



**PRIORY PARK RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT
HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND BID**

**REIGATE AND BANSTEAD LOCAL COMMITTEE
10 DECEMBER 2002**

KEY ISSUE

To consider a Joint Vision Statement for the Park together with the proposed process for developing options for conservation, restoration and enhancement of the Park prior to the submission of the lottery bid.

SUMMARY

It has been acknowledged for a number of years that Priory Park is eminently suitable for a landscape restoration project, but that such a project would rely on successful bids for external funding from sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Partner organisations have been working to develop a joint Vision Statement for Priory Park. The Vision Statement and Conservation Statement that have been prepared will be key elements in the HLF bid, and the project has reached the stage where approval of these Statements is necessary.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to

approve the Vision Statement for the Park, as set out in annex K

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Local Committee received a report regarding the preservation of Reigate Priory School at its meeting on 2nd October. The school is situated within Priory Park, which is a significant heritage resource in its own right.
- 1.2. The Borough Council has acknowledged for a number of years that Priory Park's unique history and town centre setting makes it eminently suitable for a landscape restoration project. However, the size of the park and the nature of the works required meant that such a project would be reliant upon successful bids for funding from external sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.
- 1.3. In January 2001 the Borough Council's Leisure Services Committee agreed that bids should be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Ministry of Agriculture's Countryside Stewardship Scheme for the restoration and enhancement of the park.
- 1.4. In June 2002 a Countryside Stewardship Agreement was secured and this has already levered in almost £20,000. This is already being applied to aspects of the park's landscape conservation (e.g. grassland and heathland management). Decisions on a further £198,000 in grant aid for three further projects in the park (dredging of the lake, fencing and tree works) are awaited. .
- 1.5. For the last eight months the Borough Council's Architect and Historic Landscape Consultant, Sarah Couch, has been working with Members, officers and representatives of partner organisations to develop a Conservation Statement and facilitate initial discussion with Members and Key Partners to provide the basis for future work on this project.

2. THE VISION STATEMENT

- 2.1. In the light of advice received from English Heritage and the HLF, work has taken place between the consultant, County Council and Borough Council officers and the Priory School to develop a joint vision statement for Priory Park. The purpose of the exercise was to create a context within which the HLF bid (and future funding bids by the County Council in relation to the Priory School) could be assessed by HLF.
- 2.2. The pattern of land ownership and tenure and the disposition of uses within the park (e.g. the County Council's long lease on the Priory buildings and its ownership of the playing fields and stables) make it essential to the success of these bids that both Councils are demonstrably working towards common aims and objectives. (A plan showing this information is appended at **Annex J**)
- 2.3. The proposed overall aim of both Councils', as set out in the document is:

“To achieve a balance of conserving and restoring the features, spirit and coherence of the mature Eighteenth Century park, while enhancing its wildlife value, bringing new life to the Victorian/Edwardian gardens and other historic features and integrating high quality public recreational facilities and the function of the School and Museum within the Priory and its landscape setting.”

- 2.4. The document was discussed at an informal meeting of Borough and County Members on October 23rd and was supported. (A copy of the draft document is attached at **Annex K**).

3. OPTIONS FOR RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT

- 3.1. A number of draft options are being developed in outline. They will translate the high level aims and objectives into specific proposals that will also be consistent with the Conservation Statement and the Countryside Stewardship Agreement.
- 3.2. It is proposed that the options will differentiate between proposals that would address restoration priorities and those that would enhance existing facilities. For example:

Restoration Proposals

- Restoration of Lake
- Repair and replanting of Sunken Garden
- Replanting Avenue and parkland trees
- Repair and replant Monks Walk
- Pineapple Gates restored
- Woodland management & view restoration

Enhancement Proposals

- Landscape Bell Street Car Park
- Teenage recreation area
- New under 12's play area (including water-play)
- New/Converted building for refreshments, park manager/warden/toilets
- CCTV system
- Rationalise path layout & resurface
- Improved entrance and paths from Safeway
- New Cycle Route (Safe Route to School)

- 3.3 These and other proposals will be developed and costed to determine what elements can form the basis of the consultation that needs to take place prior to a preferred option being approved for submission to the HLF. Officers will as part of this work develop a "menu " to aid the decision making process.
- 3.4 As the funding of some elements is already secure early implementation of these will be pursued. This will demonstrate progress and commitment and the expenditure can still be counted as part of the Borough Council's partnership fund for the HLF bid. Examples include:

- Conservation of seats and steps in the Sunken Garden and Monks Walk.
- Replanting hedge along Monks Walk
- Interpretation boards
- Initial works in relation to Priory Lake
- CCTV

4. CONSULTATION AND THE BID

- 4.1. The HLF must be satisfied that the bid has been worked up in consultation with the local community. The development of the Conservation Statement (an essential part of the process) was carried out with the help of local Members and representatives of key stakeholders and partner organisations. When the options have been worked up a presentation will be made to stakeholders and partners before the start of the formal consultation period.
- 4.2. The formal consultation process will take place during the early part of 2003. Results will be considered and will inform the choice of the preferred option that will be recommended to the Borough Executive in the spring. Subject to Members' agreement the bid will be submitted to the HLF in June 2003.
- 4.3. The bid will be a "Stage1" bid to seek the HLF's approval in principle and it will also seek funding for the detailed technical work that the Stage 2 bid will require. A decision on the first bid is unlikely before June 2004. Submission of the Stage 2 bid is anticipated for December 2004 and the HLF's final decision is estimated to be made around July 2005.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. It is too early to say what the costs of the options will be. However the "menu" approach that is outlined above and the separation of the proposals in to "restoration" and "enhancement" categories will allow Members to make an informed choice about the scale of the options prior to consultation.
- 5.2. The HLF fund a maximum of 75% of the capital cost of successful bids and can also provide time-limited revenue support. The 25% partnership funding that is required can include relevant new capital and revenue sums spent in the twelve months prior to submission of the Stage 1 bid or scheduled for expenditure prior to the final decision. Fees and officer time spent in preparing the bid can also be included (as can related schemes such as the "Safe Routes to School" referred to at 3.2).
- 5.3. The project could also provide opportunities for reducing expenditure as a result of measures to reduce the incidence of vandalism and anti-social behaviour (e.g. CCTV and enhanced security) and for generating additional income (e.g. refreshment concessions and events).

6. THE COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

- 6.1. 73% of respondents in the Community Plan Household Survey (2001) placed the provision of a safe and clean environment as the top issue. 32% ranked the provision of young people's facilities as their top priority. (Other complementary work with young people – who were not well represented in the original survey – resulted in a higher figure (54%).

- 6.2. Much of what is proposed in the project will address these points, for example, CCTV, Safe Route to School, Youth Leisure Area, Enhanced Landscape Quality.
- 6.3. The Borough's heritage is a key part of its character and attractiveness. The project will make a major contribution to safeguarding and enhancing an important part of the Borough's heritage.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. The Vision Statement and Conservation Statement that have been prepared will be key elements in the proposed HLF bid. The bid itself will bring significant benefits if it succeeds. The restoration and enhancement of the park will meet numerous aspects of the partners' current and emerging policy frameworks to improve the quality of life for local residents.
- 7.2. The project has reached the stage where approval of the Vision Statement and Conservation Statement are necessary.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: Priory Park Conservation Statement
Preservation of Reigate Priory – report to Reigate and Banstead Local Committee, 2nd October 2002
