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Crucial time for funds bid

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Helensburgh's bid to attract funding millions is set to reach a climax.

The decision should be known by the end of April and, if successful, the project would make a major difference to the seafront, Colquhoun Square and Kidston Park, with the intention of making the area more appealing to residents and visitors, maintaining trade in the town and hopefully bringing new investment.

However, the £10 million up for grabs is also being competed for by other Argyll and Bute towns — Rothesay, Dunoon, Oban and Campbeltown — although it is not thought that one town will receive all the cash, instead two or three areas will share the amount over a four-year period, starting in the next financial year.

The bids for the project have to be submitted by the end of this month and a decision by Argyll and Bute Council is likely by the end of April.

Independent consultants have been appointed to help each town draw up its business plans and they will be visiting the town on April 1 and 2 to help the Helensburgh Partnership — a group made up of traders, Chamber of Commerce, Helensburgh Lomond councillors and Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire.

Other independent consultants will evaluate each scheme and make recommendations to the council.

The Burgh scheme includes enhancing the esplanade area along West Clyde Street with a high-quality design, re-develop Kidston Park by demolishing the toilets and providing a cafe and play area so that people can make better use of the facilities, opening up Colquhoun Square with wider pavements to make it more pedestrian friendly and providing farmers and continental markets.

The proposals were outlined at last week's meeting of Helensburgh Community Council by chairman Mr Millar, who said that partly pedestrianising Colquhoun Square would help bring more business to the town and create "a more pleasant place". Councillor Vivien Dance said: "We have to bid for this and I think we have an excellent case. It would be an improvement to the public realm. It looks exciting, but we have to get the business case in."

Councillor Ellen Morton, Partnership member, said: "We want to get at least a chunk of this money for Helensburgh. The Business Plan is in the process of being drawn up and it is really important that we get everyone to sign up to it and that everything is non-contentious."

"We want to focus on regenerating the town centre, keeping local people shopping and traders in the town and revitalise the area and encourage other shops to come in.

"We want to provide something that is durable in the way of design and attractive and I am hopeful that we will be able to take the community with us as Helensburgh badly needs regeneration."

By Steve McElroy

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