

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 16 AUGUST 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

## **FINANCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WIRRAL WATERFRONT BOARD**

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### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report seeks approval of the financial recommendations of the Wirral Waterfront Board meeting held on 3 July 2007.

### **2.0 PUBLIC ART FEATURE FOR THE A41/M53 JUNCTION KNOWN AS THE 'MAGIC BOAT'**

2.1 The Wirral Waterfront Board approved in 2006 an ambitious programme of environmental improvements for the A41 corridor, is one of the key gateways into the Borough. A component of the approved programme was the provision of a sculpture at the southern end of the A41 as an entrance feature.

2.2 A steering group was formed to progress the entrance feature. This group was chaired by a Local Ward Member, and included the Council's Development Officer for the Arts and Cultural Industries, the Curator of the Lady Lever Art Gallery, the Council's Head of Tourism and Marketing, a member of the private sector Tourism Business Network, and the Chair of the Eastham Conservation Area Society.

2.3 In December 2006, the Renn and Thacker Partnership, a company of artists with a national reputation, were commissioned, on a £100,000 fixed-price contract, to design and install a feature that would:

- provide sustainable improvements to the A41 road corridor
- create a strong, positive image and visual impact at the southern entrance to the A41 corridor
- build on local heritage and Wirral's tourism offer
- raise people's perceptions and help to raise the profile of Wirral to potential visitors, inward investors and businesses
- provide a flavour of what is special about the Wirral Peninsula.

2.4 In March 2007, Renn and Thacker undertook a wide consultation exercise with residents, businesses, schools, voluntary organisations and key agencies. using leaflets, press releases, a dedicated website and a series of meetings, to find out what people felt was special about Wirral, so that these themes could be reflected in the artwork.

2.5 The main findings of the consultations was that the structure needed to:

- be iconic, simple, instantly recognisable and identifiable to Wirral
- big and bold, and visible from the motorway, otherwise it will be deemed insignificant
- incorporate important themes including the two rivers, ship building heritage, water recreation, wildlife and romantic history (sand, wrecked ships, ghosts)

- reflect Wirral's heritage whilst promoting its aspirations and ambition for future economic development.

2.6 'The Magic Boat' concept produced by Renn and Thacker takes into account all these comments and is reflected in the proposed design. The steering group were unanimously in favour of the proposed design when it was brought forward to the Wirral Waterfront Board for consideration.

2.7 Artists' impressions of the suggested sculpture will be displayed at the Cabinet meeting. It is proposed that the 'Magic Boat' will be installed on the southern half of the roundabout at Junction 5 of the M53. It will be 15m wide and 30m in height, clearly visible from the motorway. Discussions are being held with local wildlife group to pursue the idea of incorporating bat roosts in the structure's underside

2.8 The purpose of the "Magic Boat" is to create a gateway to Wirral, linking into the commercial and inward investment aspirations for the area. The work will also link into wider tourism and 'branding' initiatives which will raise the profile of Wirral as a major destination and increase the number of visitors to the area. Ultimately it is hoped that the unveiling of the feature can be timed to be promoted as one of the first projects in Liverpool's Capital of Culture year. The cost of the "The Magic Boat" inclusive of all permissions and planning/traffic assessments is £300,000

2.9 'The Magic Boat' is anticipated to bring economic benefits, including:

- an increase in confidence and shift in attitudes, both towards investment in Wirral, and to the value of culture and public art as a whole
- an additional attraction to residents and visitors and expanding on the Borough's cultural profile nationally
- a focus and stimulus for tourism
- added value to the existing A41 Environmental Improvement Strategy, contributing to an environment that is attractive to existing and new businesses
- new heritage for future generations.
- the incorporation of a training element into the fabrication of the structure, using apprentices from the Laird Foundation.

2.10 The Wirral Waterfront Board before recommending approval of a further £200,000 of SRB resources for the "Magic Boat" Project took into account the significance of the investment, the strategic and economic benefits which it would bring not only to the Wirral Waterfront Area but also to Wirral.

2.11 Projects of this nature will always attract a range of views and comments. Members will be aware that there has been national and local press coverage in recent weeks. There has been a very high level of support for the project politically and from the key partners within the Wirral Waterfront area.

### 3.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 Wirral Waterfront is funded by a Single Regeneration Budget grant of £20M from the North West Development Agency.

3.2 As reported in section 2 above the cost of the feature will be £300,000 which will be funded from the Single Regeneration Budget.

3.3 The additional funding is currently unallocated within the SRB Programme and no other schemes will be affected by the allocation of this resource.

#### **4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no staffing implications arising from this report

#### **5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Wirral Waterfront seeks to promote Equal Opportunities for all

#### **6.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no community safety issues arising from this report.

#### **7.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The Gateway project is being developed and implemented in accordance with Wirral Council's environmental management policy, in keeping with the principles of Agenda 21. In particular, the project will seek to accommodate protected bat species, use resources efficiently and enrich local identity.

7.2 Any further procurement required by the project will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's sustainable procurement policies.

7.3 A major part of the artists' brief has been to design a structure which will require minimal maintenance. They are proposing materials which will drain and weather naturally, with no potential for rot or rust or any need for re-painting. At present, there is no intention to light the structure. If this view changes, the maintenance implications will be carefully considered. So, apart from the need to inspect the structure every five years or so, there will be no significant cost to the Council.

#### **8.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The structure will require planning permission, as well as the agreement of the Highways Agency, who own the land.

8.2 Initial discussions with the Highways Agency has highlighted that they would support a Gateway Feature in principle on the roundabout site, provided that it does not cause too much of a distraction to motorists. Wirral Waterfront has commissioned a Road Safety Audit and a Environmental Impact Assessment at their request, with a view to these independent findings supporting planning and other statutory approvals.

#### **9.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are none arising from this report.

#### **10.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are none arising from this report.

## 11.0 **LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The proposed siting of the sculpture is the Eastham Ward.

## 12.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 Wirral Waterfront Board papers have been used in the preparation of this report.

## 13.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the decision of the Wirral Waterfront Board to allocate a further £200,000 of SRB resources to fund "The Magic Boat, subject to NWDA non-delegated approval, be approved.

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Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by Martin Pursell who can be contacted on 691 8626