

**REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 7 OCTOBER 2020****PORTFOLIO: ENTERPRISE****REPORT FROM: STRATEGIC DIRECTOR****SUBJECT: HMS BEAGLE HERITAGE PROJECT – WALLASEA ISLAND****1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 To agree that the unspent part of a £50,000 capital grant made to RSPB by the Council for the creation of facilities to commemorate HMS Beagle be used by the RSPB as set out in paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9 of this report.

**2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 A budget of £50,000 was included in the Council's 2018/19 capital programme to fund an HMS Beagle viewing platform and other facilities at RSPB Wallasea Island, which would provide a long term legacy for the District and bring in associated tourism. This capital grant was the subject of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the RSPB which regulated how the grant was to be spent.
- 2.2 On 9 October 2019 the Executive noted the proposed capital works which were estimated to be c£46,100. These works have been completed within budget, resulting in an underspend of £10,326.20 against the £50,000 budget.
- 2.3 RSPB has asked to use this underspend for further capital works at the site.

**3 SALIENT INFORMATION**

- 3.1 On 9 October 2019, the Executive noted the capital works (total (c£46,100) proposed to be undertaken comprised:

Viewing platform	c£16,000
Interpretation (at viewing platform; lagoons and car park)	c£8,000
Surfacing at toilet area	c£600
Benches (at viewing platform and lagoons)	c£2,500
Improvements to existing overflow car parking and surfacing at key pedestrian areas	c£19,000

- 3.2 Since that date, the RSPB has used the funding to create the “Beagle Trail” – a signposted walk which takes visitors from the car park to the sea wall where the viewing platform, overlooking the place where HMS Beagle was moored, has been constructed. This is a raised area on the south seawall which is surfaced with benches and which will also have an interpretation board. (This is currently under commission.)
- 3.3 The Beagle Trail passes by three lagoons named Darwin, FitzRoy and Stokes. A bench has been installed by the lagoons and another interpretation board is currently under commission.
- 3.4 Part of the Beagle Trail which is close to the car park and which in winter becomes very wet and unusable by some user groups has been resurfaced.
- 3.5 New signage has been installed for visitors to be able to locate the Beagle Trail – a map in the car park, Beagle trail markers and ‘you are here’ maps.
- 3.6 Car parking space for visitors has been increased.
- 3.7 Actual costs incurred are set out below:

	Estimated		Actual
Viewing platform	c£16,000		£11,376.75
Interpretation (at viewing platform; lagoons and car park)	c£8,000	Interpretation boards	£3,700.00
		Trail markers and arrows	£164.50
		Maps	£400.00
Surfacing at toilet area	c£600		£520.00
Benches (at viewing platform and lagoons)	c£2,500		£2,735.00
Improvements to existing overflow car parking and surfacing at key pedestrian areas	c£19,000	Access Path	£12,921.30
		Overflow car park	£7,816.25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>c£46,100</b>		<b>£39,633.80</b>

- 3.8 An underspend against the original grant sum of £50,000 creates an opportunity for use of remaining capital funds of £10,326.20. RSPB has indicated that it will be building a new hide this autumn overlooking Darwin and Fitzroy Lagoons. It has proposed to lay a path surface similar to that already laid under the terms of the current project. This would make the hide accessible to all visitors to the reserve and continue the path surface that the Council has already granted money for. The hide will be a wonderful addition to the reserve allowing people views across the lagoons from a higher vantage point and away from the elements. As visitors walk up the mound the hide sits on, they will appear above the embankment. Some fencing is required to prevent visitors disturbing the wildlife and it is proposed that hazel hurdle fencing would provide this whilst also letting some wind through. The small gaps will mean that the wind force on the fence will be reduced, but still provide screening to the wildlife.
- 3.9 The Executive is asked to agree use of the remaining monies to fund the following additional works, the estimated costs of which are as follows:

Access path to hide	c£7,257.94
Hazel hurdle screening fence	c£2,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>c£9,257.94</b>

#### 4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 If the Executive does not approve this further use of the grant monies then the project will come to an end and the underspend will be returned to the Council's general reserves.
- 4.2 If the Executive does approve this further use of the grant monies, then the responsibility for delivery within the proscribed budget remains with the RSPB.

#### 5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Executive has previously agreed a sum of £50,000 to fund capital works by RSPB at Wallasea island and funding of this amount has been allocated within the Council's capital programme. Allocation of the anticipated underspend against original planned expenditure on further capital works will not require the Council to commit any further resources.

#### 6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are none arising out of the contents of this report.

**7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and found there to be no impacts (either positive or negative) on protected groups as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

LT Lead Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



**Strategic Director**

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**Background Papers:-**

None.

For further information please contact Angela Hutchings, (Strategic Director)

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