streams and the emergence of new sub-regional drivers such as the Lancashire Local Economic Partnership and funding mechanisms.
- The impact of funding decisions/resource reviews by those remaining national/regional policy and funding agencies (for example Arts Council and Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board)
- A shift in expectations of what the public sector should be doing and public service reform: moving government towards an enabling role, encouraging ‘localism’ and the ‘Big Society’ and developing new methods of service delivery in partnership with the third sector, private business and the community.

3.0 Strategy Development and Consultation

3.1 Following development of the consultant’s brief by the project Steering Group and a tender exercise Blue Sail Consulting Ltd were appointed to deliver the Lancaster Cultural Heritage Strategy. The consultant’s activity focussed around the following work streams

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Strategy development | <p>Review of the original EDAW/Locum development priorities.</p> <p>Mapping these against the aspirations of Lancaster & Morecambe Vision and the economic regeneration framework of Lancaster District LSP.</p> <p>Verifying these against market demand.</p> <p>Audit existing Heritage components as to their sustainability, impact and suitability for development.</p> <p>Review the current management of Lancaster as a heritage destination and identification of opportunities for enhancement of this.</p> <p>Assessment of the way the city's heritage brand is promoted now and how it might be strengthened.</p> <p>Production of an outline 10 year Cultural Heritage Investment Strategy for the district, to act as a strategic framework for future activity.</p> <p>Production of a draft 5 year action plan for the historic core of Lancaster.</p> <p>Recommendations on the potential for "fiscal" measures such as Business Improvement Districts, Supplementary Business Rates, and planning agreements to be used to contribute towards sustainable city centre/heritage management.</p> |
| Economic impact | <p>Quantify the current and potential future economic and social impact of heritage in the district.</p> <p>Establish a methodology for assessing priorities for future investment which will help evaluate individual projects and can be used to determine their potential economic impact.</p> |

3.2 The strategy itself was developed with wide consultation and stakeholder engagement. A consultation draft version of the Strategy and Action Plan was circulated and published inviting comments from members of the public and the business community. Copies were placed in the council's Customer Service Centres and in libraries and the consultation was also highlighted via the council's corporate Facebook page and Twitter feed. The consultation formally closed on 4th February.

3.3 A total of 26 responses were received, some of considerable length. The document attached in Appendix 3 summarises and comments on:

- A number of common themes appearing in the representations
- Some of the specific ideas and suggestions to conserve or improve the heritage or its presentation

Consultees also raised detailed points about history, individual projects and phraseology which have been incorporated in the final Strategy document where relevant. The full text of consultation responses will be made available on the council's website following Cabinet approval of the final strategy document and are also available for scrutiny in the Member's library.

4.0 Final Strategy Document

4.1 The Strategy in Appendix 1 is a guide to investment in the district's cultural heritage over the next 10 years. It is accompanied by an assessment of the economic impact that investment in our heritage could achieve and a 5 year

Action Plan. It sets out a number of key objectives for Lancaster's heritage that all partners need to work towards. These include managing Lancaster's Georgian buildings, improving the existing heritage offer and developing the castle as a must-see attraction, raising the profile of Lancaster and promoting it as a modern heritage city.

- 4.2 In answering the key question of how Lancaster 'matches up' as a heritage city there is criticism of the range and quality of other visitor attractions in Lancaster, and that they seem not to be a central part of city life. Throughout the document there is a sense of great potential in the heritage as yet not realised. It is clear that Lancaster has a low profile as a heritage destination for most people and is not on the radar as a choice for a visit or a break. The most successful heritage cities have a rounded offer, combining strong heritage attractions that are fun as well as educational with plenty of other things to do and see. These can include distinctive retail and eating offers and attractive hotel accommodation in historic settings, well-cared for public realm that is easy to find one's way around on foot and in many cases an attractive, busy waterfront.
- 4.3 From that starting point this strategy undertakes a detailed audit of the heritage features and attractions of Lancaster and Morecambe, considering the extent to which they generate visits and satisfy the expectations of visitors and residents. The strategy identifies shortfalls in the way the public realm is presented and interpreted, the lack of a must-see attraction and the challenges of a cluster of fairly small museums that have had little recent investment. It notes the desirability of a stronger retail and hospitality offer and of a cultural and festivals programme of quality that could achieve wider recognition.
- 4.4 The strategy recommends the adoption of key objectives for Lancaster's heritage that all partners need to work towards. These are:
 - I. To manage, care for and present Lancaster's key assets, especially its Georgian buildings and townscapes, to the highest standards
 - II. To aim for a must see-attraction– the Castle with extended access – and connect it strongly with improved heritage attractions in the city.
 - III. To develop and enhance the amenities and experiences that visitors and locals expect to find in a modern heritage city
 - IV. To retain and restore the character of Morecambe's urban fabric and rural hinterland as it adapts to modern needs as a place to live and to visit.
 - V. To raise and sharpen Lancaster's profile, promoting it specifically as a modern heritage city and a university city, so that it is as least as well known as other small heritage cities
 - VI. To strengthen partnership working to implement the Cultural Heritage Strategy
- 4.5 Following an investment analysis process looking at economic impact and feasibility of a suite of potential proposals that could deliver against these objectives the Strategy suggests the council and its partners focus on the following portfolio. The Priority designation is not a 'ranking' – all proposals are 'priority' but some are more difficult to achieve in the current economic and funding climate.

Priority 1

Items with the greatest benefit and impact, with reasonable or better feasibility

Capital projects

- Public realm – Square Routes
- Lancaster Castle – interim improvements and better access on relocation of courts
- Morecambe Townscape Heritage Initiative Phase 2
- Feasibility of City Museum extension and remodelling
- Morecambe Bay Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Revenue projects

- Maintenance of public realm, Lancaster
- Better, co-ordinated marketing
- Festivals and events development
- Facilitation of a Business Improvement District (BID) Initiative

Priority 2

Items with substantial benefit and impact, but which appear difficult to move forward at present

- Lancaster Castle as a major attraction, on relocation of courts and prison.
- Canal corridor development
- City Centre hotels
- Regeneration of Victorian and Edwardian housing, Morecambe
- Further Promenade gardens and artworks.

Priority 3

Desirable items whose benefit is less or where feasibility is low at present.

- Judges Lodgings improvements
- Ashton Memorial and Williamson Park Developments
- Maritime Museum and Quay
- Winter Gardens Restoration
- Sculpture restoration.

- 4.6 The associated Action Plan (Appendix 2) for the years 2011-2015 has been prepared to show how the strategy recommendations can be carried forward. In many cases there is uncertainty over the pace and timing of progression of projects either because they depend on a positive market sentiment or because of the restrictions on public capital and revenue spending. The strategy also notes it is of critical importance that investment in fabric and

programmes goes hand in hand with focussed marketing and promotion.

5.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

5.1 The following options are identified:

| Option | Advantages | Disadvantages | Risks |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Do not adopt final Cultural Heritage Strategy objectives/priorities . | No advantages identified. | No clear up to date and comprehensive statement of direction, in either strategic or development terms, of City Council priorities for Cultural Heritage. | Development of Lancaster's cultural heritage offer will have to take place on a piecemeal basis, lacking a strong and clear economic justification, and without a strong and well developed strategic framework. The Council may miss an opportunity to build upon stakeholder engagement during strategy development. |
| 2. Cabinet endorses Cultural Heritage Strategy objectives/priorities . | Clear commitment to and direction for Cultural Heritage as an economic and regeneration driver for the district. Clear economic justification for individual projects and a robust evaluation framework. Wide consultation and formal feedback has led to identification of priorities. | Bringing together all key partners to deliver a co-ordinated investment strategy in a manner that maximises the benefit to the local economy and tackles the long under investment in this aspect of the visitor economy will be difficult. | Normal risks associated with practical delivery: achieving development and revenue funding, managing and shaping individual projects and initiatives. |
| 3. Cabinet endorses Cultural Heritage Strategy objectives/priorities with amendments / alternative actions. | Depending on time taken to review amendments there should still be: Clear commitment to and direction for Cultural Heritage as an economic and regeneration driver for the district. Clear economic justification. | Further delay possible in bringing together all key partners to deliver a co-ordinated investment strategy in a manner that maximises the benefit to the local economy and tackles the long under investment in this aspect of the visitor economy will be difficult. | Normal risks associated with practical delivery: achieving development and revenue funding, managing and shaping individual projects and initiatives. |

5.2 Essentially the Lancaster Cultural Heritage Strategy and the implementation plan is a programme rather than a collection of individual projects. It provides a strategic overview and a framework for any projects that are ultimately supported to move forward. As individual projects are developed, and if they have individual council resource/risk implications they will be subject to detailed internal appraisal within the council's own scrutiny and project management systems. Any individual project proposals would need to be considered as part of the annual budget and planning process, in context of future priorities and affordability

6.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

6.1 Option 2 is the preferred option as this provides a clear commitment and direction for Cultural Heritage and its contribution to economic regeneration work in the district through the stated policy objectives, priorities and outline action plan. Option 3 is also available to Members and acceptable given the context of changing circumstances/funding environment noted in paragraph 2.6. Members can however be assured that the recommendations have been subject to independent appraisal and wide community consultation.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The Lancaster Cultural Heritage Strategy fits in with the council's new corporate and strategic approach towards delivering economic regeneration placing emphasis on developing and focussing on key priorities, policy fit and deliverability. The Strategy should be welcomed for providing a renewed focus and for taking stock of the current situation. There are some criticisms of the district's current approach (or lack of approach) in the Strategy, but as an independent review all key stakeholders should recognise the consultant has acted in the capacity of a 'critical friend'.

7.2 The review and outline action plan will assist more effective targeting on the deliverable 'high impact' priority projects that will build upon some of the positive changes seen in the district in recent years.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Strategy objectives and priorities relate to the council's Corporate Priorities highlighted in the Draft Corporate Plan 2011-14 specifically under:

10. ECONOMIC REGENERATION: VISITOR ECONOMY

The council is seeking to build on the area's improving potential for tourism by producing a new Cultural Heritage Strategy to focus on the areas where action and investment need to be targeted. Having identified the visitor economy as a key economic driver in the Local Development Framework, there is a continuing need to stimulate investment in the areas where there is the most potential for growth. Morecambe will enter a new phase of concentrated effort to deal with the need to improve the attractiveness and function of its central area. Lancaster will be targeted with actions to make far more of its heritage assets, public spaces and retail offer. The district's rural areas will improve the focus of their tourism identities.

The endorsement of the Strategy will contribute to the following “Economic Regeneration Performance Framework ” measures:

Key outcomes for our community:

Visitor Economy

- More tourists coming to the district and tourist income is maximised
- The attractiveness of the district as a place to visit will be improved
- The district’s cultural, retail and tourism offer will be improved
- Lancaster District will be recognised as a visitor destination

Key Actions What we will do:

Visitor Economy

- Improve public realm, parks and open spaces
- Maximise cultural, heritage and retail offer

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

Diversity – positive impact. Future implementation of priority proposals will contribute towards equality objectives including women, black and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities leading to greater representation of these views and perspectives during design and implementation.

Human rights – neutral impact

Community safety – neutral impact

Sustainability – positive impact. The review discounts those proposals which are ‘not viable’ from the perspective of being sustainable and deliverable.

Rural proofing – rural cultural heritage issues and matters have been considered in the formulation of the strategy.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

No legal implications have been identified for the city council in relation to the preferred option.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Of the detailed Action Plan proposals under the preferred option (Option 2) some have no current direct contractual financial implications for the city council while some are currently budgeted for. Among the items the following should be noted:

Public realm – Lancaster Square Routes Capital programme 2011-12 includes £220,000; £73400 secured from S.106

Morecambe Townscape Heritage Initiative 2: A View for Eric: Capital programme includes £275K split over 5 years

Feasibility of City Museum Development and Extension: to be sourced from £130K Lancaster Market Reserve, subject to this fitting with its approved use.

Morecambe Bay Landscape Partnership scheme Lancaster City contribution of £5000 over 5 years to be confirmed if the HLF application succeeds.

Lancaster / Morecambe Business Improvement Districts: £40k for each.

Other figures contained within action plan have been derived from a variety of sources including existing feasibility studies and comparator estimates provided by the consultant.

The requirements for developing any 'proposed' priority projects, as per the outline action plan will be achieved using in-house officer/council resources, 'bought-in' as external funding allows, or delivered by third parties. The delivery and financial arrangements for individual project proposals will be considered under separate reporting procedures and will be subject to independent appraisal before any council resources are committed. Any individual project proposals would need to be considered as part of the annual budget and planning process, in context of future priorities and affordability.

The Cultural Heritage Strategy itself was externally funded using resources from NWDA and Lancaster District LSP.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources:

No specific HR implications arising from adoption of the Strategy

Information Services:

Although there are no direct implications to IS in the adoption of the strategy there are things that need to be considered in regard to the projects identified. With regard to 'marketing' the council has a number of computer systems which potential customers come into contact with which could potentially form the basis of a customer database. Any modern offer/new needs technological/audio visual aids and IS may have involvement in the procurement and support. There may be cost savings and efficiencies available through including some of the attractions on our network and telephony infrastructure

Property:

No specific property implications arising from adoption of the Strategy. The implementation of the some of the strategy proposals may have open space/property implications in due course. The detailed property implications for individual project proposals will be considered under separate reporting procedures and will be subject to independent appraisal before any council assets are committed.

Open Spaces:

As property implications above.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer is concerned that the proposed strategy and action plan were developed primarily between March and September of last year, before Government completed its Comprehensive Spending Review and before the Local Government Settlement was announced. As such, there has been no up to date assessment of affordability.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there is likely to be "a challenging environment for delivery of investment options set out in this Strategy" and "in many cases it must be uncertain whether [priority 2 and 3 investment proposals] can proceed in the 5 year period of the Action Plan....", the s151 Officer would advise that in her view the affordability of some of the Priority 1 plans is also uncertain. In effect, this may mean that the Strategy proves to be more visionary than actually deliverable. If Cabinet is minded to adopt the Strategy, however, in due course it could be amended to reflect any future changes in priorities and what is affordable

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Lancaster Cultural Heritage Strategy: Final Report

Appendix 2 – Lancaster Cultural Heritage Strategy Action Plan 2011-2015

Appendix 3 – Cultural Heritage Strategy: summary of public consultation responses

Full consultation responses available in the Member's library.

Contact Officer: Paul Rogers

Telephone: 01524 582334

E-mail: progers@lancaster.gov.uk

Ref: