

INFORMATION NOTE: BANCROFT GARDENS, PARKS FOR PEOPLES LOTTERY APPLICATION.

REPORT OF THE PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

This information note provides an update on the proposals to apply for external funding to regenerate Bancroft Gardens.

Background

The Councils Green Space Strategy has identified the importance of town centre parks. Over the years Bancroft Gardens has received only limited investment and the need for a comprehensive refurbishment has been acknowledged.

The Council has therefore embarked on a project to refurbish the site to increase the availability of green space and to maximise community use of this important green space.

Initial consultation took place in 2010 and a range of outline proposals were developed which provided for: increased community use of the privately run tennis courts and Bowls pavilion, provision of new informal games area, landscaping and security improvements.

The development proposals were not taken further at that stage as they were dependant on the findings of the Councils Community Halls Strategy which would identify if there was a need to provide a Hall .

At the Council's Cabinet meeting of the 24th Jan 2012, the following was resolved:

MINUTE 92. TIMESCALE OF FUTURE PLANS FOR BANCROFT HALL AND GARDENS, HITCHIN**RESOLVED:**

- (1) *That the proposed regeneration of Bancroft Gardens, as determined by the Green Space Management Strategy, be noted;*
- (2) *That the comments made at the 27 September 2011 Cabinet meeting, regarding the closure and demolition of Bancroft Hall in relation to the proposed programme to refurbish Hitchin Town Hall, be noted;*
- (3) *That the proposed timeline for closure and demolition of Bancroft Hall in relation to plans for the regeneration of Bancroft Gardens be agreed;*
- (4) *That, in order to reduce the built environment in the gardens, it be confirmed that the closure and demolition of Bancroft Hall will take place at such time as is appropriate after Hitchin Town Hall reopens following its refurbishment, currently indicated to be in early 2014, and that officers continue dialogue with existing Hall users regarding alternative options.*

This now gives certainty that the Council will not be intending to provide a new building in the Gardens and we are able to use the outline proposals listed above to apply to external funding bodies.

Next Steps

The Heritage Lottery and Big Lottery Fund operate a Parks for Peoples regeneration programme.

Their definition of a park is an existing designed urban or rural green space, the main purpose of which is for informal recreation and enjoyment. It includes parks, gardens, squares, walks and promenades.

NHDC were successful in securing a £1.8 million grant for the refurbishments of Howard Park & Gardens in Letchworth from HLF. It is intended to adopt similar approach for Bancroft Gardens. Details of the Parks for Peoples scheme are given at Appendix A. In summary there are three stages.

Pre application enquiry : Describes the park and Identifies how the project meets heritage value, local social, economic & environmental needs and partnership working with the community.

Stage 1. Application: Must show that the community values its park as part of its heritage, the park meets local social, economic and environmental needs and that park management actively involves local people.

Stage 2. Application: Detailed costs plus activity plan, 10 year management & maintenance plan, conservation management plan.

We are currently working on the pre application enquiry which is intended to be submitted later in March.

Subject to a successful outcome we will then commence work on a detailed stage 1 application and regular updates will be provided to Hitchin Area Committee and via MIS.

Steve Geach
Parks & Countryside Development Manager

6th March 2012

APPENDIX A

HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND: PARKS FOR PEOPLE

The programme aims to create new opportunities for communities to learn about and enjoy the local environment, alongside improving parks and making them safer.

A project must:

- Increase the range of audiences;
- Conserve and improve the heritage value ;
- Increase the range of volunteers involved;
- Improve skills and knowledge through learning and training; and
- Improve management and maintenance

Funding is available from £250,000 to £5 million and must have match funding of at least 5% for less than £1m or 10% for up to £5m but can include an element of gifts in kind.

Process:

- Pre application enquiry form – short, 5 pages of info. Key questions relate to identifying how project meets heritage value, local social, economic & environmental needs and partnership working with the community. An initial meeting with an HLF advisor is recommended followed by submission;
- Stage 1. application – must show that the community values its park as part of its heritage, the park meets local social, economic and environmental needs and that park management actively involves local people. The form outlines basic proposals, basic timetable, costs and risks. Can apply for a development grant at this point to work up to stage 2. This will require more survey work including why people don't use the park;
- Stage 2 application – long form, lots of detail including detailed costs plus activity plan, 10 year management & maintenance plan, conservation management plan (because within conservation area). Activity plan – covers increased learning about heritage, volunteers and training – that meet community's interests and needs.

Additional information is available at the following web address:

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowtoApply/programmes/Pages/parksforpeople.aspx>