

Subject:	Valley of Stone Greenway- proposed land swaps	Status:	For publication
Report to:	Council	Date:	17 th July 2013
Report of:	Director of Business	Portfolio Holder:	Environmental Services
Key Decision:	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input type="checkbox"/>	General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes/No	Attached: Yes/No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	Yes/No	Attached: Yes/No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That members approve initiation of negotiations to enable transfers of Council owned land to enable construction of the "Valley of Stone Greenway".
1.2	All future negotiations to be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To seek member authorisation for the Director of Business to negotiate with key landowners regarding possible landswaps along the "Valley of Stone Greenway" in order to facilitate significant improvements to the route.

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:

- Potential loss of County Council capital investment allocated for enhancing the existing cycle route through Whitworth
- Potential for significant enhancements to current route foregone
- Potential forgoing of higher capital receipts that may be derived on the land
- Officer time to resolve ongoing complex land issues near New Line
- Clarification of potential maintenance liabilities

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.1 Rossendale Borough Council, together with Lancashire County Council, have jointly commissioned John Grimshaw to develop a detailed strategy for developing a "Valley of

Stone Greenway". Rochdale MBC have also been actively involved in the project which seeks to develop a continuous high quality cycle route between Rawtenstall Railway Station and Rochdale Railway Station primarily using the course of the disused railway. The route is being designed to also enable access for horse riders and mobility impaired users. John Grimshaw is the founder of Sustrans, the charity which developed the National Cycling Network. Now an independent consultant, Mr Grimshaw was initially approached by local cycle groups to undertake this work. The aim of the Study is to produce an overall route diagram with detailed documentation as applicable for key sections of the route. Planning applications will be made as appropriate to ensure that sections of the route can be brought forward as and when funds are available. Study development is well advanced with production of the final document due by early September. At their meeting in June Cabinet indicated their "in principle" support for the project.

5.2 The success of Lee Quarry as a tourist attraction indicates the potential for cycling to be a significant economic generator for the Borough, while the Pennine Bridleway is also very popular. The "Valley of Stone Greenway" is aimed to complement this and would consolidate on the success of existing parts of the route, such as from Whitworth to Britannia.

5.3 The consultant has identified a number of issues and physical gaps that need to be addressed to make the route continuous and to achieve its full potential. Some will involve negotiations with private landowners where the Council has no landholding; others directly affect Council owned property. Two key blockages that involve Council property are:

- **Land adjacent to Station Road, Facit (Slingco)**
- **Land to the south of New Line (Height Barn Farm)**

5.4 The current cycle route from Healey Dell to Britannia closely follows the line of the old railway. One major exception to this is a diversion along Station Road, Facit; Market Street and Barlow Bottoms. This is due to the **Slingco** factory being built over the former railway alignment. A three metre wide corridor can be created through the existing factory car park to create a much more direct and attractive route at this location (see page 26 of attached document). Lancashire County Council have allocated £42 000 of funding to construct a scheme and are keen to progress with planning permission in order to be on site and complete the works before winter. If the works are not undertaken this financial year there is a risk that the funding could be lost.

5.5 Slingco have indicated a willingness to allow this corridor through their site provided they can obtain replacement car parking. This would involve swapping their land (approx. 225m²) for a larger area of adjacent land (approx. 592m²) owned by the Council. It is not envisaged there would be a direct financial cost to the Council for a legal agreement to achieve this but there would be an opportunity cost foregone as the land could be sold for other purposes. The amount would depend on the relevant use. The differential values are estimated to be as follows:

- Car Parking land value £ 2 600
- Industrial land value £ 13 700
- Residential land value £21 600

5.6 There would therefore a potential loss of direct receipts but a potential benefit of LCC investment in the route and the more intangible benefit of more direct and attractive route.

5.7 One of the existing gaps on the route is from the reservoir at New Line at the end of the Britannia Greenway through to Futures Park. A number of options have been considered by

the consultant, including use of Stubbylee Tunnel, which would involve the relocation of the Lancashire County Council Salt store. This would facilitate easier links into Bacup and would connect to New Cut Reservoir via the old railway and The Sidings but would involve loss of revenue to the Council from the current lease agreement.

- 5.8 Another option being investigated which is to route the Greenway via Stubbylee and Moorlands Parks, diverting the public footpath around **Height Barn Farm** and along an existing fence boundary to New Cut Reservoir. The Council is involved in long running negotiations with the landowner concerning land transfer of an existing culvert in the area which the Council own. It is proposed that dedication of an easement for the Greenway could be added to these negotiations (see page 19 of attached document). A willingness to dedicate the route has already been expressed informally subject to satisfactory conclusion of the culvert negotiations.
- 5.9 For all sections of the route there is a need to identify a resolution for which organisation will take responsibility for ongoing maintenance costs for the paths and related vegetation clearance, etc. It is intended that there will be discussions directly with Lancashire County Council on this topic.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

6.1 Financial matters are noted within the report.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 Included within the report.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

8.1 Cabinet in their meeting in June supported the principle of the “Valley of Stone Greenway”. Discussion of the land swap options has involved officers from Legal, Property Services, Regeneration and Planning. Council officers have actively engaged with officers of LCC and Rochdale in the development of the scheme and Rossendale Cycle Forum are aware of the broader scope of the project.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Development of the “Valley of Stone Greenway” has the potential to create a high quality long cycleway that would be of regional importance and attract visitors to the Borough as well as being of benefit to local people for health purposes. Route assembly will be incremental and will involve negotiation to resolve key blockages along the route. The two potential “land swaps” addressed in this Report would make a substantial difference in enabling creation of continuous route between Rochdale and Futures Park. It is therefore recommended that authorisation is given to officers to negotiate agreements with the relevant landowners to enable construction of the enhanced route to occur. However members should be aware that there will be potential lost revenue for the Slingco site and that negotiations for land at Height Barn Farm are complex.

Background Papers

Document	Place of Inspection
Draft Framework for Valley of Stone Greenway Click Here to Download	Business centre, Futures park