

**Meeting: Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee****Date: 24 October 2017****Title: St. Mary's Lighthouse Heritage Lottery Fund bid update**

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**1 Purpose of Report**

To present Culture and Leisure Sub-Committee with an update on the progress of the submission to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the development of St. Mary's Lighthouse and Visitor Centre.

**2 Recommendations**

The committee is invited to note the update.

**3 Details**

The Bid Team and consultants met with HLF representatives on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2017 as part of the formal Round 2 assessment.

Key actions required arising from this discussion were:

**New Interpretation** - Commitment from the Council to install new interpretation on the headland to alert visitors to the status of site as a Nature Reserve.

**Intertidal Habitat Survey** – The Council must employ someone to undertake a survey of the new intertidal habitat areas 6 months after installation. Natural England have explicitly asked for this. This will be funded from contingency in the bid.

**Wardens** – HLF were keen to see a commitment from the Council to deploy wardens to monitor use of St Mary's Island following completion of capital works to ensure increased footfall does not lead to a detrimental impact on the Local Nature Reserve.

**Response to Statutory Consultees**

Fairhurst, ecology consultants EcoNorth, and Council Officers met with Natural England, the Council's Biodiversity Officer and the RSPB on 13th October 2017 to discuss queries raised through consultation and the additional level of detail required.

Further to the meeting Natural England consulted with their marine mammal expert and provided advice regarding potential impacts to seals during the 'noisy' periods of construction. The main concerns were relating to the noisy activity such as steam cleaning work that would

be taking place on the island during the seal moulting period. The work programme for these works has been amended to time the works outside of the peak period for seals.

Natural England confirmed that the work schedule proposed for the causeway, which would start on the land side and progress across to the island, seemed reasonable. They are satisfied that this mitigation is suitable to reduce disturbance during this time of construction.

A full response to all queries was provided and is supported by additional environmental information, included in an updated Environmental Statement (ES) and supporting Habitats Regulations Assessment.

### **Other Consultees**

In addition, the RSPB, St Mary's Seal Watch and numerous members of the public have formally objected to the proposals. Northumberland Wildlife Trust and the Green Party have requested further information. Friends of the Earth have raised points of consideration relating to the applications.

Responses in relation to material planning considerations have been made and are included in the revised proposals to be circulated via a planning re-consultation.

### **Causeway**

A revised design has been drawn up for the causeway, which involves breaking out the middle 30m of the causeway, enabling the new slab to be laid at the existing causeway level for the central 5m with a slope to the proposed causeway levels at either end. This means the time when the central section is submerged will remain the same as at present. The updated Environmental Statement reflects the new details, accompanied by revised drawings showing the proposed elevations and cross sections.

### **Viewing Platforms**

Access to the viewing platforms will be free to encourage people to use the site in a controlled fashion. It is therefore expected that this will reduce the likelihood that visitors will walk unsupervised round the Island, due to their greater awareness regarding the appropriate use of the Nature Reserve, thus helping to minimise disturbance to wildlife.

The Council has developed a Viewing Deck Management Plan in consultation with Natural England and the Council's Biodiversity Officer. It sets out a management protocol for allowing visitors to access the viewing decks, monitoring of wildlife, and subsequent measures to be undertaken should any wildlife disturbance arise.

### **Planning Re-consultation**

Planning will conduct a re-consultation to share the details of how the Applicant has addressed the numerous issues raised to date.

### **Key Dates**

Planning Decision – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017  
HLF Trustees Meeting – 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017