

AGENDA ITEM NO 7

**TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
BUDGET AND POLICY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 10th FEBRUARY 2026**

**BRIEFING NOTE
ABBEY REMAINS PROJECT**

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Council have been regularly briefed on progress relating to the Abbey Remains Restoration Project. The project scope has been considered and endorsed formally by Council in 2024 and on 4th February 2025 the Council agreed the content Partnership Agreement between Tavistock Town Council and Tavistock Heritage Trust, with the Council fulfilling the role of Accountable Body for the Project. In addition, it was also agreed that the Council on behalf of the project team would be the applicant for grant submissions to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and Historic England.
- 1.2 In February 2025 a grant application to NLHF was submitted for IRO £250,000 with the applicant notified in April that they had been unsuccessful against other projects based on the unsecured match funding allocation hypothecated to Historic England. Officers discussed the matter with NLHF and were advised a re-submission would be strongly encouraged if identified unsecured funding was secured. After several meetings with Historic England and the Project Delivery Group the Council submitted a grant application on 9th July (£254,000 with match funding), targeted at the renovation of Betsy Grimbals Tower and TTC were notified by Historic England on 10th Oct that they had been successful with the grant application, amount awarded, £195,449 towards eligible project costs of £245,449. Following notification, the necessary contracts have been signed with Historic England, 25% part payment received with a grant expiry date of mid Nov 2025.
- 1.3 Following on from this notification a meeting was held with NLHF on 21st Oct. Now that the match funding from Historic England had been secured, NLHF advised that they would encourage a resubmission of the application for the wider project deliverables

that failed in early 25. The Council on behalf of the Abbey Remains Partnership submitted the grant application to NLHF on 29th October with NLHF advising that the application would be considered in mid-January 26 with decision notification that month. The timing of the determination date meant that the procurement of professional services for the conservation architects relating to the capital works to Betsy Grimbals Tower and Stillhouse would need to be advertised in January 2026 subject to funding.

2. THE CURRENT SITUATION

- 2.1 The design brief for the conservation architects was compiled along with the supporting documentation and was advertised in January on Contract Finder and Council website with a return date 29th January 2026.

<https://www.tavistock.gov.uk/information/procurementtenders/brief>

The Council received three tender returns, two of which are under consideration with interviews being arranged for weeks commencing 9th February as part of the due diligence process. Following formal appointment there is an anticipated one week mobilisation period with February/March allocated for development of capital scope/specification, inspections, applications for statutory consents and implementation of the procurement process for the appointment of a principal contractor.

- 2.2 I am pleased to report that on 15th January 2026, subject to the necessary conditions being met the Council and THT were notified that the NLHF grant application for £249,226 had been successful. The NLHF specified approved purposes being:

a) To undertake repair and conservation works to Betsy Grimbals Tower and the Stillhouse as outlined in your application, to include vegetation removal, loose stonework removal, repairs and repointing of the masonry, structural pinning and turf capping. Improve physical access where possible, and install solar-powered lighting.

- b) *Explore several areas of the abbey precinct through geophysical surveys and archaeological excavations, and undertake documentary research to enhance understanding of the site. Archive findings with Tavistock Museum.*
 - c) *Produce updated interpretation about Tavistock Abbey to feature at the Guildhall Interpretation Centre, Tavistock Museum and online. Create or update resources for local educators and to support guided walks, talks and events.*
 - d) *Deliver a community engagement programme to include volunteering opportunities, conservation training visits, a talk series, school event days and activities with Tavistock Youth Café.*
- 2.3 To receive 'Permission to Start' from NLHF, anticipated on 5th February 2026, the partnership has been working on providing additional information. This includes projection of a 'Project Governance Chart', procurement strategy, cash flow chart, explanation around how statutory consents/licences will be achieved (meeting scheduled with Historic England on 12th February pertaining to this), review of Risk Register, along with formal sign off of the contract with NLHF by two signatories within the Council. In addition a press release has been sent to NLHF for review/comment.
- 2.4 A scoping meeting was held on 2nd February 2026 with the preferred Evaluation Consultant with an inception meeting, post appointment scheduled for 19th February 2026.
- 2.5 Attached is the Project Plan (Appendix 1), the Project Governance Chart (Appendix 2) and associated information relating to decision making arrangements and project deliverables.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Committee and Council
- a) receive, review and endorse/adopt the Project governance documents and associated approach, including timetable for action, procurement and decision making arrangements associated with the above initiative (enclosed); and

- b) authorise the General Manager to undertake the day to day aspects of the operation and management of the project on behalf of the Council.

3.2 The instructions of the Committee and Council are sought.

Note: decisions around appointments for consultants/contractors fall to be made through the Partnership Project Steering Group with contracts being let by the Council in accordance with the applicable financial regulations.

**WAYNE SOUTHALL
GENERAL MANAGER
FEBRUARY 2026
TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL**