

HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Economy and Growth Select Committee

7 February 2019

TITLE:	Town Centre Regeneration and Investment Programme
EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR:	Councillor Kemp - Executive Councillor for Tourism, Regeneration & Licensing
CONTACT OFFICER:	Sarah Porru – Head of Regeneration
WARDS INVOLVED:	

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on proposals for the Town Centre Regeneration and Investment Programme and seek approval for the submission of funding bids to support delivery.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that Councillors:

- 2.1.1 Note the update on the Town Centre Regeneration and Investment Programme
- 2.1.2 Recommend to the Executive that the Council submits bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund and Highways England Designated Fund to support regeneration and investment in Glossop.
- 2.1.3 Recommend to the Executive that the Council submits a bid to the Future High Street Fund to support regeneration and investment in Buxton.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 High Streets have been affected by major changes in the past decades, and the speed of this change is increasing. Online shopping in particular has become significantly more popular than it was 10 years ago and this is having significant impact on retail stores. As a result, high streets are having to evolve and adapt.
- 3.2 In response to these changes, The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have made provision for a new £675 million Future High

Streets Fund to support and fund local areas' plans to make their high streets and town centres fit for the future. The fund can also help to restore historic high street properties and put historic buildings back into economic use.

- 3.3 Evidence shows that high streets with a wide choice alongside well designed and planned residential and office space are more resilient to these changes and are adapting more successfully. In contrast, high streets that rely heavily on traditional retail without sufficient office space and housing surrounding the high street have found it harder to adapt to these changes and tend to be the ones that are struggling (Public Health England, British Property Foundation).
- 3.4 In response to this, a draft Town Centre Regeneration and Investment Programme has been prepared for High Peak, identifying constraints and opportunities and proactively driving growth in town centres. It also considers funding opportunities including the recently announced Future High Streets Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and Highways England Designated Fund.

4. Buxton

- 4.1 The current retail vacancy rate in Buxton is 11%, this is higher than the national average of 10.1%. The majority of retail properties at Spring Gardens are owned by companies based outside the area. This can mean owners are slow to react to local issues and market changes and units remain vacant for long periods of time. The existing retail offer is perceived as poor quality and low value, and the high number of charity shops deters other investors and detracts from the retail offer. There is also a higher level of national/multiple stores in Buxton than in other High Peak towns which means it faces greater risk from national trends in retail shrinkage.
- 4.2 The recent announcement that M&S propose to close the Buxton store could potentially lead to a loss of confidence from other retailers and increase the vacancy rate further. Across the wider town centre, way-marking and the wider public realm is poor, making pedestrian access and connectivity difficult. Fairfield Road is poorly maintained and is not an attractive gateway to the town.
- 4.3 However, the town has a strong profile in terms of its cultural and well being offer. Over £106m of investment has been made in the town's built heritage and the redeveloped Crescent will help invigorate the town. The development of a new visitor economy strategy for the town will build on the success of tourism which has seen visitor numbers increase by almost 5% to over 4.5 million since 2016 and tourism expenditure contributing over £250 million to the local economy.
- 4.4 Buxton has also attracted significant new housing development and, through the Council's Local Plan and Accelerated Housing Delivery Programme, 2,450 homes will be built bringing an additional £22.8 million household expenditure into the town. Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust and McCarthy & Stone are bringing forward proposals to redevelop land at the former Buxton Water site, off Station Road in Buxton. The proposals would see the development of a state-of-the-art facility for the NHS and other public-

sector organisations, consolidating health and well being facilities into one central health hub.

- 4.5 The Town Centre Regeneration and Investment Programme proposes to capitalise on these developments and drive the health and wellbeing agenda to maximise benefits across Buxton Town Centre. It is proposed to submit an expression of interest to the Future High Streets Fund to deliver the following elements:
- Delivery of the Visitor Economy Strategy
 - Drive improvements to Fairfield Road
 - Deliver improvements to the town centre public realm
 - Promote health, wellbeing and cultural activity in Buxton and surrounding environment.
 - Promote the health and wellbeing agenda with partners including Buxton Crescent, the University, Opera House and Buxton Health Hub
 - Co-ordinate town centre activity and promotion
 - Seek alternative uses for vacant high street properties
- 4.6 The Government has stated that they are expecting only one Future High Street bid from each local authority and have made clear that they will not accept bids covering town centre areas that are not facing significant challenges. Having studied the criteria, and considered the challenges and opportunities presented by each of the High Peak towns, Buxton, as the town with the highest shop vacancy rate, is best placed to be the focus of a submission and would benefit most from programme.

5. Glossop

- 5.1 Glossop is the best performing of the major towns in terms of shop vacancies (with only 3.5% of shops empty) and the amount of retail floor-space in the town has actually increased in recent years. Its high levels of housing development and connectivity to Manchester mean it has high levels of food spend retention and, in turn, linked spending. The town has seen recent high growth in the food and drink sector and is identified as having a strong cultural and creative scene.
- 5.2 The Creative Industries Assessment (2017) identified Manchester as having one of the strongest creative and digital economies in the UK and it is one which is growing significantly. It noted that Glossop is well placed to benefit from this through the development of high quality, low cost nurturing space for creative business or cultural activity.
- 5.3 Vacant, council owned heritage buildings, including Municipal Buildings and Glossop halls, provide an opportunity to encourage cultural growth and move to a more balanced approach between shops, employment and housing. Glossop's Heritage assets are currently underutilised from the perspective of the economic and social renewal of the town. They could provide the spaces which would play a significant part in the attraction of new businesses, help grow existing businesses and attract visitors which would help increase footfall and support the high street.

5.4 Whilst it is acknowledged that as Greater Manchester continues to grow, Glossop will benefit, traffic congestion and the appearance of the A57 corridor and gateway continue to be an issue. The Trans Pennine Upgrade and proposed improvements to Mottram Moor and A57 offers an opportunity to address these problems. In addition, a submission for funding has been made to the Derbyshire Business Rate Pooling Pilot scheme. If successful, this will provide a local impact report and consider opportunities to maximise benefits and mitigate and issues arising from the proposed scheme.

5.5 It is proposed to prepare an additional bid to Highways England Designated Funds Programme to unlock local, strategic housing and economic growth benefits, improving cycling facilities and green infrastructure and deliver environmental and heritage improvements in parallel with the Trans Pennine upgrade programme.

6. **How this report links to Corporate Priorities**

6.1 Development of the Town Centre Regeneration and Investment Programme has the potential to help deliver the following aims of the Corporate Plan:

- Help create a safer and healthier environment for our residents to live and work
- Support economic development & regeneration
- Protect and improve the environment

7. **Alternative Options**

7.1 Option 1 (recommended) – that the Council notes the approach in the Town Centre Regeneration and Investment Programme and approves the submission of a funding bid to the Future High Street Fund to support improvements to Buxton Town Centre and a submission to HLF and the Highways England Designated Fund to support improvements to Glossop Town Centre.

7.2 Option 2 (not recommended) – that the Council does not approve the submission of funding bids to support improvements to Town Centres. This is not recommended.

INSERT NAME OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/HEAD OF SERVICE

Executive Director (Place)

**Web Links and
Background Papers**

<https://www.gov.uk/g>

Location

Contact details

Sarah Porcu

8. Detail

- 8.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have made provision for a new £675 million Future High Streets Fund to support and fund local areas' plans to make their high streets and town centres fit for the future. It will serve two purposes: it will support local areas to prepare long-term strategies for their high streets and town centres, including funding a new High Streets Taskforce to provide expertise and hands-on support to local areas.
- 8.2 The fund will also support the regeneration of heritage high streets (up to £55 million of the overall fund). This has two elements: helping to restore historic high street properties through Historic England, and equipping communities with their own resources to put historic buildings back into economic use - for example as residential buildings, new work spaces or cultural venues, supported by the Architectural Heritage Fund.
- 8.3 The FHSF will serve two purposes: it will support local areas to prepare long-term strategies for their high streets and town centres, including funding a new High Streets Taskforce to provide expertise and hands-on support to local areas. It will also then co-fund with local areas projects including:
- Investment in physical infrastructure, including improving public and other transport access; improving flow and circulation within a town / city centre; enabling provision of congestion-relieving infrastructure; other investment in physical infrastructure needed to support new housing and workspace development and existing local communities;.
 - Investment in land assembly, including support for increase the density of residential and workspace around high streets in place of under-used retail units.
- 8.4 Local areas are asked to out how their plans will enable their local high street to adapt to changes in consumer demands and then give details of individual projects with a clear economic benefit. Funding can not be used to expand traditional retail on their high street or for short term enhancements or promotions.

8.5 The Government has stated that they are expecting only one bid from each local authority and have made clear that they will not accept bids covering town centre areas that are not facing significant challenges. Places are expected to partner with the private sector in developing their proposals. The deadline for submission to the fund is 22nd March.

8.6 Highways England Designated Funds Programme is formed of five funds:

- Air quality
- Cycling, Safety & Integration
- Innovation
- Environment
- Growth & Housing

These funds support projects which deliver environmental, social and economic benefits to the people, communities and businesses who live and work alongside strategic road networks.

8.7 Details of the HLF Fund are expected to be announced shortly.