

Pump Room Gardens Restoration Project - Briefing Paper

Finance and Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees, 8th January 2019

1.0 Background and Summary

- 1.1 The restoration of the Pump Room Gardens is a £1.4m Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) project funded through nearly £1m from HLF and further contributions from WDC and the Friends of the Pump Room Gardens (FoPRG). The capital works are being carried out by two contractors: idverde, for the main landscaping and works (contract value: £755K) and Lost Art Limited, for the bandstand restoration (contract value: £254K). A separate Activity Plan complements this work.
- 1.2 The project has had a number of quality issues, mostly dating from the early stages of the project. These have been raised at the highest level with idverde and they have committed to rectifying these issues at no additional cost to the project, whilst demonstrating their commitment to the project. The appointment of a Clerk of Works by WDC to oversee the works has helped to bring the programme back on track.
- 1.3 Governance structure – The two contractors report directly to the Contract Administrator (Ashmead Price) alongside a Project Manager (Red Kite Network), both of whom are HLF-funded posts. The CoW was appointed by WDC to focus upon the quality side of the works and liaises with all sides and signs-off the work as being of sufficient quality. The Green Spaces Project Team Leader, leads from the client side and also oversees the Activity Plan and the Community Engagement Officer, a WDC post, part-funded by HLF.

2.0 Programme

2.1 Main contract

- 2.1.1 The main contractor, idverde, was procured via a full OJEU-compliant process and was judged to be the most economically advantageous tender. They demonstrated that they had the requisite experience for a job of this nature and had provided examples of similar jobs they had completed elsewhere. Idverde are also WDC's grounds maintenance contractor, though this project is being run through the Northern Region section which is a separate arm of the same company.
- 2.1.2 The current position is that the main works are approximately three weeks behind the original programme end date of January 2019. Some of these delays have been due to the need to co-ordinate works with the County Council over the approach to the central path (which is adopted), and the negotiations with Western Power Distribution (WPD) over problems with

the electrical supply. The remediation works have not added any significant time delay to the project.

2.1.3 By the time of this meeting, the tarmac surfacing of all of the paths will have been completed. A decision needs to be made upon when to apply the final resin finish for the paths as this is temperature dependent and so may be delayed.

2.1.4 Planting is being done over the winter period and most of the beds are prepared and ready. The main work for January will be installing and painting the fencing and putting in the swale once the site compound has been taken down and moved.

2.1.5 York Bridge - Works to the bridge were omitted from the main contract as the works required were substantially more than originally expected and will now be carried out by the County Council. They have confirmed that work will begin in April 2019 for an 8-week period. The project will pay for the surfacing and painting of the bridge not for the structural element but close scrutiny of the methodology and works will be required to ensure no damage is done to the completed works.

2.2 Bandstand

2.2.1 The bandstand is due to be reassembled on site from early January with a completion date of early February. The most significant delays were due to: the need to completely replace the decking which was only apparent when the works were underway; to agree the colour scheme for the bandstand, which took much longer than expected and followed lengthy discussions between Conservation, HLF and the FoPRG; and, agreeing with WPD the means of accessing the electricity supply. Access to an electricity supply will be retained for use by event organisers as previously.

3.0 Budget position

3.1 The forecasted final accounts for both contracts are within budget. Whilst there have been some variations to both contracts, there have also been some omissions, and there is no forecasted overall increase in costs. The cost of the Clerk of Works is incorporated within the eligible costs of the project and this has been agreed with HLF. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

4.0 Quality of works

4.1 Concerns about the quality of work came to light in the first phase of the project, and appeared to be a combination of poor sub-contractors and on the ground site supervision. To move things along and in the absence of in-house capacity, WDC appointed in September a Clerk of Works (CoW)

through the Built Environment Consultancy Services Framework on a one-day a week basis (over two half-days). Idverde has also engaged a different set of workers and ensured that an experienced Site Supervisor is permanently on site. This has worked well both in terms of picking-up on the quality issues whilst also supporting the Contract Administrator and liaising with the FoPRG advisor. A project of this nature was not considered to require a CoW from the outset but it soon became apparent that additional technical expertise was needed.

- 4.2 At the most recent meeting with the FoPRG, it was agreed that the CoW will use his report to highlight the areas that require remedial work that incorporates all parties and highlights ownership of the various risks and actions to be taken. This avoids the need for various different reports and can be used to control outstanding works / snagging issues. The intention is to extend the role until the end of the project. An updated version of the CoW spreadsheet, highlighting the status of the various issues will be issued prior to the meeting so it is the most current version. An update on the warranties relating to the project will also be provided at the meeting.
- 4.3 It should be made clear that the project is not a civil engineering project and the paths are not being built to a highways specification (aside from the central WCC path which receives a higher volume of vehicles). Such an approach would have significantly increased costs and HLF has made it quite clear that the project would not have been approved on this basis.
- 4.4 In terms of ongoing risks, an updated Management and Maintenance Plan for the site will incorporate the as-built plans but also highlight where control is needed to ensure that damage is not done to the completed works. This will particularly relate to events and maintenance vehicles and it will be made clear what mitigation measures are needed, such as protective matting. Bollards at the main entrances will restrict general access and site management will cover the on-site issues.

5.0 Reputational Risks – both locally and with the main funder (HLF)

- 5.1 HLF has been kept apprised of the project position and the project's HLF mentor, Ellen Bramhill, visited the project twice in November and December. HLF has received correspondence directly from the Friends group but is comfortable that the problems identified are being addressed they are supportive of the approach taken. A further formal visit is planned for when the physical works have been completed.
- 5.2 The FoPRG have raised a number of concerns and consequently two formal meetings have been held (29th October and 3rd December) between senior officers of WDC, a ward councillor, the Clerk of Works, and representatives from the FoPRG. The latter meeting included senior

representatives of idverde at which they gave reassurances over performance. This gives the opportunity for issues to be formally raised and addressed and have generally been very positive. A further meeting is to be held in early January.

- 5.3 There are now weekly onsite meetings between Warwick District Council Clerk of Works and the FoPRG advisor. These meetings give the opportunity to assess any quality issues and how these are to be rectified.

6.0 Lessons Learned

- 6.1 The bureaucratic and lengthy nature of funding projects of this nature and the amount of external interest in the project has made it clear that it requires a dedicated WDC project management resource to drive the project from the outset, not least for continuity but also to build relationships both external and internal and provide a more corporate approach to day-to-day issues. Invariably more time is required than consultants can provide, though it may be that additional resources are brought in to manage the HLF processes for example.
- 6.2 We would review the whole approach to project governance and communications, especially in relation to partnership working and stakeholder engagement which has proved to be problematic from the outset for a number of reasons. A more robust agreement needs to be in place that sets out responsibilities, liabilities and lines of accountability.
- 6.3 Agree communication channels before a start on site and require a more visible presence from the contractors in dealings with the public and stakeholders. This proved to be difficult from the start due to the on-set of the events season which required flexibility in terms of programming and to mitigate the impact of the works on events as far as possible.

7.0 Specific Issues - Bandstand undercroft

- 7.1 There was an original intention to use the undercroft for events storage etc and the relocation of the electrical cabinets. However, the height of the proposed access door and practicalities of access were questioned by Lost Art from the outset, as was the potential for dampness and condensation. Western Power also expressed concerns over health and safety issues over use of any electrics put inside the undercroft
- 7.2 Lost Art explored the practical detail of constructing the steel security hatch and making it watertight against the proposed doorway. The hatch was to come part way down the door and lifting the hatch would be restricted by the adjacent structures. The door opening would still be very restricted by the nature of the steep steps and low opening. Hence, it was recommended that an alternative access through the bandstand floor would be preferable. There was always a concern about water ingress into

the bandstand undercroft at times of flooding. When it was discovered that the bandstand decking / floor was beyond repair and would need to be re-cast using the engineer's recommended detail, it was agreed to incorporate an access hatch into the new floor which would satisfy the future need for inspections.

- 7.3 Once the floor was stripped off it was found that the brickwork courses and the main joists needed repair/ replacement which have now all been done to an engineer's specification. Discussion included an approach to block the old access door but to backfill the steps leaving them in situ in line with good conservation practice. A contrasting engineering brick colour was also used as infill of the doorway, again to identify the original and replacement work.
- 7.4 In hindsight this should have been picked-up earlier with the Conservation Officer and, indeed the FoPRG, and this is an omission that is regrettable but a Listed Building Consent application has now been submitted. To have delayed the project at this stage would have taken 8-10 weeks, delaying works, leaving the undercroft exposed and causing subsequent contractual issues. A subsequent meeting was held on site with FoPRG, WDC and Lost Art to go through the reasoning and this appeared to have been satisfactory.

8.0 **Activity Plan (AP)**

- 8.1 This is a key part of any HLF project and is designed to attract target audiences (especially those who don't normally use the PRG) using a mix of outreach and different activities. This is designed to run before and after the main capital works but is viewed as equally important in ensuring the sustainability and success of the entire project
- 8.2 Whilst it is due to end in 2020, we have been working closely with our HLF mentor to continue to develop the programme with a view to extending it beyond this period to allow for sufficient time post-completion to build up a range of activities. An example of this is Eco Fest 2019 which is being led through the HLF project.
- 8.3 The FoPRG, whilst involved from the outset, made it clear that they did not want to get involved in the delivery of the AP, though they are represented on the Delivery Group, which is the main mechanism for overseeing the AP.

9.0 **Invite to visit the Pump Room Gardens restoration project**

Given that level of interest in the project, Members are invited to visit the site to see the restoration works themselves. We will ensure that both contractors are available to answer any questions with regards to the restoration.