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| Subject: | Cycle Routes in Rossendale (part of East Lancashire Strategic Cycle Network) | Status: | For Publication |
| Report to: | Cabinet | Date: | 25 th November 2015 |
| Report of: | Head of Finance & Property Services | Portfolio Holder: | Regeneration and Leisure/Operations and Development Control |
| Key Decision: | <input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | General Exception | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Equality Impact Assessment: | Required: | No | Attached: No |
| Biodiversity Impact Assessment | Required: | No | Attached: No |
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| 1. | RECOMMENDATION(S) |
| 1.1 | That Members note the contents of the report |
| 1.2 | That Members approve the surrender of the Alderbottom Viaduct to the Council by the East Lancashire Railway Trust / Company. |

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To update members on Lancashire County Council's (LCC) East Lancashire Strategic Cycleway Network within Rossendale.

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 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:
- Significant pressure on LCC personnel with respect to design and implementation
 - Constraints on RBC staff resources to support LCC officers
 - Possible weather and technical issues delaying delivery on the ground
 - Resistance from key landowners in allowing the route through their land
 - Ongoing maintenance issues still require finalisation

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

5.1 The concept of the scheme was originally reported to Members in June 2013 and most latterly at the February 2015 Cabinet. It builds on previous work undertaken for this Council and LCC by John Grimshaw. Rossendale has an interest in two of the four routes proposed within the East Lancashire Strategic Cycle Network, namely:

- Valley of Stone (Rossendale)
- National Cycle route 6 (Rossendale & Hyndburn).

5.2 A brief description of the two is as follows:

5.3 ***Valley of Stone (VofS)***

The Valley of Stone is 16.5km long and connects Rawtenstall in the west to Waterfoot, Bacup and Whitworth up to the Lancashire county border with Rochdale at Healey Dell, as well as providing access to many employment sites along the Rossendale Valley. It is a largely off road route following a former railway line and when completed will provide a real sustainable travel alternative to using the busy roads which run along the main valley floor. The idea for the Valley of Stone was put forward by the local community and although some sections are already open they are of varying standards. The full potential of the route will only be realised once existing gaps in the route have been addressed and the whole corridor is completed to the same standard

View of plan - see appendix A

5.4 ***National cycle route 6 (NCR6)***

This route is mostly off road and runs in a roughly north-south direction from Accrington in the north to the Lancashire county border at Stubbins in the south. It is 12km in length and also follows the line of a former railway, although large sections no longer exist such as around Haslingden. It has great potential for commuter use, especially to the employment areas on the west side of Haslingden close to the A56 and it will contribute towards the tourist economy by linking locations such as the East Lancashire Railway and Irwell Sculpture Trail to a much wider catchment area..

The route is also part of the wider National Cycle Network Route 6 that connects Watford to Keswick via Manchester and Preston.

View of plan - see appendix B

5.5 **Project plan for 2015/16 and beyond**

Initial estimates by LCC and as reported to Highways & Transport in December 2014 were to invest £1.7m in Rossendale during 2015/16. This was over ambitious and is now anticipated to be c £700k being c £150k in design and c £550k in construction. The change to the spending profile has been agreed with the funders. The focus this financial year has been on base lining the condition of the route; undertaking necessary surveys and undertaking work to maintain and upgrade existing sections.

Appendix A and B indicate those parts of the planned route to be upgraded during 2015/16 (marked in blue). Appendix C is the current construction plan for the full 4 year programme.

5.6 Alderbottom Viaduct

Alderbottom High Viaduct near Stubbins forms part of the planned NCR6 and is an integral part of the route. The viaduct currently forms part of a long term lease to the East Lancashire Railway Trust (ELR) who have full responsibility for the viaduct's upkeep and maintenance, even though it has no relevance to the ELR's own operation. The reason for its inclusion in the original lease was because when the former British Railways Board disposed of its assets in the area it incorporated both the disused track bed and structure as well as the operational line to Rawtenstall within one "bundle". The maintenance risk was therefore transferred away from the Council as a result of this lease arrangement.

The ELR have indicated that as part of the development of the cycleway they would wish to return the responsibility for the viaduct to the Council. ELR currently have the right not to allow public use of the viaduct and therefore could stop an integral part of the planned route being used. LCC officers have indicated that an alternative route for the cycleway cannot be accommodated without significant disruption to the eventual users.

As part of the scheme Members are therefore asked to accept the return of the viaduct to Council. The viaduct has been subject to a recent structural inspection (September 2015). The conclusion of the report states:

"Overall the structure is in fair condition. No defects causing and significant structural issues were found"

There are a number of recommendations in relation to attention to be paid in the next general inspection. Officers will liaise with LCC with a view to exploring whether some areas could be contained within the current cycle way budget and remedial works.

5.7 Future reporting to Members

It is suggested that an annual update is reported to Members in order to:

- Confirm what has been achieved in the previous year
- Approve the land dedications as public rights of way with LCC
- Report what works are planned for the coming year

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

6.1 LCC have earmarked up to £3.9m for cycleway investment in Rossendale (this includes a contingency provision and excludes c £300k plus in design and survey fees). This is the largest allocation of a wider East Lancashire strategic cycleway network whose total investment is valued at £5.9m, funded from the following:

- Lancashire Growth Deal £2.6m
- LCC £3.0m
- Blackburn with Darwen £0.3m

6.2 The spend profile has changed from original plans to spend a more significant sum in 2015/16 but logistically this has proved not to be feasible. The estimated spend profile, subject to

Growth Deal approval is shown at Appendix D.

6.2 The Council will incur the on-going maintenance implications specifically in relation to: future maintenance of structures within its current ownership; litter clearance, vegetation management and land drainage. LCC will be responsible for the surface and any new infrastructure (eg: lighting, bridges, etc). A significant element of the construction of the route will be to upgrade existing structures to a good standard where possible and build a high quality route. The full responsibilities for each partner will form part of final land dedication and negotiations.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 The Chief Executive has been attending the County's East Lancashire Strategic Cycling network board meetings for this project and the Council has offered support to LCC to assist with conveyancing or land negotiations in our borough.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

8.1 Delivery of these projects will facilitate the development of Strategic Cycle Network within Rossendale as identified in the East Lancashire Transport Masterplan. Policy 9 of the adopted Core Strategy identifies the importance of developing and enhancing the cycleway network in order to develop tourism, "green infrastructure" and public health.

8.2 Members have previously been kept informed of the development of the "Valley of Stone Greenway" project including through member briefings.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Development of the "Valley of Stone" Greenway and National Cycle Route 6 has been a long term aim that has been informed by the previous development of Strategies for each of the routes. The availability of significant amounts of funding to enable the realisation of the vision over the next four years is both welcome and will bring significant benefits.

| Background Papers | |
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| Document | Place of Inspection |
| Previous reports to Members | Cabinet Agenda and Minutes |
| East Lancashire Strategic Cycle Network | Website: http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/council/strategies-policies-plans/roads,-parking-and-travel/major-transport-schemes/east-lancashire-strategic-cycleway-network.aspx |