



Northumberland

County Council

CABINET

07 SEPTEMBER 2021

Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group

Report of: Neil Bradley, Service Director, Strategic Commissioning and Finance

Cabinet Member: Councillor Richard Wearmouth, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

1. Purpose of Report

The following report summarises proposed amendments to the Capital Programme considered by the officer Capital Strategy Group via email on 6 August 2021.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 **Kielder Observatory Radio Astronomy Equipment:** approve a capital contribution of £24,596 towards the installation of radio astronomy equipment at Kielder Observatory to be met from the Strategic Regeneration Reserve within the 2021-24 Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 2.2 **Horton Grange LED Lighting (Salix Loan):** approve a project to upgrade all of the school's lighting to more energy efficient LED technologies at a cost of £40,960 funded by the school through a Salix Loan, and to include this project in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2021-24.

3. Links to Corporate Plan

The Council's Capital Programme is consistent with the priorities in the Corporate Plan in particular the 'Living', 'Enjoying' and 'Thriving' priorities.

4. Background

This paper summarises reports considered by the officer Capital Strategy Group on the allocation of funding within the Medium Term Plan to specific projects.

SUMMARY OF NEW CAPITAL PROPOSALS CONSIDERED BY OFFICER CAPITAL STRATEGY GROUP VIA EMAIL ON 6 AUGUST 2021

5. KIELDER OBSERVATORY RADIO ASTRONOMY EQUIPMENT

5.1 The Group was asked to consider a proposal to contribute £24,596 of capital funding to support the purchase and installation of radio astronomy equipment at Kielder Observatory which will raise school pupil participation and boost local tourism in the Kielder area.

Background

5.2 The purchase and installation of the equipment will cost a total of £161,336 with the remaining funding coming from the Tanlaw Foundation (£93,000) and Kielder Observatory (£43,740).

5.3 Kielder is one of two observatories in England which are in protected dark sky areas, as certified by the International Dark Sky Association. It is a leading astronomy outreach facility; its mission is to create opportunities for people of all backgrounds and abilities to experience moments of inspiration, revelation, wonder and hope through observing the cosmos.

5.4 In Kielder Observatory's 13-year history, it has expanded at a remarkable rate. Originally opened in 2008 to host a small number of events each year, accessed by a few hundred people, it is now open 360 days per year, hosts 730 events and welcomes over 20,000 people as well as working in schools to inspire and educate students.

5.5 To continue to expand the facility and local, regional and national impact Kielder Observatory now requires further capital investment in radio telescope technology to add a further unique selling point to its offer. Radio telescope technology will allow greater levels of remote access which will yield greater levels of impact to the education and outreach activities currently undertaken at the site.

5.6 The impact upon Northumberland schools is projected to be delivery of pupil workshops which will train pupils how to access this and other national/international radio telescopes from school/own devices and how to interpret and use the technology remotely.

5.7 This will lead to a projection of 10,000 Northumberland pupils accessing the technology remotely in the first 3 years of operation in addition to the additional physical visits to the observatory.

CSG Recommendation

5.8 The Group supported the proposal and recommends Cabinet to approve a capital contribution of £24,596 towards the installation of radio astronomy equipment at Kielder Observatory to be met from the Strategic Regeneration Reserve within the 2021-24 Medium Term Financial Plan.

6. HORTON GRANGE LED LIGHTING (SALIX LOAN)

6.1 The Group received a proposal to upgrade all of the lighting at Horton Grange School to more energy efficient LED technologies at a cost of £40,960 funded and delivered by the school through a Salix Loan.

Background

6.2 Horton Grange Primary School originally applied for Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund to carry out a project to upgrade all of the school's lighting to more energy efficient LED technologies. The grant application was unsuccessful but given the benefits it would bring the school decided to continue with the project and - on the basis repayments could be accommodated within its future budget allocations (i.e. revenue money) - were successful in securing a 5 year interest-free loan under the Salix Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme to support the process.

6.3 Supported by the Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy, the Salix Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme provides interest free loans to public sector bodies to support the installation of energy efficiency measures, thereby reducing energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and energy bills. Applicants are required to demonstrate affordability and that the loans are repayable through energy bill savings.

6.4 The school are in a solid financial position and therefore the risk of default on the loan is considered to be very low albeit it should be noted that the Council are required to underwrite the loan in the event of default.

6.5 The interest free loan will be repaid by the school over the next 5 years from their revenue budget, so there is no direct cost to the Council.

6.6 CSG Recommendation

The Group supported the proposal and recommends Cabinet to approve the upgrade of Horton Grange School's lighting to more energy efficient LED technologies at a

cost of £40,960 funded by the school through a Salix Loan, and to include this project in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2021-24.

Implications

Policy	The capital programme is part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2021-24. The plan supports the Corporate Plan.
Finance and value for money	The report outlines proposed project allocations and amendments to the approved Capital programme. The financial implications of these proposals are outlined in the main body of the report.
Legal	There are no direct legal implications.
Procurement	In line with all other capital expenditure, the additional spend will be subject to the Council's recognised procurement procedures.
Human Resources	Not applicable.
Property	The properties affected by the proposals are identified in the main body of the report.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Not applicable.
Risk Assessment	The risks associated with the proposals are regarded as acceptable but these risks will continue to be reviewed up to and during implementation of the proposals.
Crime & Disorder	There are no Crime and Disorder implications.
Customer Consideration	There are no Customer Considerations.
Carbon reduction	Carbon Reduction measures have been considered within each project.
Health & Wellbeing	There are no Health and Wellbeing implications.

Wards	All wards
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Background Papers:

Medium Term Financial Plan 2021-24

Report sign off:

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

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Monitoring Officer/Legal	Helen Lancaster
Executive Director of Finance and S151 Officer	Jan Willis
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