

To: Economy and Regeneration Policy Board

On: 29 August 2023

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Village Heritage Grant Scheme - Update

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Council Motion of 3 March 2022 to create a £0.250million conservation and heritage grants scheme for property owners in and around the centres of Renfrewshire's villages.
- 1.2 The repair and maintenance of privately owned historic properties, to an appropriate conservation standard, helps preserve the historic environment and maintain our villages as sustainable, thriving places.
- 1.3 Two complementary grant schemes are proposed, available across the eleven Renfrewshire villages which previously benefited from the Villages Investment Fund: "Grants for Heritage Maintenance Plans"; and "Grants for Heritage Repairs".
- 1.4 The application process for both schemes will follow a similar model to the online process successfully established for the Retail Improvement Scheme in Renfrewshire, with applications scored on a range of criteria which assess impact, quality and deliverability. It is anticipated that the scheme will go live in autumn 2023.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board:
 - (i) Approves the proposal for the creation of a Village Heritage Grant Scheme, utilising existing identified budgets, through two complementary schemes: Grants for Heritage Maintenance Plans; and Grants for Heritage Repairs;

- (ii) Authorises the Head of Economy and Development to refine the parameters of the grant scheme and produce the relevant guidance and application pack, to be available on the Council's website.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council meeting of 3 March 2022 agreed to commit £0.250million of capital resources committed to town centre regeneration and underpin a conservation and heritage grants scheme for property owners in and around Renfrewshire's village centres.
- 3.2 The Village Heritage Grant Scheme will focus on preserving and enhancing the historic built environment in Renfrewshire's villages, complementing the existing Villages Investment Fund to support projects which strengthen the character, identity and heritage of our village communities.
- 3.3 In aligning with the Villages Investment Fund, the intention is that the Village Heritage Grant Scheme will be available to property owners in Bishopton, Bridge of Weir, Brookfield, Crosslee, Elderslie, Houston, Howwood, Inchinnan, Kilbarchan, Langbank and Lochwinnoch.

4 Village Heritage Grant Scheme

- 4.1 In devising an application and assessment process, lessons have been learned from Renfrewshire Council's Retail Improvement Scheme and the Paisley TH.CARS2 regeneration project. Research has also been undertaken into similar schemes offered by councils and heritage trusts nationally.
- 4.2 It is anticipated that the Village Heritage Grant Scheme will be targeted primarily at private owner occupiers (including shared owners), but third sector organisations and commercial businesses (who are more likely to be lessees) would also be eligible to apply.
- 4.3 Properties dating from 1945 or earlier will be eligible for funding. Applications will be scored according to a range of criteria which will be weighted to prioritise listed buildings, buildings at risk and buildings within Conservation Areas.
- 4.4 The intention is to make grants available through two complementary schemes:
 - (i) Grants for Heritage Maintenance Plans will support a conservation accredited professional advisor to undertake an external survey and prepare an illustrated, costed maintenance plan for a privately owned historic property. Grants of up to 80% of eligible costs (excluding VAT) - up to a maximum value of £1,500 per property - are proposed.
 - (ii) Grants for Heritage Repairs will support the repair of a privately owned historic property. Small Grants of up to 60% of eligible costs (excluding VAT) are proposed and would be available for works valued between £3,000 and £8,000 (excluding VAT).

Standard Grants of up to 50% of eligible costs (excluding VAT) are also proposed; these would be available for works valued over £8,000 (excluding VAT). The maximum amount awarded for Standard Grants would typically be £25,000.

4.5 The proposed criteria for the Village Heritage Grant Scheme will support the assessment of impact, quality and deliverability of applications. It is anticipated that criteria will include:-

- Whether the property is listed, within a village Conservation Area or is identified on the Buildings at Risk Register;
- Ownership and evidence of commitment of owners to repair and maintain the property;
- Whether the property is currently occupied and has a long-term, sustainable function;
- Evidence of a level of input from a conservation accredited professional advisor;
- Whether quotes have been obtained from Renfrewshire based contractors and their experience in heritage works.

5 Next Steps

5.1 Subject to receiving approval from the Board, officers will refine the conditions and parameters of the Village Heritage Grant Scheme and produce the relevant guidance and application pack, which will be available on a dedicated page on the Council's website.

5.2 The scheme will also be supported through a marketing campaign which will promote the scheme via appropriate Council social channels. It is anticipated that the scheme could be open for applications by autumn 2023.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – Funding for both schemes utilise an approved Council budget.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.
3. **Community/Council Planning** –
 - *Our Renfrewshire is thriving* – The schemes support development which will protect and enhance the built heritage of Renfrewshire's village centres, contributing to the creation of thriving places which support individuals, communities, and businesses.

- *Reshaping our place, our economy and our future* – The schemes will help support the restoration and productive re-use of buildings in the centres of Renfrewshire’s villages, improving the built environment, helping to create job opportunities and contribute to economic growth.
4. **Legal** – Third party grants will be awarded within the relevant Council policies and will be subject to the Council’s approved conditions.
 5. **Property/Assets** – None.
 6. **Information Technology** – ICT will help develop and maintain the online application process for both schemes.
 7. **Equality & Human Rights** – The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals’ human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report.
 8. **Health & Safety** – None.
 9. **Procurement** – None.
 10. **Risks** – None.
 11. **Privacy Impact** – None.
 12. **COSLA Policy Position** – None.
 13. **Climate Risk** – With cognisance of Historic Environment Scotland’s ‘A Guide to Climate Change Impacts: On Scotland’s Historic Environment, Our Place in Time, 2019’, the repair and maintenance of Renfrewshire’s historic fabric will contribute to the restoration and repair of buildings and will improve the performance of these properties over time.

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