

North Yorkshire Council

Environment Executive Members

23 January 2026

Approval of Five-year Business Plan and 10-year Maintenance Plan for South Cliff Gardens, Scarborough

Report of the Assistant Director, Highways & Infrastructure

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To gain approval and sign off from the Corporate Director - Environment in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation for the 'Management and Maintenance Plan' and 'Business Plan' for South Cliff Gardens project, which are pre-requisite for project closure and final funding draw down.
- 1.2 To highlight the proposed charging for the room hire of Beeforths Hive, as part of the South Cliff Gardens 'Business Plan'.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 On 10 January 2019 an HLF 'Parks for People' grant of £4,665,700 was awarded to Scarborough Borough Council to restore the South Cliff Gardens. In addition to this the former Scarborough Council committed £2,129,960 and an additional £236,229 was donated, bringing the budget for the refurbishment of the gardens to £7,031,889.
- 2.2 This report explains the work undertaken and the commitment to continue with the ongoing increased maintenance level and community engagement as required for the funding as well as a proposed business plan (Appendix A) to ensure additional income is brought into the gardens.
- 2.3 The main aim of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) project was "To save the unique and enchanting heritage of South Cliff Gardens from a point of critical decline and to breathe new life into the Gardens so they appeal to 21st century communities and become a vibrant and well-used park once again."

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 South Cliff Gardens are located on the South Bay of Scarborough in North Yorkshire. The Gardens are a designated heritage asset, being listed Grade II on the Historic England Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Within the gardens are further designated heritage assets consisting of several individually listed buildings and curtilage structures. Principal amongst these structures is The Spa, originating in the 17th century, that was subsequently developed and expanded in the 18th and 19th centuries and which together with the emerging fashion for sea bathing provides Scarborough with a justifiable claim to be England's first true seaside resort.
- 3.2 The development of the spa, the town and its role as a resort saw the provision of new facilities for visitors along the South Cliff, amongst them gardens open to the public. Some of these were provided by the town council, others by the Spa company while the wealth generated from increasing tourism led to many of the town's elite developing their own

private gardens. Further developments and extensions during the 20th century culminated in the South Cliff Gardens coming under the singular management of the Borough Council, both through purchase and by gift. The registered gardens include not only those to the east of the Esplanade on the cliff itself, but also the Valley Gardens, Prince of Wales Gardens and Shuttleworth Gardens to the west of the Esplanade.

- 3.3 A large scale £7m restoration project has taken place since 2019 with the final funding grant ending in October 2025. As part of the conditions of that grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the recipients are required to submit a Business Plan to show how the Council can ensure the success of the project moving forwards without the grant funding, as well as a Management and Maintenance Plan (Appendix B) for the gardens to ensure the standards remain high quality for the public to enjoy.
- 3.4 Submission of both these documents to a standard deemed satisfactory to the National Lottery will enable the Council to claim the remainder of the grant (which this report is also seeking approval to do). This is currently £719,490.64.

4.0 SOUTH CLIFF GARDENS – KEY WORKING DOCUMENTS

4.1 Business Plan

- 4.1.1 The five-year business plan has considered numerous opportunities to generate additional income within South Cliff Gardens. Some have been dismissed whilst others have been added as actual income generators which need implementation with immediate effect.
- 4.1.2 Income generated within the gardens will be retained and reinvested within the gardens to ensure they remain high quality moving forwards. Should the proposed income levels not be met, the management and maintenance within the gardens will continue as this has already been included within staffing base budgets.
- 4.1.3 The main income generator detailed is to charge for use of Beeforths Hive – this is a purpose-built multi-purpose building using the NLHF grant. Part of the building is a small operational depot and rest room. Part of the building is a community room with small kitchenette, provision of tables and chairs as well as access to an accessible toilet. It is this community room which will be hired to community groups, for events, meetings etc. Since completion there have been numerous regular and some one-off users of this facility all of whom are aware a charge will be introduced. The charge will be the same as that for rooms within NYC libraries (Hourly rental £15.00 per hour; Half day rental £55.00 max four hours; Full day rental £110.00 max eight hours; cancellation fees to be considered for all options) so no additional Fees and Charges are being considered. This report seeks approval that charging can commence in February 2026.
- 4.1.4 This report also seeks an approval signature on the business plan which will then be submitted to NLHF as well as published online and shared with the Friends of South Cliff Gardens.

4.2 Management and Maintenance Plan

- 4.2.1 This 10-year management and maintenance plan is a requirement of the funding grant from NLHF. It includes a detailed action plan about how an uplifted maintenance schedule will be managed whether this is by Parks and Grounds staff, Property, Compliance and Facilities staff or volunteers.
- 4.2.2 This report seeks an approval signature on the management and maintenance plan (with associated appendices) which will then be submitted to NLHF as well as published online and shared with the Friends of South Cliff Gardens.

4.3 Final Grant Claim from NLHF

- 4.3.1 In 2019 a NLHF fund was awarded to Scarborough Borough Council of £4.66m.
- 4.3.2 This grant was awarded with specific criteria and methods of spend. Once each element had commenced, all invoices were submitted on a quarterly basis and reclaimed from NLHF, however repayment was at 85% with the remainder being held to ensure project completion.
- 4.3.3 We are now at a point of project completion – once the Business Plan and Management and Maintenance Plan are both submitted the Council will be eligible to make the final grant claim of £719,490.64.
- 4.3.4 This report therefore seeks approval to submit the final grant claim to NLHF and receive the remaining funding of £719,490.64.

5.0 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN AND RESPONSES

- 5.1 Internal consultation has been taking place with staff from the former Major Projects Team of former Scarborough Borough Council who originally coordinated and managed the improvements at South Cliff Gardens.
- 5.2 Within the Parks and Grounds team consultation has taken place with the East Operational Team, the Parks Commercial Team and Parks Community Assets and Engagement Team as well as the Trees and Woodlands Team.
- 5.3 Consultation has also been conducted with Facilities Management Team to assess the space availability to hire the community facility at Beeforths Hive, with the finance team to review the cost implications.
- 5.4 Division Councillor for Weaponness and Ramshill, Cllr Richard Maw has also been contacted in relation to this report. His feedback is below.
 - 5.4.1 “I am supportive of the improvement project at South Cliff Gardens, which has delivered significant enhancements to a much-loved and historically important public space. These improvements have enabled both local residents and visitors to enjoy the gardens in a safe, accessible, and attractive environment.
 - 5.4.2 While I recognise that introducing charges for some aspects of the gardens may raise concerns, I also acknowledge the financial challenges facing local authorities in maintaining public assets to a high standard. In this context, I am supportive of the introduction of charges for certain facilities, provided they are fair, proportionate, and carefully considered.
 - 5.4.3 It is essential that the core experience of the gardens - open access to the landscape, paths, and green spaces - remains free to all. Any charges should apply only to specific, optional services or facilities and must not create barriers to access for the local community.
 - 5.4.4 I will continue to monitor the implementation of any charging arrangements to ensure they strike the right balance between financial sustainability and public accessibility.”

6.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

6.1 The delivery of the South Cliff Gardens project and associated ongoing business and management plans contribute to the following Council priorities:

- **Thriving and empowered communities** – Supporting our places by supporting regeneration and celebrating culture and heritage.
- **Sustainable and connected places** – Protecting and enhancing our built and natural heritage by improving the local environment.
- **Safe, healthy and living well** – Support healthy communities that live and age well by working in partnership with the voluntary sector.

7.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 Not approving the 4 items in the recommendations for this report was considered but rejected. This was because it will result in the council not receiving the remainder of the NLHF grant of £719,490.64 to fund the capital spend incurred on South Cliff Gardens.

7.2 In addition, this will also have a reputational impact with a view from NLHF and other potential funders that NYC are unable to meet grant requirements therefore we may not be eligible to apply for external grants in future.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The legacy project is funded from a grant award from the National Lottery Heritage Fund of £4,665,700, supplemented with £2,129,960 from the former Scarborough Borough Council and £236,229 of fund raising for a total budget of £7,031,889. However, both the total income and expenditure has exceeded this with a net shortfall of £33,173 shown. This was due to an overcharging of salary costs to the project in 2024/25, where the full cost rather than the uplift for enhanced management and maintenance was charged.

Income to date	
Local authority	£2,009,753
Other fundraising	£105,000
Increased M&M met by SBC	£547,460
Noncash contributions	£950
Volunteer time	£121,091
HLF Grant	£3,946,234
TOTAL INCOME TO DATE	£6,730,488
Final NLHF Grant to claim	£719,466
PROJECT INCOME TOTAL	£7,449,954
Expenditure to date	
Capital Costs	£6,470,732
Activity Costs (staff, training, volunteering & engagement)	£547,116
Other costs (publicity, contingency, management & maintenance uplift).	£465,279
TOTAL EXPENDITURE TO DATE	£7,483,127

- 8.2 The business plan sets out proposals to generate additional modest income of at least £12,206 from 2026/27 onwards derived from rental income of Beeforth's Hive and events and activities in the gardens. This will contribute to the overall running costs for management and maintenance of the gardens.
- 8.3 The estimated annual management and maintenance costs are £353,201 as set out in the maintenance and management plan (minus volunteer hours). Existing staffing budgets of £270,488, and £70,507 revenue costs (e.g. for materials, equipment, services) are available to cover these costs along with estimated annual income of £12,206. The overall budget for the Parks and Grounds Service is overspending and a review is underway to ensure actions are taken to bring the spend back on budget. In addition, achievement of the increased income target is a risk for the service, and it should be highlighted that any shortfall in income will result in an ongoing budget pressure for the Directorate. However, the management and maintenance plan is a condition of receiving the grant funding and so without it, the draw down of the remaining grant funding of £719k will not be possible.
- 8.4 Officers from NYC continue to work closely with the NLHF to ensure all conditions of the grant funding are met. A particular challenge has been around the maintenance of the cliff area where slope stabilisation works were undertaken prior to this project, with a key aim of funding to restore this area. Therefore, the draw down of the remaining grant is subject to a final site visit on 12 March 2026.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The NLHF Grant was awarded in January 2019. The approved purposes of the grant (which have all been achieved) related to:
- Restore 14 shelter buildings and a clock tower; repair/replace/add railings, fencing, litter bins and benches; restore/reopen funicular tunnel and restore Italian steps.
 - Tree pruning/removal/planting; perennial, ground flora, shrub and under-storey planting habitat management/enhancement and Japanese Knotweed management.
 - Repair/resurface footpaths; create accessible through-route; cover and seed obsolete paths; and repair steps/paving.
 - Repair retaining walls; undertake minor earthworks; improve drainage; and repair/replace/extend lighting and electrical connections.
 - Build new operations centre (incorporating public toilets); install fitness distance markers and cycle parking/signage; and create a 'family hub' near the Clock Café, with new play area and toilets/changing facilities.
 - Deliver SSP reinstatement, plant specimen trees, ornamental shrubs, herbaceous plants, wildflowers and bulbs; repair/reinststate/replace shelters, rock-work, lighting and fencing and create a new lost shelter feature.
 - Reinterpret through way-marking, signage, interpretation panels, brass rubbing trail, oral history audio posts; orienteering/geocaching, leaflets and web material.
 - Engage priority underrepresented groups as identified through extensive Development work.
 - Deliver extensive volunteering, training and activity programmes, in partnership with Friends of South Cliff Gardens and numerous other organisations.
 - Continue to explore/develop proposals for putting green shelter/toilets and report progress to HLF.
 - Prior to practical completion submit an up-to-date Management and Maintenance Plan to HLF's satisfaction.
 - Before the project complete and the final HLF payment is made, submit an up-to-date Business Plan to HLF's satisfaction.

9.2 The standard terms of the NLHF grant and the additional grant conditions will last for 20 years from the Project Completion Date therefore the Council is legally bound by the terms for 20 years. This will include ensuring that the property must remain as Gardens and within the council's control for this period (unless otherwise agreed with NLHF).

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The proposal/report will not have any detrimental impact in terms of EIA. See Appendix C

11.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The improvements at South Cliff Gardens have a positive impact on Climate Change and will continue to be managed and maintained in this way due to the supporting Management and Maintenance plan required as part of the NLHF grant. See Appendix D

12.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The South Cliff Gardens project has been scheduled to conclude by March 2026 with all works completed and the final funding claim submitted. This report outlines the key achievements and the proposed ongoing maintenance for the gardens, which are mandatory requirements to enable project closure and full grant draw down.

13.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Director – Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation approves:

- i. the Business Plan for South Cliff Gardens;
- ii. the Management and Maintenance Plan for South Cliff Gardens and to note that this is reliant on income generation of £12,206 per annum and
- iii. the submission to claim for the remaining National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) capital grant due of £719,490.64.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – South Cliff Gardens Management and Maintenance Plan with costed breakdown and monthly work schedule

Appendix B – South Cliff Gardens Business Plan

Appendix C – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix D – Climate Change Impact Assessment

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

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12 January 2026

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Jon Clubb Head of Parks and Grounds

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.