

Subject:	Investment in Cycle Routes in Rossendale	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	11 th February 2015
Report of:	Director of Business	Portfolio Holder:	Regeneration, Tourism 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 support the proposed investment and this Council's active engagement in scheme delivery.
1.2	All future minor amendments to the implementation of the Project to be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To inform members of the substantial investment proposed in developing strategic cycle corridors in Rossendale and the work that will be required to deliver this.

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
- Post 2016, resistance from key landowners to allowing the route through their land
- Ongoing maintenance issues still require finalisation

- 4.2 Due to the funding profile for this work there is a very demanding timescale for scheme design and delivery, especially in the first year

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

5.1 Overview

There are two main long distance cycle routes in the Borough which form part of the East Lancashire Strategic Cycle network. The first is National Cycle Route 6 (NCN6) which largely follows the old railway from Stubbins outside Ramsbottom-Rising bridge and onto Accrington. It is part of a long distance corridor between Cumbria and the Midlands. The second cycle route is largely along the corridor of the former Rawtenstall-Bacup-Rochdale railway line. In each case parts of the corridor have previously been constructed. Two problems however exist:

- There are significant gaps in the routes, particularly where the railway alignment has disappeared, which reduces the value to users
- Some of the existing sections have suffered from lack of maintenance and are now difficult to use

5.2 Rossendale Borough Council, together with Lancashire County Council commissioned John Grimshaw, the founder of national cycle charity Sustrans, to prepare a detailed Feasibility Study for the Rawtenstall-Rochdale “Valley of Stone” corridor which was completed in 2013 while Railpaths Ltd produced a plan in 2014 for NCN6. These two pieces of work, together with smaller schemes in Hyndburn and Blackburn, have formed the basis of a submission to Government for funding as part of the 2014 Lancashire Economic Partnership “Growth Fund” bid. This was successful in obtaining over £2 million of Government support. Match funding is being provided by Lancashire County Council as part of the Local Transport Plan (East Lancashire Transport Masterplan). The total value to Rossendale up to 2018/19 including contingencies is expected to be in excess of £4 million.

5.3 Railpaths Ltd, a branch of Sustrans, have been in negotiation with the Highways Agency who will provide additional money and support to construct NCN6 along a new route close to the stretch of the A56 where it passes through Haslingden. This will help to fill an important gap in the existing route. In addition to the Growth Fund bid, the County Council has been successful in obtaining over £1.3 million in Local Sustainable Transport. Funding (LTSF) revenue from the Government. This is for projects such as Travel Plans, promotion and cycle training and covers the whole of East Lancashire. This will provide important complementary funding to maximise the value of the capital investment and to promote usage of the routes when built.

5.4 Under the terms of the government grant all the capital contribution they provide (£2 million) has to be spent in year 2015/16 or it will be lost. In order to achieve this it will be necessary to bring forward the easier to deliver schemes as soon as possible. The main initial focus will be on the “Valley of Stone”. These projects are primarily those on Rossendale BC land, including upgrading the Britannia Greenway, taking the route through Stubbylee Park and particularly opening up the tunnel at the Glen. This would be a particularly iconic part of the route. While Lancashire County Council will be the primary lead, it will be essential that Rossendale Borough Council actively facilitates the project. This will include necessary legal work, processing planning applications and liaising with landowners to obtain access rights over other gaps in the route that will be delivered in future phases of the programme

5.5 The primary available funding is for capital works rather than maintenance. Building the route to a high standard will help to reduce long term maintenance costs though there will still need to be discussion about ongoing issues such as cleansing and vegetation control, as well as a long term responsibility for maintaining the track in good condition

5.6 It is expected that development of the routes will have significant benefits. It will complement the existing Mountain Bike offer by providing relatively flat “off-road” routes that are suitable for a wide range of users. It is hoped this will draw whole families to visit the Borough. It will also provide a place for local people to cycle and develop confidence to do so in a safe environment, both for leisure and commuting purposes This will produce public health benefits. The routes are primarily aimed at cyclists but there will be much wider benefits including for walkers and horse riders.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

6.1 As noted in the report the funding is for the initial capital investment. As part of the project officers will be required to liaise with LCC as to who is liable for ongoing maintenance and the estimated annual cost. Any responsibility from Rossendale will have to be quantified and budgeted for in the future.

6.2 It is assumed that any Council land required for this scheme will be given at £Nil value.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 The Director of Business 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. Colleagues in Regeneration had some limited involvement in the development of the broader original “Growth Fund” bid Neighbouring authorities have been kept informed of the success of the bid.

8.3 The content of the report does not require cuts to services. This proposal has therefore not been analysed as part of an Equality Impact Assessment. However, once implemented the schemes will have positive impacts for public health and the local economy. While there will be biodiversity impacts from the proposals it is difficult to assess these at this stage and they will be fully addressed as part of the relevant planning applications.

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. It is however recognised that it will be a challenging programme to deliver, especially in 2015/16 when £2 million needs to be spent. This will demand commitment from this Council to support LCC in their delivery role and ensure that none of the funding has to be returned to central government.

Background Papers	
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Document	Place of Inspection
http://council.lancashire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=6181	