

EXTRACT FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTE OF 15 AUGUST 2017**3. UNION CHAIN BRIDGE - REQUEST TO INCREASE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION**

3.1 With reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of 7 March 2017, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Assets and Infrastructure seeking approval to increase the funding for the Union Chain Bridge Project to £1M to support the application to Heritage Lottery Fund and match the commitment from Northumberland County Council. The Project Management Team Leader, Mr Ewan Doyle, explained that, since the update to the Executive Committee in March 2017, that stated the Heritage Lottery Fund application date of June 2017, there had been several developments on the project that had affected its progress and budget estimate, ultimately causing a delay in the application to Heritage Lottery from Northumberland County Council, as lead agents, until December 2017. There had been proactive consultation with Historic England over the past twelve months, which was required to support the Heritage Lottery Fund application. Unfortunately Historic England required a higher level of restoration to the original features than originally envisaged and there was also increased scope to the engineering works required. This had contributed to an estimated increase from the aspiration of circa £5M project to £7.8M, and ultimately creating a £900k funding gap. Northumberland County Council had approved a report to their Cabinet Committee to re-affirm their commitment to the project and increase their financial contribution over the next 3 years from £550k to £755k with an overall project contribution estimated at £1M. A matched contribution of £1M was also consequently expected from Scottish Borders Council. A table within the report outlined Northumberland County Council's revised proposed funding structure for the project. Representatives from the Heritage Lottery Fund indicated that there was still strong support for the project but that if the bid was submitted with the request for increase in funding the project would be considered at a national, rather than local, level and have to compete with other national projects.

3.2 In discussing the report Members were in support of the project to restore the bridge, recognising its historical significance and importance as a crossing point and link between two communities and tourist locations. It was recognised that if the Heritage Lottery Fund application was unsuccessful the authorities would be left with a declining asset which may require an increased contribution from both authorities for its repair or replacement, or a reduction in the bridge's capacity to carry vehicular traffic. Concern was expressed at the request for additional funding for the project and the proposal to allocate this from the Roads and Bridges capital block in future years, for which there would be many other competing demands. The delay in the application to Heritage Lottery Fund had allowed a much more technical investigation on the condition of the bridge, with only 25% of the estimated increase in cost due to heritage aspects. The Chief Financial Officer noted the risks relating to large funding packages which were reliant on multiple funding partners and explained that the £450k was being vired within the 2019/20 and 2020/21 Roads and Bridges capital block, meaning the current spend on Roads and Bridges was unaffected. There would be the opportunity for Members to revisit the quantum of the Roads and Bridges allocation when future years' budgets were being developed, subject to the overall resources available to the Council. Members supported the recommendations but indicated that they would be unlikely to support any further increase in contribution from Scottish Borders Council should this be requested in the future.

**DECISION
AGREED:-**

- (a) **to increase the financial commitment to the Union Chain Bridge Project by £450k, in line with the current agreement with Northumberland County Council; and**

- (b) to approve the virements of £190k in 2019/20 and £260k in 2020/21 from Roads and Bridges capital block to the Union Chain Bridge.**