

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	16 <sup>th</sup> January 2018
REPORT TITLE	Balnagask Motte regeneration proposals
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/17/307
INTERIM DIRECTOR	Bernadette Marjoram
REPORT AUTHOR	Bill Watson

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT:-**

To seek approval from Committee for improvements to the access arrangements and environment around this Scheduled Monument.

**2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

It is recommended that Committee:-

- (a) Approve the undertaking of procurement actions, tender acceptance actions and repair works to:
  - (i) the retaining wall (to the north side) of the Motte, and
  - (ii) the surfacing of Baxter Street (between Baxter Place and Victoria Road);
- (b) Approve the allocation of funds, for these repair works, within the Housing Revenue Account capital budget for 2018/19;
- (c) Agree to the further engagement with those community groups and activists who have expressed an interest in the heritage and amenity of this monument and its adjacent areas;
- (d) Approve the undertaking of grant applications in support of:
  - (i) the improvement of amenity of this monument and its adjacent areas, and
  - (ii) the telling of the story of the monument;
- (e) Approve confirmation of the delegated authority of the Head of Land and Property Assets (or equivalent) to accept offers of grant funds designed to:
  - (i) the improve the amenity of this monument and its adjacent areas, and
  - (ii) the telling of the story of the monument.

### 3. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES / OTHER HEADINGS AS APPROPRIATE

- 3.1 The regeneration of Torry was identified as a priority within the Council's Strategic Infrastructure Plan. This project is intended to be part of the Council's on-going investment in the community and physical assets within this neighbourhood.
- 3.2 Balnagask Motte and its condition have been topics of discussion for Torry community members for a number of years. The retaining wall, between the monument and Baxter Street, is in poor structural condition. It is currently being prevented from collapse by the support of large concrete blocks. These concrete blocks and their associated temporary fencing, litter and weeds have been the subject to regular complaints by members of the public.
- 3.3 Recently, a small group of interested community members have come together to provide input and insight to how they see the development of the Motte in the future. The community would like to see this as a thoroughfare for locals to get to Victoria Road as opposed to using the supported accommodation 'route' next to the site.
- 3.4 The group see this as an opportunity for other community groups including schools, to build bird boxes and bug hotels for the motte to encourage wildlife to the area, Girl Guides Torry have already expressed an interest in supporting this. In addition, they hope to work alongside groups and churches, for support with litter picks to ensure the space remains litter free and safe for users.
- 3.5 There is a rich history attached to the motte, mainly fuelled by legend. The Memories and Heritage Society in Torry have committed to find out more about this. There is the possibility to insert boards to share this information with locals and possible tourists. Looking to the future there is potential for this to be seen as one of several 'heritage points' for the Torry area.
- 3.6 Should the proposal for the repair of the wall be successful, the community group have also advised they would be willing to help design and carry out a consultation for those living in the area surrounding the motte so that we can ensure any development is well received by those that may be affected.
- "Balnagask Motte .....is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM10403)..... Mottes are artificial mounds which were once topped with timber castles. ....Normanised Celtic family, with the territorial designation of de Nug, held the lands here in the twelfth century "* (Cameron Archaeology 29<sup>th</sup> March 2016)
- 3.7 Both the Motte and Baxter Street came into the possession of the Council via the *"Lands of Torry"*. The Motte is now the responsibility of the General Account, while this (non-adopted) portion of Baxter Street is the responsibility

of the Housing Revenue Account. The defective retaining wall is the wall between the Motte and this (non-adopted) portion of Baxter Street.

- 3.8 It is understood that the repair of this retaining wall will not be a priority for the General Account for the foreseeable future.
- 3.9 It is understood that the undertaking of activities that will assist community regeneration in areas of multiple deprivation is a priority for the Housing Revenue Account. This location is within data zone S01006631, which is within the 3<sup>rd</sup> most deprived decile (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016).
- 3.10 The repair of this retaining wall has received Scheduled Monument Consent.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The total cost of the works has been estimated to be £210,000, plus administration costs.
- 4.2 It is proposed that £150,000 (plus administration costs) be allocated from the Housing Revenue Account: so as to meet the cost of repairing the retaining wall and the surfacing of the (non-adopted) portion of Baxter Street. This budget also includes allowances for employing an archaeologist to monitor the proposed excavations and the relocation of a British Telecom pole, which is mounted immediately to the rear of this defective wall.
- 4.3 It is proposed that the capital cost of improving the access arrangements and amenity of the monument is met by a grant from Suez's Landfill Tax Fund. The full scope of this work will be established in consultation with the community and Historic Environment Scotland. The target capital cost for this work is to be within Suez's limit of £50,000. It is intended that these works will be robustly designed so as reduce their future maintenance requirements.
- 4.4 It is proposed that the costs associated with public engagement and interpretation of the site will be met by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Sharing Heritage programme. This fund can meet such cost up to a limit of £10,000.
- 4.5 It is recognised that these improvements will require periodic repair if they are to remain in good condition. It is understood that such costs will be considered under the usual budgetary prioritisation considerations. It is further understood that these considerations will, in part, be influenced by how active the community has proven to be in making use of the monument and undertaking litter picks, heritage and wildlife promotion activities etc.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

- 5.2 If the recommendations are not approved the temporary support works should be brought-up to and maintained in a good condition so as to reduce the potential for an accident and a consequent claim against the Council.
- 5.3 If the temporary works were removed this could give rise to failure by the Council (as landowner) to fulfil its statutory duty to protect the monument.

## **6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

### **6.1 Financial**

There are no significant or unusual financial risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

### **6.2 Employee**

There are no significant or unusual employee risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

### **6.3 Customer / Citizen**

There are no significant or unusual customer/citizen risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

### **6.4 Environmental**

There are no significant or unusual environmental risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

### **6.5 Technological**

There are no technological risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

### **6.6 Legal**

There are no significant or unusual legal risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

### **6.7 Reputational**

There are no significant or unusual legal risks arising from the recommendations of this report. There is, however, a growing reputational risk of not proceeding.

## **7. IMPACT SECTION**

### **7.1 Economy**

The recommendations of this report will have a positive economic impact.

### **7.2 People**

The community will be encouraged to develop during the course of this project and become empowered to make increasing use of their environment and take increasing control.

It is envisaged that the works, and the Council's Communities & Partnership Team will help establish a community based group that will facilitate:

- making decisions as to the detail of what is to be implemented; and
- self-police the use, misuse and maintenance condition of the monument; and
- lead on future developments

An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been undertaken. It has been assessed that this project will have a positive impact

### **7.3 Place**

This project will assist the enhancement of local identity, which will, in turn, support the regeneration of Torry.

### **7.4 Technology**

The recommendations of this report will have no technological impact.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Not applicable

## **9. APPENDICES**

Not applicable

## **10. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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