



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Name of Committee	CABINET
Directorate:	Governance and Resources
Corporate Director:	Isabell Procter
Portfolio Holder:	Malcolm Mildren
Date:	30th July 2007

Report Title	Delapre Abbey – Commission of Options Appraisal
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Key Decision	Yes
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to the allocation of £35,250 from the LABGI Reserve Fund for the commissioning of an option appraisal, through the Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust, to establish a strategy to securing the long-term future of the Abbey.
- 1.2 That a further allocation of £5,500 from the LABGI reserve be agreed to cover the two-year unbudgeted commitment as a contribution towards the Trusts' secretarial and admin expenses.
- 1.3 That any successful bid to the Architectural Heritage Fund for grant assistance towards the options appraisal be repaid to the LABGI Reserve.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Cabinet approved a strategy and initial funding to secure the future of the Abbey. Having now completed the tender process to commission an Options Appraisal all the tenders were in excess of the original estimate. The preferred tender has been identified by the Trustees and approval is sought for additional funds to enable the appraisal to proceed.

3. Report Background

- 3.1 On the 14th March 2005 Cabinet approved a process and initial funds to take forward a strategy securing the long-term future of the Abbey (copy report attached).
- 3.2 In 2006 the Leader of the Council also approved the granting of £2,750 per annum for a period of 2 years to enable an appointment of a Trust Secretary and general admin expenses, commencing the 1st April 2007. No funding source was identified for this amount.
- 3.3 The Options Appraisal will consider all the potential options for the re-use and refurbishment of the building complex and identify the best / most preferred option appropriate to the buildings. This option must be financially viable if necessary with the aid of grants and other funding sources, not yet identified.
- 3.4 It is essential the study makes an appropriate recommendation for the use of the building, which is capable of being worked up into a deliverable project which will form phase 2 of the scheme.
- 3.5 The Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust has now been formed with initially six members and charitable status applied for.
- 3.6 The tender process to commission a lead consultant has been completed by the Trust. All the tenders were above the initial £15,000 budget. It is proposed to award the contract to Niall Phillips as this represented the best value for money. A budget of £35,250 is now required to complete the Appraisal and fund valuation advice.
- 3.7 If approval to this expenditure is given it is hoped the appointed consultant would commence the appraisal in August and that it would be completed by the end of 2007. At that point a further report will be brought to Cabinet outlining the findings and recommendations of the Appraisal, future steps and funding implications.
- 3.8 It is not possible to recover VAT with respect to this particular commission. However, the Trust are preparing an application to the Architectural Heritage Fund for grant assistance towards the cost of obtaining the Options Appraisal Study and, if successful, could be awarded up to a maximum of £7,500.

4. Options and Evaluation of Options

- 4.1 The first option would be to decide not to proceed with the proposed strategy for restoring and securing the future of the Abbey. If this option were adopted it would effectively reject the recommendations of the Delapre Consultation Group, prevent the implication of Cabinet's previous decision and lose the

support of the Architectural Heritage Fund and funding organisations. It would also send out the wrong public message about the Council's commitment to the Abbey.

- 4.2 If the funding is approved, as recommended, it would facilitate the continuance of the agreed strategy and demonstrate the Authority's commitment to the widely supported proven strategy approved by Cabinet. Further by supporting the process it will enable the first stage in achieving the objective of securing the future of an important heritage landmark building in Northampton.

5. Resource Implications (including Financial Implications)

5.1 The proposal strategy will require officer support to the Trust.

5.2 The proposal will require the approval of:-

a) £35,250 (*Options Appraisal and valuation advise*)
 £2,750 (*Trust secretary and admin costs*)
 £38,000 in financial year 2007/2008

b) £2,750 in financial year 2008/2009 (*Trust secretary and admin costs*)

5.3 It is proposed to finance this expenditure from the LABGI Reserve Fund.

5.4 It is proposed that any grant received by the Trust from the Architectural Heritage Fund should be repaid to the Borough Council as a contribution to the above.

5.5 If there are any further requests for expenditure this will be referred to Cabinet for consideration. However, it is anticipated that the above sum will fund the Options Appraisal process and initial Trust costs as outlined.

6. Risk and Opportunity Issues

6.1 Neither the Borough Council or Trust will be able to reclaim any VAT incurred. Additionally, when the Options Appraisal is finished there may well be further financial implications to the Authority in implementing any recommendations to take the project to the next stage and beyond.

6.2 Some form of Options Appraisal is essential if the future of the Abbey is to be secured. Adopting the proposed strategy approved by the Architectural Heritage Fund and other heritage and funding organisations carries with it public confidence and support and will be essential if further external funding and finance to take this project forward is to be sought to enable this project to proceed.

7. Consultees (Internal and External)

Internal	Legal Services Planning Finance
External	Delapre Abbey Consultation Group Architectural Heritage Fund

8. Compliance Issues

A: How Proposals Deliver Priority Outcomes

Recovery Plan
Proposed refurbishment and regeneration of the Abbey within its park setting meets several of the objectives outlined in the recovery plan.
Corporate Plan
Again this project supports several of the objectives within the Corporate Plan.

B: Other Implications

Other Strategies
None

9. Background Papers

Title	Description	Source
Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust	Estates File	Estates

Name	Signature	Date	Ext.
Author	David Fletcher		8763
Director & S151 Officer	Isabell Procter	27.7.07	
Monitoring Officer or Deputy (Key decision only)	Francis Fernandes		



**NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Cabinet: Date: 14 March 2005	Item No: 14
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Portfolio: Financial Strategy and Performance Community Leadership Directorate: Strategic Resources Estates & Valuation Services Author/Contact Officer: D I Fletcher Senior Estates Officer ext 8763	Title: DELAPRE ABBEY
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Recommendation(s)

1. That Members note the current progress of the investigations in respect of Trust status and, in view of the advice given by the Architectural Heritage Fund, approve:-
 - a) The formation of a Trust by way of Company Limited by Guarantee and its Charitable Registration within 6 months of this approval.
 - b) That the Authority proceeds with an Options Appraisal Study to consider the future of the Abbey.

Summary

1. The report seeks to advise Members on the appropriate actions and steps which are necessary to consider the future of the Abbey and also obtain access to the expert advice and assistance from the Architectural Heritage Fund.

1. Background

Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust

1.1 Members will recall that at the November 2004 meeting a report was considered outlining the work of the Architectural Heritage Fund and how that organisation could assist in exploring the viability of a Charitable Trust for securing the future of the Abbey. Approval was given in principle to working with the Architectural Heritage Fund and a further report requested on how this could be taken forward.

1.2 There have now been further meetings with the Architectural Heritage Fund who have confirmed that they are prepared to assist with the process of securing the future of the Abbey subject to the following actions being undertaken:-

1.2.1 An Options Appraisal Study

The AHF has confirmed that this is the key to a successful restoration project. The Study is a statement of the importance of the building in conservation terms and considers the various options for the building providing a viability assessment of any preferred option. Alternatively it may give reasons why the potential project is not viable. This will be carried out by a Steering Group comprising Councillors, members of the community and other interested organisations. The Steering Group will need to write a brief and appoint specialist consultants who will lead the Options Appraisal process. Although it is hoped that the initial £7,500 match funding committed by this Council and the potential £7,500 grant assistance would cover these costs this cannot currently be confirmed. Any additional sums will be identified when potential consultants submit their fee proposals. It is anticipated that the Options Appraisal Study process would take approximately 6 months to complete.

1.2.2 The formation of a Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust

The purpose and objectives of the Trust would be to preserve for the benefit of the people of Northampton, its environs and of the nation, the historical, archaeological, architectural and environmental heritage of the buildings and curtilage constituting Delapre Abbey, Northampton and its environs and the safeguarding, maintenance and upkeep of the same for future generations.

Initially a skeleton Company would be formed and an application submitted to the Charities Commission to establish a Charitable Trust. Whilst this would legally require only two signatories, in this case it would be proposed that two potential Council representatives subscribe with one other initial external subscriber. Subsequently detailed Trusteeship and invitations/applications would be dependent upon the results of the Options Appraisal but would probably have a maximum of 11 to 16 Trustees giving the Council two to three representatives.

- 1.2.3 One area of concern with seeking grant aid from the Architectural Heritage Fund is the potential delays created by the application process and the funds administrative procedures. Therefore in order to progress the Options Appraisal more quickly an alternative route would be for Members to consider funding the Options Appraisal process, with an application being submitted to the Architectural Heritage Fund at a later date if this becomes appropriate.
- 1.3 This process does have the support of the local community and Friends of Delapre Abbey. Further update reports will be submitted to Executive at key stages. Members' approval to the above is therefore sought.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The cost of setting up a Charitable Building Preservation Trust at this stage is regarded as minimal. Currently the cost of the Options Appraisal would either be the match funding of £7,500 already approved or £15,000 if the Authority met the full cost of this. At this stage it is unknown whether there would be any additional financial implications. This will not be known until consultants have submitted fee proposals in respect of the Options Appraisal Study.

3. Social Impact Implications

- 3.1 As previously reported

4. Background Papers

Estates and Valuation Services files

5. Directorates Consulted

- Relevant Directors