

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Conservation Advisory Group
Conservation, Sustainability &
Community Planning Portfolio Holder

AUTHOR/S: Conservation Manager

9th March 2005

CONFIRMATION OF ENGLISH HERITAGE SUPPORT TO ARREST DETERIORATION OF THE REDUNDANT CHURCH OF ST. DENIS, EAST HATLEY AND PROPOSED ACTION.

Purpose

1. To advise the Conservation Advisory Group of the results of the recent grant submission to English Heritage and seek support for proposed action.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	The proposed project will secure the future of a 'building at risk', such action is an adopted performance indicator (SP903)
Village Life	The project will : enable the churchyard and County Wildlife Site to be restored to full accessibility; make possible the development of a community facility; make safe a semi-derelict building; lay the grounds to restore an important part of local heritage; thereby enhancing village life.
Sustainability	The restoration and re-use of historic buildings is a key sustainability measure.
Partnership	The scheme will be developed as a partnership project with the Parish Council , SCDC and English Heritage and will facilitate further partnership working with other national heritage bodies to secure an appropriate use for the building.

Background

3. Members will be aware of the report to the meeting of the 15th September 2004 Conservation Advisory Group where it was reported that English Heritage had indicated that grant support would be considered to undertake a programme of work to arrest the deterioration of the building.
4. The Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder subsequently agreed that subject to the confirmation of grant support from English Heritage that :
 - (a) officers should be instructed to seek tender prices to undertake the programme of works suggested by English Heritage on the basis of comparative submissions for both (i) corrugated iron roof cover and (ii) retailed using recycled and new tiles.
 - (b) subject to the receipt of satisfactory tenders that Cabinet approval is sought to let a contract of works. The works to be funded from the Portfolio Holder's existing budget : *Historic Buildings Preservation Fund*.
5. Confirmation of the grant offer was received on 10th January 2005. Conditions on the grant offer must be accepted within 3 months of the date of the offer and works

commence in the same period. The repair works must be completed within 18 months of the offer date.

6. English Heritage have summarised the estimated the cost of “eligible” grant works as follows :

Repair project work (scaffolding, wall, roof and window repairs.	£71,950
Fees	£ 9,594
VAT	0
Total eligible costs	£81,544
English Heritage Grant offer	£61,000
% of estimated eligible costs	74.8%

7. Purcell, Miller Tritton Architects have consequently been instructed to prepare a detailed “Specification and Schedule of Work” and seek tender prices to enable a contract to be considered by Cabinet as soon as possible.

8. The architects have estimated the programme of initial design works as follows :

Task	Duration	Start	Finish
Site inspections and survey	15 days	Mon. 14.02.05	Fri. 04.03.05
Amend tender documents	25 days	Mon. 21.02.05	Fri. 25.03.05
Submit for EH approval	10 days	Mon. 28.03.05	Fri. 08.04.05
Tender period	20 days	Mon. 11.04.05	Fri. 06.05.05
Review tenders	5 days	Mon. 09.05.05	Fri. 13.05.05
Place contract/Contractors lead in time.	20 days	Mon 16.05.05	Fri. 10.06.06
Contract period	90 days	Mon 13.06.05	Fri. 14.10.05

Considerations

9. It will be evident from the above programme that the tenders will not be able to be reported to Cabinet until the new financial year (2005/06). However, English Heritage’s grant offer needs to be formally accepted to secure the grant sum. The design works are part of the repair programme and have commenced.
10. The proposed funding to enable a building contract to be let would be financed from the portfolio holder’s, “Historic Buildings Preservation Fund”. This is a capital sum made available to the portfolio holder to facilitate intervention to secure the preservation of historic buildings at risk. To date, at St. Denis, East Hatley, the budget has been utilised to erect the security fencing and structural scaffolding to protect both the building and the public. It will necessary to seek Cabinet approval to ‘roll forward’ the uncommitted balance from this budget to enable a contract to be subsequently let in 2005/06.
11. The generous grant offer from English Heritage should enable the fabric of the medieval church to be protected. This will remove the health and safety issues; re-open full access to the churchyard; and provide the opportunity to examine options for a viable community use for the building. While the actual works costs will not be known until tenders are received, it would appear that the funding commitment, for these works, by the authority will be within existing budget limits.

Options

12. The Conservation Advisory Group are asked to consider the following options :

- (a) To recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder formally accepts the grant offer, on behalf of the authority, to secure the offer of financial support from English Heritage.
- (b) To recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder requests that Cabinet agree to carry forward the uncommitted balance in the 'Historic Buildings Preservation Fund' to enable this funding to be used to support the implementation of these first phase repair works.
- (c) To recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder presents a report to Cabinet in May 2005 (in line with the above timetable) to review tenders, and consider letting a contract subject to the proposed grant offer from English Heritage.
- (d) To recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder declines the offer of grant support from English Heritage and seeks Cabinet approval for an alternative means to resolve the long-term future of this building.

Financial Implications

- 13. The estimated costs of the necessary repair works will be clarified by the tender process but is expected to be within the range estimated by English Heritage. There will be additional cost for the tiling of the roof (English Heritage's estimates are based on corrugated iron) but the additional cost of the material is not expected to make the project unviable.
- 14. The on-going need to maintain scaffolding and security fencing at the former church of St. Denis is slowly drawing on valuable resources. These costs (totalling approximately £5,000 per annum) will be removed by implementing the repair works and create a potential asset rather than a drain on resources.
- 15. The *Historic Building Preservation Fund* was established for the purpose of intervening to protect serious deterioration of listed buildings. It could accommodate the necessary SCDC contribution to these repair works. It is evident that the English Heritage, is cash limited (i.e. will not be increased) but is both generous and probably the only immediate source of external finance available to the Council to assist in the first stage of the restoration of the building. English Heritage support and the implementation of these works does, however, indicate the importance of this medieval building as an item of the national heritage and could help secure subsequent funding from other bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- 16. Resolution of the immediate structural problems and removal of the danger presented to the public will also open the prospect of creating interest amongst other heritage bodies (such as the National Trust or Landmark Trust) who might be approached to assist with the long-term management of the building. The expenditure of the initial sum would then not only buy time to consider a community use it would also help re-establish the building as a possible asset.

Legal Implications

- 17. SCDC is the owner of the building and has a duty to try to secure its future as a national heritage component. It also has a duty of care to users of the adjoining churchyard.

Staffing Implications

18. None specific. The project will be coordinated by the Conservation Manager.

Risk Management Implications

19. The building is in the ownership of the Council and is at present both a hazard and an on-going drain on resources. The main risk of not proceeding to implement these basic repairs is that the physical danger will increase along with on-going maintenance costs. The implementation of these works will remove both the risk and the potential criticism of the authority.

Consultations

20. The Parish Council supported the bid to English Heritage and the approach to the repair initiative. Members will be aware that the issue has been subject to considerable debate in the authority over a number of years.

Conclusions/Summary

21. The offer of generous English Heritage grant support to secure the structural stabilisation of the former church of St. Denis would appear to offer the potential to finally start to implement the restoration of this medieval church. The immediately proposed action is necessary to protect the offer of external funding. Successful implementation of these works will enable subsequent consideration to be given to an appropriate community based use for the building. Members are, therefore, requested to support this action to start the process of returning the building to active use.

Recommendations

22. The Conservation Advisory Group are requested to:
- (a) recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder formally accepts the grant offer, on behalf of the authority, to secure the offer of financial support from English Heritage.
 - (b) recommend that the that Cabinet agree to carry forward the uncommitted balance in the 'Historic Buildings Preservation Fund' to enable this funding to be used to support the implementation of these first phase repair works.
 - (d) recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder presents a report to Cabinet in May 2005 (in line with the above timetable) to review tenders, and consider letting a contract subject to the proposed grant offer from English Heritage.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

1. Grant offer letter form English Heritage – 10th January 2005
2. Report to Conservation Advisory Group - 15th September 2004.

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