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Date: 19th May 2023

Cathy Beare
Chair of Leas Lift Community Interest Organisation

Dear Cathy

Leas Lift, Folkestone

I take great pleasure in writing on behalf of Folkestone and Hythe District Council to confirm our support of the Folkestone Leas Lift project.

The Council is firmly committed to supporting you and the board as best as we can to restore the much beloved Grade II* listed Victorian water lift that has provided such enjoyment and happy memories for so many of our residents and visitors alike. We have for a long time had a strong working relationship with the board. We have been consulted and kept updated on a regular basis and are very confident that the organisation and board are the right people to deliver this project and we will continue to provide support where required.

The work the Board has progressed to date has been exemplary and to reach the hugely significant milestone of submitting the stage 2 National Lottery Heritage Fund application is a major achievement. To further support the efforts of the Board, the Council has identified key officers across a range of disciplines, including **planning, legal and regeneration, who will continue to work to facilitate delivery of the project.**

In my role as a member of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team, I will take an active role in championing the project, ensuring that the Council is responsive to the needs of the project moving forward. I am pleased to confirm that at this stage, **the planning application is going through the consultation stage and a positive outcome is expected by the end of June 2023.** Alongside this, **an informal agreement on the required leasing of land has been reached.** I would also add that the Council will manage the **£106 contribution, which is part of the overall project funding plan, in a flexible way, to support the delivery programme milestones.**

The Grade II* Leas Lift is a very rare cliff funicular railway of national significance situated in the Leas & Bayle Conservation Area of Folkestone. Historic England have confirmed that "it is one of only eight water balance cliff lifts in the country, of which only three operate using their original system. It retains its original engineering system, including its 1890 reciprocating pumps and the only working band brake in a funicular railway worldwide". The heritage value is recognised by the Council and the community.

The Council has worked with key stakeholders and the community to develop a Place Plan for Folkestone town centre which sets an ambition for future growth and investment to ensure the town has a vibrant and sustainable future. The Leas Lift is identified as an important heritage asset in this work and the reinstatement of the lift has been viewed as a very positive intervention by all involved. The Lift has always been considered the linchpin between The Leas and seafront, which has been re-affirmed as demonstrated by the level of feedback from public and stakeholder consultation during the Place Plan development.

This project will not only celebrate and promote a significant heritage asset; it will also play a key role in supporting the future of the town by creating sustainable access for people to and from the Coastal Park and beachfront. We are encouraged that your plans to tell the story of the Leas Lift will complement the Council's proposals for improving signage and interpretation in the town. The economic and community benefits arising from the project have already started to deliver jobs and boost the local economy. This includes the successful café business and the Leas Lift Lockout Rooms, which is a tremendous example of the entrepreneurial flair the Board demonstrates when seeking to raise funds for the project.

We look forward to working with the Board to support the creation of new jobs and opportunities for apprenticeships and training schemes during the construction phase and when the lift is restored and operational. This commitment to local people, along with the plans to continue to engage and involve the community will create opportunities to further strengthen the social connection of local people of all ages to their town.

The Council's ambition for the district is based on the key themes of *encouraging positive community leadership, a thriving environment, growing a vibrant economy and provision of quality infrastructure*. The Leas Lift project will deliver positive outcomes to support each of these themes and is a terrific example of the way in which heritage will play a major role in ensuring a sustainable future for Folkestone.

Kind regards



Ewan Green
Director of Place