

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE: 5 SEPTEMBER 2000**

**THE NEWMILNS TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE : UPDATE**

**Report by Director of Development Services**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To update the Committee on the progress with the Newmilns Townscape Heritage Initiative (NTHI).

**2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 The Development Services Committee of 21 December 1999 were advised of the progress which had been made to ensure all organisational arrangements and staff were in place to permit the commencement of the NTHI, the progress with funding support, and the next steps required to implement the proposals contained in the NTHI action plans. These were:-

- (1) Seek the agreement from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to commence the NTHI scheme;
- (2) Hold a meeting of the NTHI Executive Committee to consider the following:-
  - (i) the signing of the Agency Agreement with East Ayrshire Council;
  - (ii) the detailed programme of work for Year 1; and
  - (iii) applying for Members and Officers Liability Insurance.
- (3) The appointment of a Project Officer; and
- (4) Publicise the Launch of the NTHI.

2.2 This report advises of the significant progress, over and above the steps identified here which has been made to commence with implementation of the NTHI's Action Plan. The report also updates this Committee on the progress with individual projects, and advises of the NTHI Executive Committee's concerns over the HLF's handling of the Brown's Institute project.

**3. PROGRESS WITH THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE NTHI**

3.1 As a result of delays in finalising the contracts with HLF, the project has not proceeded as quickly as had been anticipated. However, on the 12 May 2000 authorisation to commence the NTHI scheme was received from the HLF. The Official

Opening of the NTHI was subsequently held on 15 June 2000, at the Morton Hall in Newmilns.

3.2 The Official Opening was performed by John Gerrard representing the Heritage Lottery Fund. At the Opening an Exhibition on the NTHI and other local projects and initiatives were available for viewing and representatives were available to answer questions on the various displays. The success of the occasion and the extent of support for the NTHI was clearly demonstrated by the good attendance at the event.

3.3 The Official Opening also gave Fiona Murphy the new NTHI Project Officer, who was appointed on 13 March 2000, an opportunity to be introduced to the local community. Fiona Murphy has now established an office in the Town House in Newmilns sharing the premises with the Irvine Valley Regeneration Partnership.

3.4 To date three Executive Committee meetings have been held, on the 28<sup>th</sup> February, 12<sup>th</sup> April and 15 June 2000, with the next meeting scheduled to be held on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2000. All the main organisational arrangements are now in place including; the Contract with NHMF; the Constitution of the NTHI; the Agency Agreement between the Council and the NTHI; Members and Officers Liability Insurance and the financial systems and audit arrangements.

3.5 The first Quarterly Report required by the HLF was submitted at the end of July 2000, together with a request for a payment of their 42% grant towards the works undertaken to date. This payment has now been authorised by the HLF.

#### **4. PROGRESS WITH INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS**

4.1 The following is an update on the individual projects included within the NTHI Action Plan.

##### **4.2 Full Restoration**

###### **Browns Institute**

Phase 1 was completed in the spring of 1999. However, HLF have recently declared that invoices for approximately one fifth of the project cannot be considered because they predate the offer of grant. This is despite the fact that the project, which was already underway, was pulled from the main grant programme to the THI programme at HLF's suggestion. Phase 2 has been further delayed with the protracted negotiations with HLF about the contract. The grant application for Phase 2 has recently been referred to HLF with a request that they increase the % contribution on this project to 63.05%, whilst keeping the total sum the same .

4.3 The Executive Committee have also presented a detailed Minute expressing their concerns about the project to HLF as the HLF decision to declare early invoices ineligible will have an impact on the Action Plan for this project and all others. A

meeting has been requested with HLF at senior management level to discuss this matter.

#### 4.4 Westgate Co-op

The Action Plan specifies that this building is to be restored and converted into flats. The Council had been trying to voluntarily acquire the building to progress the project. However, as negotiations to date have been unsuccessful the Council is now pursuing the compulsory purchase of the building. A Minute of Agreement has been signed between East Ayrshire Council and a Building Preservation Trust to transfer ownership once acquired.

#### 4.5 73-77 Main Street

This property is the subject of a feasibility study by St. Vincent Preservation Trust into its restoration and conversion into flats. This project has an offer of grant from the Empty Homes Initiative for the current financial year and hence needs to proceed as a matter of urgency. Discussions are in progress with the owner and potential end users.

#### 4.6 24 26-28 King Street

These properties are also the subject of a feasibility study, with the project as 26-28 also having Empty Homes Initiative money, available in this financial year. Similarly, discussions are in progress with the owner and potential end users.

#### 4.7 53-55 Main Street

The Action Plan identified this property for full restoration for housing purposes. However, recent fire damage has left the building without a roof. The owner of the property is presently addressing the options for the property, including the possibility of retaining the front elevation as part of a new build scheme. This project is therefore likely to become a façade retention scheme or possibly a new build scheme. HLF have been approached about an amendment in the funding of this project and have suggested that a façade retention project could be supported.

#### New Build

#### 4.8 Covenanters Car Park

This site has been purchased by Hanover Housing Association who have submitted a planning application for two family houses and ten amenity flats on this site. They also intend to submit an application to NTHI for grant assistance. A start on site is anticipated early next year. The site has been extended to include the property at 16 King Street, which is presently a burnt out shell.

#### 4.9 Rex Cinema

This property was included in the Action Plan as new build housing, but the owner would prefer to see the building re-used for leisure/community uses. The NTHI is contributing to the cost of a feasibility study into the possible retention and re-use of this building for leisure/community purposes. Should the feasibility study conclude that such a re-use is a viable and sustainable option, the Action Plan will be varied accordingly.

#### 4.10 Public Realm Works

A preliminary scheme for the open space at 82 Main Street (the Jubilee Gardens), was prepared but has not received widespread support from the local community. Further discussions are now underway about this site and the other public realm sites within the NTHI boundary.

#### Reinstatement of Architectural Detail

##### 4.11 Loudoun Parish Church

This project included the repair of the boundary wall and reinstatement of the railings and gates at the Loudoun Parish Church, and was completed in March as an early action project.

##### 4.12 Private Properties

There have been various enquiries from local property owners following the Official Opening of the project in June. A number of individuals are in the process of obtaining tenders for works to their properties.

## 5. THE NEXT STEPS

5.1 Following the Official Opening there is a need to start to see action on the ground. The following are the main steps required to start to implement the priority projects contained in the NTHI action plan:-

- (1) Brown's Institute
  - (i) Resolve issues with HLF over the Brown's Institute Project, and receive HLF's approval to offer a grant to this project
  - (ii) Issue offer of Grant to St. Vincent Crescent Preservation Trust to allow them to commence Phase II of the Brown's Institute project.
- (2) Westgate Co-op - continue to assist with project development whilst awaiting the outcome of the Compulsory Purchase Order.
- (3) Covenanter's Car Park

- (i) Deal with the application to NTHI for grant assistance as efficiently as possible.
- (4) 73-77 Main Street and 26-28 High Street
  - (i) Act upon the conclusions of the feasibility study to fast track these projects to ensure that the Empty Homes Initiative funding is secured.
- (5) Public Realm Works
  - (i) Identify a priority project through further discussion with the Local Community
  - (ii) Develop a Draft Proposal and set up a meeting to gauge public opinion.
- (6) Reinstatement of Architectural Detail –
  - (i) Seek applications from property owners for reinstatement works to their property
  - (ii) Continue to advise property owners in the NTHI area of how to apply for grant assistance
  - (iii) Deal with applications to NTHI for grant assistance as efficiently as possible

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 A shortfall in funding is emerging as a result of the following changes in the original Action Plan:-

- (i) Reduction of HLF's contribution from £1.78M in the Action Plan to £1.7M
- (ii) Failure of the bid for ERDF funding under Measure 3.2
- (iii) The winding up of East Ayrshire Housing Partnership
- (iv) The approach adopted by HLF to the funding of Phase I of the Brown's Institute project
- (v) Potential additional costs associated with the Westgate Co-op Compulsory procedures

6.2 It is intended to try to identify other sources of funding to make up any shortfall. If alternative sources are not identified the original Action plan will have to be amended to take account of any shortfall with the resultant reduction in the number of properties targeted for improvement.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The Councillors nominated to the NTHI Executive Committee are now covered by the NTHI's own Members and Officers Liability Insurance.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**8.1 It is recommended that the Committee:**

- (i) notes the success of the official opening of the NTHI and the progress which has already been made towards the implementation of the Action Plan**
- (ii) notes the next steps proposed to progress the implementation of those priority projects identified in the NTHI Action Plan.**
- (iii) notes that additional funds will be sought from alternative sources to meet any shortfall identified, and**
- (iv) note that a further report will be placed before Committee with regard to any financial implications which may affect the implementation of the NTHI Action Plan.**

**Stephen Chorley**  
**Director of Development Services**

14 August 2000 (CMcK/SA)

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 1. Reports to Development Services Committee dated 24 November 1998, 16 December 1998, 20 April 1999, 31 August 1999, 21 December 1999.**
- 2. "Stage 2" submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund.**
- 3. Contract between the Trustees of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and East Ayrshire Council.**
- 4. Monitoring Procedural Document on the Townscape Heritage Initiative Schemes by the Heritage Lottery Fund.**
- 5. The NTHI Constitution.**

Anyone wishing to inspect the above papers please contact Colin McKee on 01563 576759.

***Implementation Officer – Karl Doroszenko***

**AGENDA**