



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Observations on a Practical Example (and the Benefits of the General Power of Competence)

<https://www.tavistock.gov.uk/your-council/council-initiatives/townscape-heritage-initiative>

SOME BACKGROUND

- West Devon Market Town – Livestock, Pannier, Farmers and periodic Arts Markets;
- Reputation for Artisan and Independent retail base;
- Significant historical and Heritage Assets – stannary town, part of the Cornwall & West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site;
- Approaching 200 listed buildings & other heritage structures;
- Much of the Town was rebuilt as a model town in the C19 by the Dukes of Bedford from Mining revenue;
- Town Council 25 fte staff;
- Attempts by the Borough Council partnering with Town Council and community groups to secure a Heritage Lottery Fund Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) Grant failed pre 2010
- It then tried again (successfully) in 2014

TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE 3rd PARTY GRANT SCHEME (HLF) CONTENT

- THI's Delivered by Principal Authorities – not Town/Parishes (scheme partners/beneficiaries) – Town Centre Regeneration
- 3 Stage Process 1 (Bid), 2 (Development-up to 1yr) 3 (Delivery–up to 5yrs)
- seeking to
 - address the needs of **Critical** buildings (work which must be completed if the Scheme is to be considered a success);
 - address the needs of **Priority** buildings (significant buildings deserving of attention);
 - deliver improvements to the **Public Realm**;
 - deliver a range of **Complementary Initiatives** (skills, interpretation, historic building management guides, heritage events etc);
 - deliver **improvements** to the Conservation Area Management Plan and relevant planning framework
- Ask - NLHF Grant of £980,000, Match Funding £500,000 + Landowner Contributions (overall initial value £2.2m)

SO FAR SO NORMAL....BUT

- At the stage 1 initial Bid - Principal Authority withdraws from administering the scheme citing lack of capacity;
- Decision Time – **Step up or Step out?**
- Can Tavistock Town Council
 - Lawfully deliver a large scale 3rd party grant scheme, (S137 vs **GPC**)?
 - Persuade the main funder (and other partners & funders) it is capable of doing so?
 - Secure PWLB loan (£500,000) to match fund work to its own premises?
 - Actually deliver a THI (1st time Town/Parish Council skills + capacity)?
 - Reconfigure core operating arrangements to do so?
 - Accept & mitigate the accompanying risk to financially underwrite Scheme?
- GPC applied: Council agrees: HLF agrees: work starts in earnest...

TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE 3rd PARTY GRANT SCHEME (HLF) CORE REQUIREMENTS

The Council to:

- act as Accountable Body (ie be responsible for administering the scheme in accordance with HLF requirements - including meeting any financial shortfall from funders);
- Ensure the Scheme is underpinned by a broadly based Community partnership;
- Secure eligible Match funding;
- Develop detailed a delivery programme + project plans including associated safeguards and appropriate governance arrangements;
- Resource the initiative...
- Successfully deliver against scheme targets; monitor and comply.

UNCHARTED WATERS

- No template/precedent for a Town/Parish Council to follow
- Securing specialist resources
 - Quantity surveying, surveying, legal, accountancy, audit, project management, planning, architectural, conservation, land charges
 - And identify the basis of engagements
- Growing mutual understanding, new roles/relationships
- Develop, Introduce/Implement process & governance controls, checks and balances
- Deliver, Deliver, Deliver
- A 6 year journey (last project delivered during lockdown)
- Scheme completion – est'd overall spend iro £2.75m (scheme itself 2.2m)
- For more information and full evaluation report <https://www.tavistock.gov.uk/your-council/council-initiatives/townscape-heritage-initiative>

Outcomes

- Delivery to budget (once PTS granted) but Covid extension required
- £2.2m scheme to restore/bring back to use 7 commercial grade II listed buildings (+ one community building), 2 areas of public realm + complementary skills/learning & community engagement
- Attracted additional spend (est'd £550k to date)
- Brought 590m² commercial buildings back into use
- Created 12 new and safeguarded 150 jobs
- Provided new pedestrianised space in the public realm
- Revitalised the commercial offer in a previously secondary trading zone
- Revised conservation area policies; increased knowledge of heritage + skills
- Built confidence, social capital and community cohesion – enabled our next project (WHS Gateway Centre)

WHAT WE LEARN'T – OUR JOURNEY

- Value of the GPC
- Ambition vs capacity
- Relationships and partnerships
- Team, (& Teams)
- A rules based approach
- Understand and (where possible) mitigate your limitations
- Programme Management - Risk, Finance, Contracts, Project Plans & Critical Path
- Control, & Influence, Roles, & Responsibilities
- Managing Change and expecting the unexpected (a statutory funder pulling out)
- Creating understanding and Aligning Interests
- In it for the Long haul
- Evaluation
- <https://www.tavistock.gov.uk/your-council/council-initiatives/townscape-heritage-initiative>

Lessons we took away (1)- What Worked Well

- Localised decision making, agility, long term commitment
- Enhanced/deeper relationships – community leadership
- Landowner & accountable body – improved project mgt
- Skill development
- Innovation in use of GPC, risk well managed
- Plan based approach – ongoing
- Laying the Foundations – heritage quarter, WHS Key Centre

Lessons (2) What didn't Work so Well

- Perceptions – accountable body vs landowner interests
- Late Entry – preparedness & understanding
- Protracted Development Stage
- Delivering Results outwith Council Control (LPA)
- Project Manager Resource – skill set and continuity + Key Worker Dependencies
- Impact on Business as Usual and Opportunity Cost

In Conclusion

- Adding Value;
 - Commitment, planning and flexibility;
 - Capacity building, cohesion, confidence and social capital – an exercise in co-production;
 - Laying the Foundations – a beginning not an end.
-
- Any Questions

