

Subject:	Valley of Stone Greenway	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	12 th June 2013
Report of:	Planning Manager	Portfolio Holder:	Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required: Yes	Attached: Yes	
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required: Yes	Attached: No	
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That Cabinet supports the development of a Strategy which will create a “Valley of Stone Greenway” tourist attraction and sustainable transport corridor and confirm that Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure acts as the Council’s “Cycling Champion”.
1.2	That all future minor amendments to the strategy to be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.
1.3	That future reports confirming the financial/land resource requirements for the various elements of the Strategy to be brought to a further meeting

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To seek the support of Cabinet for the development of the “Valley of Stone Greenway” including views on the proposed name, seek Cabinet’s views on how best to address blockages and identify an appropriate way forward.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **Regenerating Rossendale:** This priority focuses on regeneration in its broadest sense, so it means supporting communities that get on well together, attracting sustainable investment, promoting Rossendale, as well as working as an enabler to promote the physical regeneration of Rossendale.
 - **Responsive Value for Money Services:** This priority is about the Council working collaboratively, being a provider, procurer and a commissioner of services that are efficient and that meet the needs of local people.
 - **Clean and Green Rossendale:** This priority focuses on clean streets and town centres and well managed open spaces, whilst recognising that the Council has to work with communities and as a partner to deliver this ambition.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- Obtaining less than maximum land value on a small number of Council owned sites
- Investment of staff time into negotiating with reluctant landowners on key bottlenecks with no guarantee of successful delivery
- Pursuing funding for delivery of elements of the Project with no guarantee of success
- Ongoing maintenance costs and responsibility requires further determination

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.1 Cycling is already a major tourist and economic generator for Rossendale, in particular Lee Quarry. The old Railway line from Rawtenstall to Rochdale via Bacup and Whitworth has already been partly developed as a Greenway (a cycleway with enough space for pedestrians and facilities for equestrians alongside) but some significant gaps remain which prevent its use as a through route. In other places where the Greenway has already been constructed the gradients used are too steep for disabled users and need easing (e.g. Oak Street, Whitworth). There is also currently no direct cycle link into Bacup. In some locations the bridleway will be separate from the cycleway, e.g. horses would not be expected to use the re-opened Glen tunnel.
- 5.2 Local cycle activists have approached John Grimshaw, former head of the national cycle charity, Sustrans, to identify how these issues can be addressed and the overall route enhanced. Mr Grimshaw, who has developed thousands of miles of such routes across the country, sees the Rawtenstall-Rochdale route as being of national interest with iconic features as the Glen Tunnels and Healey Dell. The name "Valley of Stone Greenway" has been suggested by local groups, building on existing wider branding.
- 5.3 Development of a continuous route based primarily on the old railway will provide a safe and relatively level route for local families to use for cycling or walking. It would also attract leisure riders from much further afield as well; it would provide a complementary attraction for those not wanting to try the more strenuous attractions of Lee Quarry. For horse riders the route would provide an important link to and from the Pennine Bridleway into other areas of Rossendale. Work is being undertaken to assess the economic benefits but it is not clear what level of detail will be provided.
- 5.4 The Strategy itself consists of maps, drawings and descriptions for all sections of the route. Large elements of the route already exist, such as through Whitworth, with little extra work necessary to implement the project. More detailed analysis is required of locations where there are particular issues to address. It is programmed to complete the Strategy by the end of June 2013. The budget for this piece of work is £5,000. The costs for this are equally split between Rossendale and Lancashire CC.
- 5.5 There are a small number of blockages on the route where interventions are necessary to avoid long detours. The main ones are as follows:
- *Rear of Buckhurst Plant, Warth Mill, Waterfoot*- two alternative routes are available but one is not acceptable to the owner
 - *Glen Tunnels, Waterfoot* – these are owned by the Council. A recent survey confirmed the two shorter tunnels are in relatively good condition. A new bridge would be required over the River Irwell. Installation of LED lighting in the tunnels would be low cost and low maintenance. The bridleway would use an alternative route over the hillside.
 - *Lee Road, Stacksteads*-the best route from the rear of Bacup Cemetery to Futures Park involves the use of property owned by two local residents. Land swaps/reduced price purchase of nearby Council owned land are one option being pursued
 - *Stubbylee to Britannia Greenway*- use of Stubbylee Tunnel is the preferred option but would require relocation of the salt store. This has implications for the Council's lease with LCC. Alternative routes via Stubbylee Park could be constructed but would require a Toucan crossing. There would also be a need to negotiate a revised

bridleway route across farmland near Moorlands Park.

- *Stubbylee Park into Bacup Centre*- it is seen as important to link the centre of Bacup to the Greenway to maximise regeneration benefits. There are however a number of challenges; e.g. taking the route behind Morrisons; land above Henrietta St depot; land at end of River Street and a strip of land owned by Bootham Sulzer
- *Land adjacent to Slingco, Station Road, Facit* – the factory is willing to offer a strip of land in their ownership which could be used to construct the Greenway past the site. This would resolve the current lengthy diversion via Market Street. This solution is however dependent on RBC giving an equivalent amount of land as compensation to be used as car parking for use by Slingco. LCC already have £40,000 allocated in the Commissioning Plan to build the Greenway at this location as it is the last significant “gap” in the Britannia-Healey section of the corridor.

5.6 Development of the scheme will occupy a number of phases, some of which overlap:

Design and assembly

- **Phase 1** – *Upgrading of the route within Rochdale*: Rochdale MBC have invested £90,000 of Section 106 money into enhancing the route between the town centre and Healey. This money has to be spent by the end of June 2013. The work will be based on detailed drawings set out in the Strategy
- **Phase 2** – *Obtaining Planning Permissions* – submitting applications concurrent with Strategy finalisation utilises the current availability of Mr Grimshaw. Most of the cost would be borne by Lancashire CC. However a contribution from Rossendale would be necessary. A potential budget has been identified internally (by July 2013)
- **Phase 3** *Adoption of the Strategy by Council* – this would provide the basis for negotiation with partners about improving and enhancing the corridor (by September 2013)
- **Phase 4**- *Protection of Corridor for development control purposes* – to ensure that any development located in proximity to the corridor does not jeopardise implementation and opportunities for Section 106 agreements are secured. The protection will eventually be included within Local Plan Part 2 (by September 2013)
- **Phase 5** - *Addressing implications for the Council's landholdings*- addressing some of the key blockages on the route entails use of Council owned land. This may entail land swaps or sale of land at lower than market value. This would need to be weighed against the benefits of producing a high quality route. It is suggested that a further Report on the costs and benefits of land disposal be produced by Autumn 2013. A decision on landholdings at Slingco and Lee Road is however required expeditiously as the current opportunities may otherwise be lost.

Development, Construction and maintenance

- **Phase 6** – *Maintenance implications* – Parts of the current route (e.g., at Britannia) have degraded because of poor initial design and construction and a failure to define maintenance responsibility. In order to ensure ongoing route integrity and to minimise long term maintenance liabilities for the Council it is essential to define which party (LCC, District, Town Council or Voluntary sector) is responsible for which section of the route. Such discussions need to define ongoing operational issues such as keeping the route swept and free of glass as well as physical repair of surfaces and structures in the medium and longer term. This needs to be agreed prior to construction of further works. This will require round table discussions, including identification of legal issues, with conclusions set out in an agreed Report

(by end March 2014)

- **Phase 7 – Identification of Funding Sources** - It is envisaged that a variety of sources of funding will be used to construct parts of the project including the National Lottery; the Local Transport Plan; Lancashire County Council Environmental Projects and Section 106 contributions. Sources of internal funding, especially in relation to match funding of bids, also require consideration. A Report on Funding Options, including implications for the Council, should be produced (by March 2014)

- 5.7 Development of the Project will involve partnership working, particularly with Lancashire County Council and voluntary cycling bodies. It will require officer time from a range of different Council Service Units, including Planning, Legal, Estates and Communities to manage the project, negotiate land agreements and bid for funding.
- 5.8 At member level it is proposed that a lead member for cycling should be designated. This is a recommendation in the April 2013 publication “Get Britain Cycling” by the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group. The member identified for this purpose would play an important role in overseeing implementation of the Greenway Strategy. Given the existing involvement and interest of the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure in in this project it is suggested that they take on this role.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 6.1 Financial implications are currently being identified and evaluated to be included in a further report to Members.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

- 7.1 A considerable amount of legal resource has gone in to this project already and more will be required to prepare the necessary agreement and land deals.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 8.1 The Equality Act 2010 established the Public Sector Equality Duty, the duty requires the Council to give due regard to :

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

The amount of regard that is ‘due’ (that is, the degree of attention demanded by the needs) is set out in section 49 of the Equality Act and will depend on the circumstances of the case, the greater the potential impact of a decision, the greater the regard that must be had.

- 8.2 As well as a wider community positive impact, this project has the potential to enhance equality of opportunity in terms of access to this leisure pursuit for those with a disability.
- 8.3 A number of different Council service areas have been actively involved in discussions about development of the Greenway, in particular Planning and Legal Services.

Management Team has been consulted (April 2013) and will be kept up to date. Management Team recognised the benefits of the project, but also noted that the staff and financial resource implications were also a matter that required consideration.

- 8.4 The proposal is strongly supported by Rossendale Bike Users Group and by the Adrenaline Gateway Group which includes representatives of horse riders groups and the local tourism sector. Relevant landowners have been consulted, particularly at key pinchpoints on the route.
- 8.5 Further consultation will be undertaken throughout the project as appropriate.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The “Valley of Stone Greenway” provides an opportunity to provide a high quality cycling, walking and equestrian route through Rossendale that has the potential to be of national significance. It would further enhance the Borough’s offer as a centre for adrenaline based activities as well as providing healthy travel options for local people. The detailed drawings provided give a clear project plan for the work needed.
- 9.2 Development of the corridor will involve incremental development within the context of an overall design. This will require effective partnership working, especially with Lancashire County Council and the voluntary sector. It is hoped that the County Council, as transport authority, will be able to contribute significantly to this project. However, in order to overcome some of the major obstacles on the route Rossendale Council will be required to contribute its own land and therefore forgo potential (or existing) income. Officer time in negotiating agreements could be considerable.
- 9.3 Effective delivery, branding and publicity are all essential to successful delivery of this project. Cabinet are asked to support a long term commitment to delivering this project as a whole while recognising that there will be resource implications for bringing forward individual elements of the projects.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Draft Valley of Stone Greenway Report	Business Centre, Futures Park, Bacup, OL13 0BB