

Stourbridge Area Committee 3rd September 2008

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Mary Stevens Park and Gates

Purpose of Report

- 1 To inform the Committee of the outcome of the findings of the recent independent condition survey of the fencing and gates at Mary Stevens Park;
- 2 To advise the Committee of the findings from the independent appraisal of funding opportunities for projects on Mary Stevens Park; and
- 3 To support the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture in making an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to be submitted in early 2009

Background

Ironwork

- 4 The perimeter fencing, three gates and the Grade II Listed main entrance gates to the park, all built circa 1930, were the subject of a condition survey in January 1999, which estimated that the cost of restoring these features would be in the region of £142,000. (excluding fees and permissions)
- 5 A report was submitted to Stourbridge Area Committee on 29th March 2001 requesting that the Trustees of the Ernest Stevens Trust consider funding the restoration work. In the same year an application was also made for the works to be included in the Council's 5 year Capital Programme.
- 6 Since that date, maintenance of the gates has been limited to a few minor repairs and periodic inspection of the condition and structural integrity.
- 7 The gates are monitored in relation to their condition on a regular basis and additional inspection and advice has also been provided by the Council's Historic Environment Team and by English Heritage.

- 8 In April 2008 English Heritage inspected the gates and commented that they were showing “obvious signs of deterioration – principally corrosion and the delaminating of the floral decoration and the after-effects of a vehicle collision. Following discussion with English Heritage it was agreed that a detailed up-to-date condition survey was required and accordingly the Council appointed independent metal conservators to carry out a survey of the following fences, gates and stone piers:
- Grade II listed main entrance gateway and flanking railings
 - Heath Lane/ Love Lane side entrance
 - Love Lane side entrance
 - Stanley Road side entrance

This was a visual survey undertaken without dismantling of the gates’ component parts.

- 9 The survey was carried out in June of this year and established a detailed schedule of defects and identified a comprehensive conservation plan. The proposed conservation works would deploy traditional blacksmithing techniques, use authentic material and involve making a detailed record of the work. It would involve substantial dismantling of ironworks, some off-site repairs and treatment prior to painting. Sampling of the old paints would be required in order to identify the original colour and gilding scheme and help inform the new painting system.
- 10 The conservator’s report recommends that the best way to deal with the scale of repair and renewal work described would be to dismantle the ornamental ironwork from the main iron framing for treatment in a workshop environment, where they could be stripped, overhauled, reassembled and painted. The main framings are generally in good order and could be treated in situ to avoid disturbance to the stonework.
- 11 Prior to the commencement of any works on the gates it is proposed that the Council engages with local Colleges to identify any training or learning opportunities with due regard to the Listed nature of the gates and the scale of the works to be undertaken.
- 12 The report also sets out the following estimated budget price (ex VAT) for the restoration and renovation works:

	<u>£</u>
Ironwork	174,400
Stonework	35,000
Lights	8,000 (provisional & excludes electrical work)
Gilding to ironwork	10 -20,000
<u>Sub total circa</u>	<u>240,000</u>

- 13 **It must be emphasised that these costs are indicative and for budget planning purposes only as they have not been put through a competitive procurement process.** Furthermore these costs do not include any statutory fees for planning consent, English Heritage approvals, professional design costs or the costs associated with the closure of vehicular/pedestrian access and creating safe areas of work in the proximity to highway.

The estimate including such would be as follows:

	<u>£</u>
Works:	240,000
Other costs(see para13)	36,000
CDM/Traffic issues	20,000

Total 296,000

- 14 It is recognised that much of the public concern regarding the condition of the ironwork at Mary Stevens Park has focussed on the Main Grade II listed gates.
- 15 It is estimated that the main entrance gates constitute around 65% of the overall costs identified and the lighting and gilding work is largely exclusive to the main gates. Therefore utilising the projected costs above as a guide it is estimated that the cost to refurbish the Main Gates and pillars alone would be in the region of £205,000.

Funding opportunities

- 16 As part of the Liveability project the Council and the Friends developed a long term master plan for the park which was endorsed through public consultation exercise held on 21st July 2004. As part of this process the Friends identified the priority items for improvement as follows:
1. Extension to the play area
 2. Repair to paving around the park
 3. Installation of a teen shelter
 4. Replacement of the fencing along the Norton road
 5. Provision of new entrance gates off Stanley Road
 6. Provision of a café and refurbishment of toilets
 7. Dredging lake and restoration of the island
 8. Refurbishment to the Bandstand
 9. Ornamental planting

- 17 In order to assess the likelihood of financial support from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), for the continuation of these improvement works and the restoration of the ironworks, a scoping study was commissioned in July 08 to determine the strengths and weaknesses of a potential future bid. The study employed the evaluation criteria for HLF's current Parks for People programme to assess what work would need to be done to submit a bid.
- 18 The study identified that whilst the park would be eligible to make a bid to the programme, there were substantial weaknesses in the information available, at the time of assessment to support such a submission and for example the following documentation would need to be developed before a submission could be made:
- Conservation Management Plan
 - Itemised schedule of proposed capital works
 - Itemised schedule of revenue costs
 - Audience Development Plan
 - Training plans
 - Business plans for commercial facilities (such as cafes)
 - Outline 10 year management plan
 - Project development plan
- 19 In addition the Council would need to identify a minimum of 25% match funding, towards the total cost of the project with a proportion of this being in cash as opposed to "in kind". There is a sum of £49,485 remaining from the Liveability funding for MSP which has been identified as match funding for a future bid and officers will be seeking to identify other sources to support a bid in the coming months but in the first instance there is a need to establish the precise nature of the application and its costs.
- 20 The closing date for the current and final round of the jointly funded HLF and Big Lottery "Parks For People Programme" is September 2008. In view of the points above and based upon experience that it takes 6 to 9 months to compile a robust bid the Council was advised that there was insufficient time to make a bid for Mary Stevens Park for the September 2008 deadline. Informal discussions with HLF about the possibility of submitting a bid to the Programme for the Main Entrance Gates alone was not received positively and would still require the information detailed above.
- 21 Heritage Lottery Fund have announced that they are to continue with the "Parks for People Programme" after the end of the current scheme, but with a reduced amount of funding available – in total £20 million per annum. Full details of the application process and timetable will be announced later in 2008 and may be available for disclosure at the Area Committee meeting.

The Way Forward

22. In broad terms there are two options available:-
- A) To prepare a funding package of sources readily available and instigate repairs to the main gates and pillars; or
 - B) To prepare a Heritage Lottery Application for submission in 2009 to undertake works at Mary Stevens Park to implement the Friends Group's master plan to include the refurbishment of all ironwork at the Park.
- 23 In order to implement Option (A) the Area Committee and the Ernest Stevens Trust would be requested to ring fence a significant amount of their available funding for the next 2 financial years (2009 10 and 2010 – 11) along with the Council utilising funding from Section 106 sources that could legitimately be allocated to this project. By pursuing this Option it has to be acknowledged that the Area Committee's and the Trust's resources will be depleted for the next 2 years thus significantly reducing the funding available to the other groups and causes normally supported by these funds. Furthermore this option would also minimise the potential to use this limited partnership funding available to best effect as match for external funding purposes and would significantly hinder the Friends Group's aspirations to implement their master plan for the site.
- 24 Consequently it is proposed that option (B) is adopted and with the agreement of the Area Committee and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture plans be put in place to commission consultants to carry out the work necessary to make a bid to the HLF in 2009 and that a project team (including Representatives of the Friends) would be convened. It has also been agreed that a proportion of the Section 106 money currently allocated to MSP will be made available as additional match funding with further funding to be sought from the Ernest Stevens Trust, Landfill Tax and other relevant sources.

Finance

- 25 The cost of the studies detailed in the report, are funded by revenue budgets held by the Culture & Leisure Division of DUE and Law & Property.

Law

- 26 Mary Stevens Park is held on trust by the Council under the terms and conditions of a deed of gift dated the 6th December 1929 when the land was donated by Ernest Stevens.

Equality Impact

- 27 The proposals contained in this report are in full accordance with the Council's Equal Opportunities policies and should in no way have any impact on different racial groups, disabled people, both genders and/or other relevant groups.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Stourbridge Area Committee

- 28 Note the contents of this report.
- 29 Support a Heritage Lottery Application for submission in 2009 to undertake works at Mary Stevens Park to implement the Friends Group's master plan to include the refurbishment of all ironwork at the Park and recommend the Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture to arrange for this submission.
- 30 That Stourbridge Area Committee consider allocating Stevens Trust fund funding towards the project when more detailed costings are known.

Background Papers

1. Condition Survey by Dorothea Limited
2. Scoping Study by Heritage Initiatives



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