



EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Environment & Operations
LEAD OFFICERS:	Strategic Director of Environment & Operations
DATE:	13 March 2024

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:	Environment
WARD/S AFFECTED:	Shear Brow and Corporation Park;

SUBJECT: Historic England Grant for Conservatory at Corporation Park

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Conservatory in Corporation Park was officially opened to the public on 16 May 1900. The Conservatory is a glazed structure comprising of a central double height atrium with two lower wings to the east and west, it is acknowledged as a good example of Victorian Conservatory style.

In recent years, the structure of the Conservatory has deteriorated to the point where it was closed to the public in 2016. In 2019, the roof of the west wing collapsed, the east wing structure is currently intact however it is suffering from corrosion and timber supports have been installed to prop the cantilever canopy of the east wing. More recently the glass panes have been removed from the roof of the east wing to avoid structural damage to the roof in the event of heavy snowfall. The Conservatory has had to be fenced off to prevent public access on grounds of health and safety.

The Council has previously submitted bids to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2012 and 2014 to restore the Conservatory, both of these bids were unsuccessful. In November 2023, Historic England launched a new funding programme 'Repairs to Heritage at Risk'. The Council submitted a bid to Historic England in January 2024 and requested a grant of £68,400 towards project development work on the Conservatory. The project development work will identify the most appropriate methods to restore the Conservatory and the capital cost of restoration. The project will also identify ways in which the Conservatory can operate in a sustainable way, in line with the Council's commitment to minimise its carbon footprint, which will also reduce the operating cost of heating and lighting the building. As part of the project, the Council with support from the Corporation Park Supporters Group, will also undertake a comprehensive community and stakeholder consultation and engagement to identify the most appropriate uses for the Conservatory once it is restored.

In February 2024, Historic England confirmed that the Council's application for a Repair grant for Heritage at Risk was successful and a grant of £68,400 has been awarded towards estimated project development costs of £136,800. The project works have to commence by 30 May 2024 and be completed by 31 December 2024.

Once the project development work has been completed, it would enable the Council to then submit a capital funding bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore the Conservatory.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Member:

- Agrees a supplementary revenue budget of £136,800 to undertake the work as outlined in the report.
- Approves that the Council accepts a repair grant for heritage at risk of £68,400 from Historic England.
- Notes that the balance of funding (£68,400) required will be drawn from the Council's Budget Support Reserve.
- Delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Environment and Operations in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment & Operations to procure the works identified within the Heritage at Risk grant application, and detailed in this report, in accordance with the Council's contract procurement rules

3. BACKGROUND

Blackburn Corporation commissioned the Conservatory in Corporation Park to be built in 1898, it was officially opened to the public on 16 May 1900. The Conservatory is acknowledged in its Grade II listing as a good example of Victorian Conservatory style, it is the centrepiece to the town's Grade II* listed town-centre park (Corporation Park), which sits within the wider Corporation Park designated Conservation Area.

The Conservatory is located in a prominent position on elevated ground, it is a highly visible structure and a fundamental element of the park's built and cultural heritage. The Conservatory is a glazed structure comprising of a central double height atrium with two lower wings to the east and west. The highly decorated cast iron frame contains areas of wrought iron ornamental infill and sits on a stone and brick plinth.

The Council has previously submitted bids to the National Heritage Lottery in 2012 and 2014 to restore the Conservatory, both of these bids were unsuccessful for various reasons. In recent years, the structure of the Conservatory has deteriorated to the point where it was closed to the public in 2016. The roof of the west wing of the Conservatory collapsed in 2019 and corrosion of the structural elements and fixings of the west wing structure are clearly visible. The east wing structure is currently intact however this is also suffering from corrosion. Timber supports have been installed to prop the cantilever canopy of the east wing and more recently the glass panes have been removed from the roof of the east wing to avoid structural damage to the roof in the event of heavy snowfall. The Conservatory has had to be fenced off to prevent public access on grounds of health and safety.

In October 2023, Historic England contacted the Council because they were looking for potential projects for Historic England investment. A new funding programme was to be launched in November 2023 to support Councils with jointly funded work to promote energy efficiency and help to understand how to move assets towards net zero targets.

A site meeting was arranged in November 2023 to view the Conservatory which was attended by officers of the Council and Historic England and members of the Corporation Park Supporters Group. Following the site meeting, it was agreed that the Council and the Corporation Park Supporters Group would work together to submit a bid to the Historic England 'Repair grants for Heritage at Risk'.

The 'Repair grants for Heritage at Risk' would not provide sufficient funding to restore the Conservatory but it would fund the work necessary to enable the Council to then submit a robust bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the restoration of the Conservatory.

A bid was submitted to Historic England on 5 January 2024, the bid requested a grant to fund 50% of the costs to complete the following elements of work on the Conservatory:

- Undertake a Building Condition survey including architectural, structural, mechanical and electrical services.
- Produce an assessment of historical significance and heritage impact.
- Conduct Drainage Surveys and Asbestos Surveys.
- Conduct an environmental appraisal and provide input into the options for future use and provide landscaping advice on the area surrounding the Conservatory.
- Undertake a design options appraisal including architectural, structural, Mechanical and Electrical options appraisal including thermal modelling, energy assessment and net zero strategy.
- Produce a management and maintenance plan and associated budget requirements.
- Produce a security plan, including CCTV and lighting survey and report to improve both physical and passive security around the building and the wider site.
- Undertake community and stakeholder consultation and engagement.

These project development works will identify the most appropriate methods to restore the Conservatory and the capital cost of restoration. The project will also identify ways in which the Conservatory can operate in a sustainable way, in line with the Councils commitment to minimise its carbon footprint, which will also reduce the operating cost of heating and lighting the building. As part of the project, the Council with support from the Corporation Park Supporters Group, will also undertake a comprehensive community and stakeholder consultation and engagement to identify the most appropriate uses for the Conservatory once it is restored.

On 20 February 2024, Historic England confirmed that the application for a Repair grant for Heritage at Risk had been successful and a grant of £68,400 towards estimated project development costs of £136,800 had been awarded by Historic England to fund the aforementioned works. The work must commence by 30 May 2024 and must be completed by 31 December 2024.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

The structure of the grade II listed conservatory in Corporation Park is deteriorating and it is only a matter of time before the structure will deteriorate to the point where it needs to be dismantled and placed in storage, at significant cost to the Council.

The Council has previously submitted bids to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2012 and 2014 but both bids were unsuccessful. A further bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund could be submitted, the bid will need to be robust, and evidence based.

Historic England have allocated £68,400 towards project costs of £136,800 to undertake the project development works necessary to enable the Council to then submit a capital funding bid to The National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore the Conservatory.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The restoration of the Conservatory in Corporation Park aligns with the Council's Corporate Plan and one of our core missions to build happier, healthier, safer communities. A restored Conservatory will also operate sustainably which supports the Council's mission to deliver our climate emergency action plan.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Historic England have allocated £68,400 towards project costs of £136,800 to undertake the project development works on the Conservatory at Corporation Park. The Council will have to provide 50% match funding (£68,400), this will be funded from the Council's Budget Support Reserve.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The works will be procured in accordance with Council's Contract Procurement Procedure Rules and approved by legal officers in the contracts and procurement team.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Officer time in preparing the brief and procuring the works required under the conditions of the grant and managing the contractors employed to undertake the work, to ensure it is completed to the required standard.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded and published if applicable.

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CONTACT OFFICER:	Martin Eden
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DATE:	1 March 2024
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	
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