

## Helix shaping up nicely for Falkirk

Plans to transform a vacant 300 hectare site between Grangemouth and Falkirk into a thriving environmental community took another step forward today with the news that the Big Lottery Fund has awarded The Helix project a development grant of up to £250,000, as part of its Living Landmarks programme.

They are amongst 23 projects across the UK that have made it on to the shortlist to compete for a small number of grants of between £10 million and £25 million each.

The second stage funding will allow partners in the project to develop a full scale submission next year that could see over £40m investment in the area as the site is developed.

The Helix, a project in the innovative My Future's in Falkirk economic development initiative, aims to establish a community resource that is based around the environment and would be driven by community participation and use best practice design, construction and management of a number of projects.

Once completed, The Helix would offer 34 kilometres of paths and cycle networks; see 750,000 trees planted, five new biodiversity nature parks, create employment through community enterprise businesses and support new 'micro' businesses. In addition, a new 1.85km canal link would be created linking Grangemouth into Scotland's extensive canal network.

Councillor David Alexander, Leader of Falkirk Council: 'The project offers a really different approach to improving our local communities and their environment. The next stage will see widespread work with schools, landowners, community groups, the business sector and voluntary agencies in order to shape the final design of The Helix and develop its true potential as a community resource.'

'We are determined to build a successful case for The Helix now we have this additional funding in place.'

Richard Millar, Service and Business Development Manager at British Waterways Scotland said: "The real vision behind The Helix is the value it will place in the community through heritage, landmark structures and the environment. It will put Falkirk and Grangemouth firmly on the map with a landscape and canal link which will be the envy of all."

Central Scotland Forest Trust's Chief Executive Simon Rennie added 'We are extremely excited about this news, local people have always been proud of the area and its history, this next stage of funding is an important step towards improving not only the landscape but also what is central to everything that we do, improving the quality of people's lives.'

Partners in the project (Falkirk Council, British Waterways and Central Scotland Forest Trust) will use the funding to:

- \* test the feasibility of potential end uses of the site;
- \* carry out technical assessments and site audits;
- \* develop a final 'masterplan' and costings;
- \* begin a massive community consultation and;

\* begin a public art programme through artist led workshops.

The name 'Helix' comes from the distinctive shape of the project as it spirals down from Langlees to Laurieston and Polmont. It would become a key component of Falkirk's 'Eco Park' project, part of the My Future's In Falkirk economic regeneration initiative for the area.

A formal announcement regarding successful bidders is expected in September 2007.

#### Notes to editors

The Big Lottery Fund is the joint operating name of the New Opportunities Fund and the National Lotteries Charities Board (which made grants under the name of the Community Fund). The Big Lottery Fund, launched on 1 June 2004, is distributing half of all National Lottery good cause funding across the UK.

The Big Lottery Living Landmarks Programme will award £140 million across the UK to initiatives that has been designed to inspire communities to transform, revitalise and regenerate the places where they live, through social and community projects and major infrastructure investments.

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Full details of Big Lottery Fund projects and grant awards are available at [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)

My Future's In Falkirk is an innovative 10 year regeneration initiative which has started to create up to 4250 jobs, stimulate up to £200m of additional investment, attract a diverse range of businesses to the area and generate up to £50m a year for the Falkirk economy. It is transforming Falkirk and the surrounding area into a thriving, diverse modern economy that attracts businesses and visitors into the area and provides jobs for local people.

Projects within My Future's In Falkirk fall into four key themes; developing new technologies, creating capacity for business growth, exploiting physical and digital connections to the world and living, working and visiting Falkirk.

The £23m initiative (originally referred to as the Falkirk Action Plan) was launched in December 2002 by a partnership of Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley, BP and Falkirk Council with support from the European Regional Development Fund.

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