

New delays for cash millions

HELENSBURGH'S hopes of securing a vital funding boost have hit another snag.

The town is bidding for a share in a multi-million pound windfall set aside for waterfront regeneration projects.

Rothsary, Dunoon, Campbeltown and Oban are also competing for a share of the cash and outline business cases for each of the towns have been drawn up by independent experts.

Council chiefs were due to decide how to split the £10 million at the end of the month, but the judgement has now been pushed back until August. It is the latest in a series of delays which have plagued the decision making process.

Gary Mulvaney, councillor for Helensburgh Central has condemned the hold up, saying: "It's disappointing. A lot of work has been done in Helensburgh and Lomond to pull the case together and make sure our sub-

mission was on time. It seems every time we take a step forward, we have to take two steps back while we wait for everyone else to catch up. It's like we are in a race and out in front, but we've been told to wait for the others so we can cross the finish line together.

"Everybody has been getting geared up to hear in June, so it's frustrating that the decision has now been put back until August."

The frustrated councillor, continued: "Ultimately the 36 members of the council will have to make up their minds about how to spend the £10 million and more than likely someone is going to be disappointed."

"I can't envisage that if this process goes on any longer, it will make the decision any easier. There's no point in having a budget ready for 2009 onwards if nobody has the green light to use it. Simply dividing the money

equally between all the towns will not be making best use of the money and would certainly not be the best way forward. It would be a political fix of the worst kind."

A council spokeswoman said: "There have been significant delays in the presentation of the Outline Business Cases and a prolonged exchange between the five project boards and Cogent (consultants).

"There are outstanding elements in relation to the factual content and style raised by most boards and issues about the completeness of the cost/benefit and risk/deliverability quantification. In addition, RPS, the scoring consultants, have also raised a number of queries which require addressing before they can score the OBCs.

"We will, in the interim, continue to work with consultants to complete the OBC and scoring process to enable reports to go to the next meeting."