



Report To: Economic Development Portfolio Holder
Lead Officer: Director of Planning and New Communities

26 March 2015

Heritage Guardianship Sites: Landbeach Tithe Barn and East Hatley Church

Purpose

1. To provide an update regarding the future of Landbeach Tithe Barn and East Hatley Church.
2. This is not a key decision. The report is brought to this meeting at the request of the Portfolio Holder, at his meeting in December 2014.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder give, in principle, approval for:
 - (a) The Tithe Barn Trust to take on responsibility for the Landbeach Tithe Barn, subject to acceptable terms and conditions
 - (b) A partnership agreement to fund and manage the repairs programme, subject to acceptable terms and conditions
 - (c) Urgent works to safeguard the barn from further deterioration, including tarpaulin covers
 - (d) And, notes progress on transfer of St Denis Church, East Hatley.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. Further work has been undertaken locally to develop proposals for a new local trust to take on responsibility for Landbeach Tithe Barn, and a conditions survey has been completed. The Portfolio Holder is asked to endorse further work on the trust and measures to protect the barn. Progress has been made regarding disposal of St Denis Church.

Background

Landbeach Tithe Barn

5. Landbeach Tithe Barn is a Grade II listed building owned by the council since 1986. The barn had been leased to the Landbeach Society since 1975.
6. In May 2013, the Portfolio Holder agreed that the local community should be given the opportunity to put forward proposals for the future of the Barn, or that the Barn should be sold for conversion to residential use. In October 2013, the Portfolio Holder noted that a meeting had taken place with the Landbeach Society, Cambridge Past Present and Future (CambridgePPF), District Councillors and other local representatives; and allowed time for further discussions.

7. In March 2014, the Portfolio Holder:
 - (a) Endorsed work with external bodies to explore options for the future of the barn, and welcomed input from CPPF
 - (b) Requested that Councillor James Hockney use best endeavours to establish a Trust to take on responsibility for the barn
8. In September 2014, it was reported that there had been a seminar to consider options for the future of the barn, and that Landbeach Society had surrendered the lease. The Portfolio Holder agreed that there should be further work to establish a Trust and prepare a business plan.
9. In December 2014, it was reported that further progress had been made including formation of a shadow trust and development of an outline Business Plan. The outline Business Plan envisaged that the first stage would involve necessary repairs to the thatch and fabric of the barn. It was also reported that SCDC had commissioned a structural survey, and offered to provide some legal advice to the shadow trust. The Portfolio Holder agreed that further work be undertaken to develop a robust proposal to enable the Council to lease the Barn to a local trust to be set up to restore and maintain the Barn, and requested a further report in March 2015.

St Denis Church, East Hatley

10. St Denis Church is owned by the Council. It is a grade II* listed building and local nature reserve.
11. In October 2013, the Portfolio Holder agreed to transfer St Denis Church, East Hatley, to the Friends of Friendless Churches, subject to acceptable terms and conditions and appropriate support from the local community and recommended that the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder considered funding to support the maintenance of the church and facilitate the transfer. The Trustees of the Friends agreed to accept a contribution of £60,000 and further contributions have been committed by local people. On 27 February 2014, Council approved payment of £60,000 to the Friends of Friendless Churches, subject to acceptable terms and conditions and upon transfer of the Church.
12. In March 2014, a project plan for the transfer of the church was agreed, and this plan has guided work over the last twelve months.

Considerations

Landbeach Tithe Barn

13. The structural survey report has demonstrated that the barn is in slightly worse condition than anticipated, and as a result the cost of necessary works is also higher. The report lists essential works that are required urgently and also those that are not so urgent. The surveyor recommends that all the works be undertaken as one project, in order to put the building back in sound condition quickly.
14. The cost of the urgent works is estimated at £80,000 and, in summary, the urgent works are:
 - (a) Strip back the thatch and re-thatch
 - (b) Provide support to the whole frame in order to allow access for inspection

- (c) Frame repairs, including inspection and appropriate repair of the weatherboard
 - (d) Timber treatments as necessary
 - (e) Repairs to floors to remove trip hazard.
15. The other recommended works have an estimated cost of £40,000, and consist of:
- (a) Other frame works
 - (b) Plinth capping
 - (c) Repairs to doors and joinery
 - (d) Completion of repairs to weatherboarding
 - (e) Further timber treatments, as required
 - (f) General tidy up internally
 - (g) Removal of redundant timbers, if advised
 - (h) Repairs and finishing to the floors
 - (i) General redecoration of the weatherboard externally.
16. The survey confirmed that the barn is not watertight, and there is some water damage to timbers. Therefore immediate works are recommended to safeguard the barn from further deterioration, through use of tarpaulin. These works are required as part of the Council's responsibility for its listed building.
17. Over the last three months, a joint working group between the Shadow Trust and SCDC has been set up, and has met several times. Six trustees are 'firmly on board', and the group aims to have at least eight by the end of April. They have a treasurer who is a professional accountant, and are advertising for trustees based on skills needs that were identified through a gap analysis.
18. The Shadow Trust has agreed a name, Tithe Barn Trust, and has a draft vision statement and objects in place (see appendix). The Shadow Trustees have arranged a bat and owl survey, and hedge-cutting, both were completed free of charge. The Shadow Trustees have also planned a set of events and continued to develop a communications plan, as listed in the appendix.
19. The Shadow Trust is unable to collect donations or open a bank account as it has no formal status. The Council's legal officer is providing advice on options for the group to have a legal interest in the barn and therefore be able to secure funding and charitable status. In the meantime substantial funding pledges have been made. The Shadow Trust has asked that SCDC consider a partnership agreement for the repair works, as this arrangement would provide financial efficiencies, and also to consider the principle of providing capital funding akin to a dowry.
20. In summary, a good momentum has been established; and ideas and project details are being developed.
21. Separately, SCDC Historic Buildings Officer is liaising with the owner of the neighbouring rectory, seeking to improve working relationships as the barn and boundary of the rectory are adjacent.

St Denis Church, East Hatley

22. There has been progress, over the last three months, regarding the transfer of St Denis Church to the Friends of Friendless Churches (FOFC). The Church Commissioners have recently agreed to vary the deed of covenant, and discussions are now underway on the wording of the grant agreement. The transfer should be concluded very soon.

Options

23. The recommended option is give, in principle, approval for:
- (a) The Tithe Barn Trust to take on responsibility for the Landbeach Tithe Barn, subject to acceptable terms and conditions
 - (b) A partnership agreement to fund and manage the repairs programme, subject to acceptable terms and conditions
 - (c) Urgent works to safeguard the barn from further deterioration, including tarpaulin covers.
24. An alternative option is for the Barn to be sold with residential planning consent.

Implications

25. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

26. There are a range of financial implications arising from Landbeach Tithe Barn and they will be considered further in a future report. The estimated cost of recommended repairs is £120,000, including urgent repairs estimated at £80,000. There is no budgetary provision for the re-thatching of the Barn or repair of timbers.
27. The cost of urgent works to safeguard the Barn from further deterioration can be funded from existing approved budgets.

Legal

28. Legal officers are providing advice on setting up a Trust for the Landbeach Tithe Barn.

Staffing

29. None

Risk Management

30. The Landbeach Tithe Barn is covered by the Council's Insurance Policy in order to mitigate financial risks arising from damage to the Barn.

Equality and Diversity

31. None.

Climate Change

32. There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

33. The Tithe Barn Working Group has a communications plan to raise awareness of the Barn, and this includes email shots, a Facebook page, articles in the Landbeach magazine and Cambridge News.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Aim 1 – We will listen to and engage with residents, parishes and businesses to ensure we deliver first class services and value for money

34. This report is based on discussions with local residents regarding the future management of the heritage asset in their neighbourhoods.

Aim 2 – We will make sure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding quality of life for our residents

35. This report outlines progress regarding proposals to secure the future of an historic asset, thereby contributing to the quality of life of residents.

Background Papers

Heritage and Guardianship Sites and Closed Churchyards – reports to Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder on 10 September 2014, 20 March 2014, 22 October 2013, 28 May 2013 and 18 December 2012.

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