

Five towns still in running for cash

HELENSBURGH'S bid for cash to aid regeneration has been given the green light to progress to the next round — but so have four others.

Councillors on the Argyll and Bute authority voted to allow all five towns competing for funding to move on and compile their outline business case documents.

Dunoon, Campbeltown, Helensburgh, Oban and Rothesay will all receive cash to prepare the document, despite prophecies that only the towns rated top in ranking assessments carried out by council officers would be allowed to continue with their bids.

We told two weeks ago how Dunoon's Initial Business Case had slotted in to top place with an overall score of 63.5, compared to Helensburgh's 59.65.

But at last Wednesday's full meeting of the authority in Lochgilphead, councillors vetoed the idea of knocking any towns out of the cash running.

Instead, all will be funded to prepare Outline Business Case blueprints, before

By Tracy-Ann Carmichael

all documents are scrutinised and ranked once again, this time by a team of independent assessors.

The motion to progress all towns in the cash race was tabled by Council Leader Dick Walsh and seconded by Councillor Robert Macintyre, who represents the Isle of Bute.

The council have allocated a staged £2.9m sum over the next five years for the regeneration fund.

A £1m sum is earmarked for 2009/10, with a further £1m for 2010/11 and £900,000 in 2011/12. However, the authority say they have not ruled out allocating further monies during forthcoming budgetary preparations.

It is not clear how many towns will benefit, but a spokeswoman for the authority confirmed the project ranked highest priority will progress first, followed by the others in priority order.