

	REPORT TO CABINET TO BE HELD ON 19 JULY 2011	
	Key Decision	Yes
Corporate Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creating Healthy and Vibrant Communities ○ Creating Quality Environments ○ Building Prosperous Communities 	Forward Plan Ref No Cabinet Portfolio Holders	TSHTECFD/K1 Cllr Andrew Backhouse Cabinet Member for Technical services, Highways and Transport, Environment, Project Management and Coastal and Floor Defences Cllr David Jeffels Cabinet Member for Tourism and Culture

REPORT OF: HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES 11/345

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL SCARBOROUGH AND WHITBY TOWN WARDS AND THE RURAL WARDS OF FYLINGDALES, NEWBY & SCALBY, HACKNESS & STAINTONDALE.

SUBJECT: GROUNDWORK PROJECT – CINDER TRACK

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that Members:

- a) note the proposals set out in the Cinder Track Action Plan summary in this report and the work carried out to date and
- b) approve the continuation of the Borough Councils involvement in the Cinder Track Steering Group

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Cinder Track is a valuable resource as a green space, recreational facility, wildlife corridor and traffic-free transport route and although its value cannot be quantified its amenity value and use by walkers, cyclists and horse riders makes this a significant feature and potential visitor attraction for the Borough. Maintaining the Cinder Track needs to be on-going and the Action Plan sets out a number of improvement projects which will need to be progressed by the Steering Group.

HIGHLIGHTED RISKS:

The principal risk in relation to the project is the on-going revenue costs for the Borough Council although our position on the Steering Group will enable any such costs to be identified at an early stage and prior to the commitment of any additional funding by the Council.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report summarises the Cinder Track Action Plan which is available on the Groundwork and the Councils websites. The next stage is to deliver some, if not all the actions where external funding can be obtained. To date, a Steering Group of agencies including the Borough Council, North Yorks Moors National Park and Groundwork have overseen the work and have developed the Action Plan. Copies of the Cinder Track Action Plan has been placed in the Members Room and Cabinet Room.
- 1.2 The Steering Group will now have to work on the delivery stage with the Borough Council continuing their role in the group and delivering, either directly or through Groundwork, the on-going maintenance of the Cinder Track although this is restricted by the current budget. This role is as set out in paragraph 3.8 of this report. Commitment of resources by the Borough Council in excess of existing budgets will require a further report and Member approval.
- 1.3 The key issues and actions of the Action Plan are summarised in the Background and Issues section.

2. CORPORATE AIMS/PRIORITIES AND THE COMMUNITY PLAN

- 2.1 This report supports the following themes in the Corporate Plan:
 - Quality Environments
 - Prosperous Communities
 - Safe and Healthy Communities
 - Inclusive and Vibrant Communities
 - Accessible Communities

3. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 3.1 The Cinder Track Action Plan sets out a strategy for the improvement and management of the Cinder Track, also known as the Scarborough to Whitby Old Railway. The track opened as a railway in 1885 and was closed in 1965. Since then it has been maintained as an informal path for walkers, horse riders and cyclists. It runs for 21½ miles through stunning scenery and links the countryside and National Park with the town centres of Scarborough and Whitby.
- 3.2 In recent years the value of the track as a green space, recreational facility, wildlife corridor and traffic-free transport route has been increasingly recognised, along with an appreciation that its potential benefit to the local area is not being fully realised. This has resulted in a number of small improvement schemes, the inclusion of the track in various strategies, the establishment of two community groups, and the development of the Cinder Track Improvement Project.
- 3.3 This project ran for 18 months from January 2010 to July 2011 and provided a training scheme for unemployed young people to carry out environmental improvement work on the track, and also involves the production of the action plan. The project was delivered by Groundwork North Yorkshire and managed by a partnership of stakeholders.
- 3.4 Public consultations carried out as part of the project have found widespread support for the improvement of the track, but a general consensus that its greatest asset is its quiet natural beauty and that it should not be over-developed. The highest priority for improvement is undoubtedly the surface and drainage, along with more signage, improved maintenance and better access.
- 3.5 Physical surveys of the track have confirmed the surface and drainage to be the biggest problem, along with poor access and information. Vegetation is sometimes overgrown and inhibiting use, but the wildlife value of the track is great, and could be enhanced further. In certain places the legal designation or ownership of the track is unclear. It is also part of a wide network of other paths and cycle routes, with which better connections could be made.
- 3.6 The action plan proposes a series of recommendations based on these surveys and research:

Surfacing and drainage:

- a) Locate, clear out and repair minor drains and ditches
- b) Carry out condition survey of all major drains and culverts
- c) Develop a routine programme of drainage maintenance
- d) Carry out a phased programme of willow removal from drains
- e) Repair eroded track surface, building up levels and returning from concave to convex profile
- f) Create minimum width of 2.5m along the whole length of the track

- g) Use unbound cinders and ash as top surface, with road planings or stone as sub-base where required. Use sealed bitumastic type surface in Scarborough urban area

Structures and lighting:

- a) Carry out condition survey of all bridges, structures and major drains
- b) Install lighting from Safeways (Sainsburys) Park to Station Road, Scalby

Access:

- a) New steps, ramps and paths where desire lines currently exist or useful links could be made with existing routes
- b) Improvements to existing steps, ramps and paths where obstructions to access have been identified
- c) New and improved car parking areas where conflicts or overcrowding currently exist
- d) New and improved bridle gates at road and major farm crossings
- e) New and improved farm gates at all vehicle access points to deter unauthorised vehicle use
- f) Improved safety at road crossings
- g) Improved information

Information, signage and facilities:

- a) Develop a distinct branding and logo for the track and a uniformity in design of furniture and signage
- b) Install a hierarchy of signage and information – information boards, finger posts, way-marker posts, arrows and branding icons
- c) Develop interpretation on features of heritage and wildlife interest
- d) Provide appropriate information on signage, such as nearby facilities and links, gradients, and distances
- e) Rationalise existing signage where clutter and confusion exists
- f) Develop updated and expanded information leaflet
- g) Install benches and picnic tables at appropriate places, creating viewpoints at key locations
- h) Review the provision of litter and dog waste bins along the track
- i) Install cycle racks at key points

Vegetation and wildlife:

- a) Carry out an Extended Phase 1 habitat survey of the entire track
- b) Maximise and enhance the varied landscape character of the track
- c) Manage the track in balance between public access and wildlife
- d) Identify particularly valuable areas for special management such as woodland, wetland and wildflower areas
- e) Carry out a phased programme of willow removal from drains
- f) Promote planting hedgerows along fence lines in partnership with farmers
- g) Carry out a tree and shrub planting programme – enhancing the track's wildlife value and developing potential as a linear orchard and food source, with native species in rural areas and predominantly native species in urban areas

- h) Carry out a wildflower planting programme to improve appearance and wildlife value
- i) Manage tree works for wildlife benefit, leaving log piles and removing chippings from site

Fencing and boundaries:

- a) Carry out full condition survey of boundaries and fencing, including liaison with farmers and landowners
- b) Develop rolling programme of repair and replacement

Heritage and art:

- a) Develop a series of heritage replica features, such as railway numbers on bridges, signs, signals, points and station renovations
- b) Improve Sustrans mileposts with colouring competitions as has been done at Safe Ways Park, but in keeping with rural settings
- c) Develop public art projects in partnership with the local community
- d) Develop a children's quiz or heritage trail using track signage and features

Management:

- a) Continue steering group as management board for the track
- b) Develop a management plan and structure for the track
- c) Encourage and promote mutual respect and usage protocol amongst different users and aim to reduce the speed of cycles
- d) Preserve the track's quiet natural character
- e) Review licence system for authorised vehicle access
- f) Minimise commercial use of the track
- g) Investigate land and bridge ownership queries
- h) Designate the urban sections as permissive path and cycleway and the rural sections as permissive bridleway, clear up small anomalies and establish a consultation protocol for any future change of use
- i) Improve promotion and marketing of the track more, using clear branding
- j) Encourage and provide for volunteering
- k) Work with partners to provide facilities such as benches and trees and carry out improvement and management works such as planting or litter picking

External links:

- a) Promote existing and develop more circular walks and rides using the track and neighbouring routes
- b) Improve signage and links with public transport
- c) Work with partners to promote and improve the wider path network

3.7 These recommendations have then been applied to the track to provide a series of proposals and actions, detailed in the full Action Plan. The delivery of these proposals has been grouped into four categories:

Improvement Team – Much of the work has been undertaken by the Cinder Track Improvement Team within the existing budgets.

Capital funding required – Proposals where capital funding is required, amounting to a total of £1,772,850. Full costs breakdowns are given in the full document.

Partner delivery – Some proposals involve land not in SBC ownership or require close involvement of partners.

Management – Many proposals involve on-going management operations or action by the management organisation.

- 3.8 To look beyond the Improvement Team period and address the latter three of these delivery categories, an action plan is presented, which focuses on five main areas:

1 – Management

Recent management of the track has neither kept pace with maintenance needs nor looked proactively at future improvements and potential. The Cinder Track Improvement Project has begun to reverse this trend and the report recommends continuing this partnership approach. A management work programme sufficient to maintain the track to satisfactory levels is set out and the resources required to deliver this are identified. These management proposals include considerable training, apprenticeships and volunteering elements, and the proposals can be delivered through existing SBC maintenance resources for the track.

2 – Funding

Capital funding to support infrastructure repairs and improvements is becoming increasingly difficult to secure in the current economic climate, but several possibilities are identified. The report recommends these are further explored and funding applied for.

3 – Public Right of Way dedication

The report recommends extending and clarifying the track's designation as a permissive bridleway in rural areas and permissive footpath and cycleway in the Scarborough and Whitby urban area. It finds there is insufficient benefit to justify dedicating the route as a public right of way though it does recommend establishing a consultation protocol on any future change of use to help alleviate public concern over the track's long term security as a recreational route.

4 – Access licences

The report recommends review of the licence system with the intention of:

- a) Minimising the use of track by vehicles
- b) Ensuring appropriate physical access barriers and signage exist and are maintained
- c) Encouraging use of alternative routes to the track for both residential and agricultural use, including the repair and reinstatement of former routes
- d) Setting the access licence fee at an appropriate level to ensure revenue from this system matches the maintenance costs of additional repair to the track surface

5 – Timetable

The action plan is presented as a timetable over the next two years along with lead partners for each action.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Wide-ranging consultation has taken place with various groups in the formulation of the Action Plan.

5. ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The full cost of delivering the Action Plan is estimated at £1,772,850. Clearly it will be essential to source external funding for the majority of this work but there may be on-going maintenance costs which might require the Council, where we are the landowner, to meet. Further progress reports will be presented as the project progresses and these will detail any such cost implications which fall outside existing budget levels.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

Although it is proposed to seek external funding there will be on-going revenue costs which as yet cannot be quantified. The existing budget for the Cinder Track is unlikely to be sufficient if all the actions are delivered.

6.2 Legal

There are no legal issues arising from this report.

6.3 Staffing

There are no staffing issues arising from this report..

6.4 Policy

There are no Policy issues arising from this report.

6.5 Planning

There are no Planning issues arising from this report.

6.6 Environmental

This project continues to deliver the wider ranging environmental benefits of the Cinder Track.



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Background Papers:

The Cinder Track Action Plan (available of the Council and Groundwork websites)