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**THE DENES – SUCCESSFUL HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND AWARD**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Chris McEwan  
Efficiency and Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - Cliff Brown, Director of Community Services**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To request the release of funds awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for carrying out improvements to the Denes.

**Summary**

2. The HLF 'Parks and People' bid was submitted at the end of 2008, which received Stage 1 approval in March 2009 for improvements to the Denes. The physical improvements include footbridges, seating, bins, signage, lighting and ecology.
3. The Stage 2 bid was submitted in December 2009, which was again successful and approved in March 2010. A grant of £818,992 capital and £59,508 revenue has been offered to the Council to carry out improvements across all six Denes.

**Recommendation**

4. It is recommended that the Cabinet release the HLF Capital Award of £818,992 for the Denes

**Reasons**

5. The recommendations are supported to enable improvements to the Denes to take place.

**Cliff Brown  
Director of Community Services**

**Background Papers**

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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CLD

S17 Crime and Disorder	Through the consultation process, resident raised concerns with safety in the Denes. These have been taken on board as part of the design of the project.
Health and Well Being	By improving the overall infrastructure within the Denes will enable residents to enjoy high quality open space, having a positive impact on their health and well being.
Sustainability	Part of the project is about improving the sustainability and ecology of the Denes.
Diversity	All residents have access to the Denes regardless of their background.
Wards Affected	Two wards affected are Northgate and Pierremont.
Groups Affected	No particular group is affected differently to any other.
Budget and Policy Framework	This is not a change to the Budget and Policy Framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The Denes is a key strategic open space within the Borough. The improvements will positively impact on the Greener theme of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
Efficiency	This report has no impact on the Council's Efficiency agenda.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

6. There are six Denes across two Wards giving a total length of 1.5 kilometres covering 10 hectares with 26 entrances. The Denes are recognised in the Darlington Open Space Strategy 2007-2017 as a key open space, serving the urban population and are identified as filling a strategic role. One of the short term actions within the strategy was to improve and enhance the Denes as a strategic park.
7. A significant amount of work has been undertaken in the last few years and the Council has worked closely with the Friends of the Denes and Groundwork North East. In 2008, a new play area was installed in the Play Dene as part of the Local Area Agreement and a Stage 1 HLF Parks and People Bid was submitted at the end of 2008.
8. In March 2009, the HLF approved the Stage 1 bid and provided the Council with funding to develop the Stage 2 submission. At this point, the Council went out through a procurement exercise to select a partner to develop the Stage 2 submission and if successful, implement. Groundwork North East was the successful contractor.
9. Groundwork North East worked closely with the Friends of the Denes developing the Stage 2 submission, which was forwarded to the HLF in December 2009. This submission was successful and approved in March 2010. A grant of £818,992 capital and £59,508 revenue has been offered to the Council to carry out a range of improvements across all six Denes.
10. The project aims to fulfil the needs and aspirations of existing and future residents, both local and town-wide, by restoring the park's historic, environmental and social value, improving the visitor experience by improving access, personal security, educational pleasure and play activities.
11. The physical improvements will include:
  - (a) All 26 entrances, of which 14 are classed as main entrances and 12 secondary entrances, will be improved with new artistic features.
  - (b) Street lighting across routes in three of the Denes.
  - (c) Replacement of all street furniture with new seats, bins, directional signage and notice boards.
  - (d) Replacement of the eight footbridges.
  - (e) General improvements to the habitat within the Denes that will enhance the biodiversity.
12. In addition, an events programme will be delivered to raise the profile of the Denes and engage existing users and the wider population of the Borough. A full range of diverse activities catering for all ages is planned, along with volunteering and training opportunities for young people aged 14 to 25. The activities will include play days, history walks, cultural events, fun days, school programme, treasure hunts and a school holiday

programme.

13. The Council's ongoing commitment to maintaining the Denes and engaging with users will be delivered through existing resources within Street Scene and Parks & Countryside. There is no additional revenue funding required to sustain the project into the future.

### **Consultation**

14. A significant amount of consultation has taken place with the Friends of the Denes and wider residents in the development of the HLF bid. All properties that back onto the Denes have been leafleted and have had the opportunity to partake in the consultation.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

15. The project has been shaped by this consultation with the final design of the scheme taking on board the comments received.