

## **'Transforming Berwick Barracks' Project: Update, April 2018**

Dear Colleagues,

I am conscious that it is some time since I last wrote to update you on the progress of this project and for that I apologise. My silence does not indicate that nothing has been happening but rather that so much has been changing in the landscape surrounding the project that it has been difficult to determine when would be the optimum moment to write.

You will recall that by the summer of last year we had, owing to the generosity of many, managed to secure pledges of the £100,000 which we needed in order to undertake the preparation of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the substantial capital funding which will be required if the overall vision for the project is to be realised. In the late summer/autumn of 2017 we made the first use of that by commissioning some Market Research which looked at the overall tourism market in Berwick and, within that, at the visitor market for the Barracks. The research concluded, in brief, that there was considerable scope to increase the visitor market for both Berwick and the Barracks by improved marketing and branding as well as the development of the Barracks as a destination tourist attraction in the town. The results of the research were a key piece of input to the Berwick Visitor Conference held in December last year and have since been used to support a number of other initiatives to improve Berwick's overall tourism offer.

Later in the year we commissioned Campbell & Co. to undertake an initial Interpretive Design Strategy for the core museum component in the proposed Borders 'Heritage Hub'. This work included a workshop with a number of local bodies and individuals which informed the approach taken by the consultants to their task. The final draft report of the consultants has just been received.

We expected to spend the first part of 2018 using the market research and interpretive design work in the preparation of a Round 1 capital funding application to HLF. However, a number of developments have caused the project team to conclude, following informal contact with HLF officers, that it would not be sensible to submit a Round 1 application to HLF this year. The key reasons for this are:

- The HLF grant-making budget has halved over the past 2 years as a result of the fact that the proceeds of the Lottery are much reduced.
- Our conversations with HLF officers made clear that HLF would expect to see further work done on the long-term sustainability of the Barracks site as a whole before they would be willing to consider committing substantial funding to our project.
- The recent success of the Union Chain Bridge (UCB) project in securing a Round 1 'pass' from HLF means that the chances of the Berwick area securing another such pass during 2018 are, given HLF's present straitened circumstances, nil.

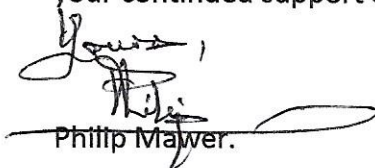
While we are delighted at the UCB project's success, this has been conclusive in our decision not to proceed with a Round 1 application during 2018.

These developments do not, however, mean that work on the project will not proceed in 2018. It will simply go forward in another form. Specifically we are proceeding with a multi-faceted approach which includes:

- The submission on behalf of all the Partners of a capital funding bid to Round 5 of the Government's **Coastal Community Fund (CCF)** programme in order to establish a destination catering outlet at the Barracks. An improved catering offer was most frequently identified by respondents during the market research undertaken last year as the single change which would most improve the visitor experience at the Barracks. With the support of Berwick's Coastal Community Team, of the Town Council and of the Berwick Regeneration Commission, I submitted our initial Expression of Interest in bidding under Round 5 yesterday. The indications are that we should hear whether or not we have been invited to submit a full application around the end of June/early in July.
- The submission to HLF by English Heritage Trust (with the support of all the project Partners) of an application for a **Resilient Heritage** grant, which will enable us to do the work required to satisfy HLF, other funders and all the Partners about the prospects for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Barracks.
- The submission by the Maltings (Berwick) Trust Ltd. to the Arts Council of a bid for funding to transform the **Gymnasium Gallery** on the site. This will enable Berwick Visual Arts (BVA) to extend the exhibition programme in the gallery from 6 months to all year-round; address basic services (heat and light) and meet the expectations of today's gallery visitors; improve BVA's technical ability to meet the exacting environmental standards specified in loan agreements of high value works; and significantly enhance environmental sustainability and financial resilience.
- An enhanced programme of **visitor activities** at the site.

In addition to all the activity associated with these various initiatives, the project Partners are supporting a bid which has been submitted by Berwick's Coastal Community Team to the CCF for revenue funding for various measures to help improve Berwick's overall performance as a tourist destination.

It will be clear from this that we are continuing to press on with the project. Thank you for your continued support of it. We will keep in touch about our progress.

  
Philip Majewer.

30 April 2018