

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

meeting date: 15 OCTOBER 2024
title: CLITHEROE CASTLE GROUNDS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To seek committee approval for the outlined approach to the Council's investment in the Castle Grounds and to submit an expression of interest to the Heritage Lottery in the hope of attracting further major investment.

1.3 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Making the Ribble Valley a place we want to be by creating a safer, stronger, greener and cleaner borough.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Clitheroe Castle dates from the 1180's and is considered the jewel in the crown of the Ribble Valley. A number of projects are ongoing in relation to the Clitheroe Castle Keep and the Grounds. These include ongoing restoration works to the Castle Keep, a £500k Jubilee fund allocation, a review of the museum along with smaller capital projects that have either been completed or are planned for future years.

2.2 Even with this large Council investment, it will not be sufficient to fully address the restoration of the Keep or have a transformative impact that we would wish for the Castle Grounds. Initial contact with Historic England and the Heritage Lottery indicates that a major lottery project at the Castle grounds could be worth considering. The option of lottery funding can only be explored further once an expression of interest is submitted. This report therefore suggests that whilst a scheme funded in full by this council is developed in line with the current capital programme and as outlined in this report, there should also be a separate scheme developed in order to submit an expression of interest to the Heritage lottery. The proposed expression of interest is attached as appendix 1.

2.3 At the time of committee in January 2025, we will have a clear indication as to whether a lottery bid can be developed or whether we progress with a Council funded project only. This report provides an outline of both potential projects in order to seek Committees approval for the approach being taken.

3 CASTLE GROUNDS PROJECTS

3.1 **Castle Keep** – A report was presented to committee in August this year recommending an approach to the restoration of the Castle Keep. It was agreed that urgent structural works would be prioritised along with the removal of foliage. It is hoped that this can be completed within the current capital allocation. Further works are recommended by the heritage consultant to prevent water ingress and improve the pointing however this is likely to be much more costly and would require lottery funding.

3.2 **The Castle Museum** – A report is included for this committee on the future operation of the museum. If the museum's operation remains with the County Council, it is expected that they will play a major role in developing the historical narrative for the site. This will include historical events and information boards explaining the significance of Ribble Valley's history.

- 3.3 **Improvement Works to Castle and Grounds Capital Scheme** – £500k has been set as a capital scheme budget for improvement works to the Castle and grounds. A wide range of options have been considered, such as a major single stand out project. This could involve a statue or significant pieces of play equipment. The option of creating a large event space on the grassed area by using supportive matting such as grasscrete was costed. The funding available would only allow for less than half of the field to be converted. When the number of extra events possible is considered, it does not prove cost effective to do this.
- 3.4 A condition survey of all the key items in the park has been undertaken along with a topographical survey. It is considered that a majority of the street furniture is in overall poor condition. This includes seating, lighting, bins, gates and fencing. The notice boards are also dated. It is considered that maximum impact could be achieved by a comprehensive refurbishment and replacement of these items. In addition, the proposed scheme would look to upgrade the castle lighting, key areas of paving and landscaping and refurbishment of the bandstand.
- 3.5 The report in Appendix 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the work that could be undertaken with photographs of each element. As with the Castle Keep, the funding allocated by the Council to date is very substantial. However the nature of the work is very expensive and as such external lottery funding will be required to complete the overall vision for the site.
- 3.6 If the Expression of Interest to the Heritage Lottery is not successful, then a fully costed scheme for the £500k Jubilee funding will be presented to committee for approval in January 2025. It is thought at this stage that the priority works would be:
- Replace Benching and bollards
 - Refurbish lighting columns and fit new LED lighting
 - Resurface key areas of pathway
 - Refurbish Bandstand, fencing and steps
 - New Information Boards, signs and finger posts
 - Planting areas
 - Refurbish Castle Street Gates
 - Replace Litter Bins
 - Improve Castle illumination
- 3.7 In addition it is proposed that a Green Flag bid be submitted for next year to boost the profile of the site. The submission will be presented to committee in January 2025.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – There are three existing capital schemes in the current capital programme connected directly with the keep and surrounding castle grounds:

Scheme	£	Year
Castle Keep Lime Repointing Works and Repairs	298,820	2024/25
Roof Renewal and Upgrade to Parks Store Building in Castle Grounds	66,360	2024/25
Improvement Works to the Castle and Grounds	500,000	2024/25
Relaying of Roadway to the Castle Keep	44,500	2027/28
Clitheroe Castle Paths and Steps	43,100	2028/29
TOTAL	952,780	

These works are fully funded within the capital programme. Any works beyond that budgeted for would need to have identified approved financing, and the Heritage Fund Expression of Interest will hopefully start the process in securing such monies, if supported by members. Some proposals that have been included have a revenue implication and may need to be separately considered as revenue growth items, outside of the capital programme, if supported.

- Technical, Environmental and Legal – Legal have been consulted and their comments are included in this report. This proposal is at a very early stage and the report is intended to give a representation of the works that could be completed. All costs are early estimates.
- Political – No implications at this stage.
- Reputation – An improvement scheme as outlined at the Castle Grounds will create a positive perception of Clitheroe and the Ribble Valley as a whole. Detailed discussions cannot take place with the Heritage Lottery until an expression of interest is accepted. Heritage Lottery may stipulate additional aspects for the scheme which will need to be considered by committee as the scheme progresses.
- Equality & Diversity – The final design will examine methods of making the grounds more accessible to all.

5 IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Approve the overall approach to the Castle Grounds Improvement Works as outlined in this report.

5.2 Approve the Expression of Interest included in Appendix 1 being submitted to the Heritage Lottery.

5.3 Note that a further report be brought to committee in January 2025 detailing the result of the Expression of Interest and proposed next steps.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS – None
For further information please ask for Adam Allen, extension 4461.