

Otley Town Council

Environment & Sustainability Committee

Date: 13th July 2015

Report: Update on Wharfedale Greenway project

Report by: Community Development Officer

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide members with information on progress made since this matter was discussed in committee on 9th March 2015.

2. Background

2.1 Traffic free greenways are unique spaces for commuting, leisure trips and for experiencing wildlife whilst travelling by foot, bike, or wheelchair. A well maintained surfaced pathway within a green corridor, typically on a disused railway line, is wide enough to allow users to pass and where gradients are kept to a minimum to suit all levels of fitness.

The Pool-in-Wharfedale, Otley, Menston and Burley-in-Wharfedale cycleway feasibility study was prepared by Sustrans in 2010 for Otley Town Council. The brief was to assess the scope for improving walking and cycling routes to, through and around the town. This study highlighted the opportunity to create a series of greenways along extant sections of the former Arthington to Burley-in-Wharfedale railway (closed in 1965) to provide primary walk/cycle routes to Menston and Burley stations.

In the autumn of 2013 a steering group was formed involving Otley Town Council, Burley-in-Wharfedale Parish Council, Menston Parish Council, Pool-in-Wharfedale Parish Council, Bradford City Council, Leeds City Council and Sustrans. There was a desire to see a safe route for walking and cycling linking the parishes together. It was decided to follow the recommendation made in the 2010 report and put forward the old railway corridor, to be named the Wharfedale Greenway, as the proposed route.

2.2 The Wharfedale Greenway Steering Group has met twice since the last committee meeting of the 9th March.

2.3 On 25th March the key points arising were:

- All landowners have been written to by Sustrans on behalf of the Steering Group. No responses received except from Otley Golf club;
- Sustrans confirmed that an Ecology Report would be undertaken during April;

- It was agreed that a meeting take place between the principal authorities and Sustrans to discuss plans regarding land ownerships and maintenance on local authority land;
- A list of potential options regarding future land ownerships/lease agreements and maintenance implications to be prepared by Leeds CC and Bradford MBC;
- With the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) coming into force – it was reiterated that CIL is likely to be an important possible source of finance and/or match funding for the Greenway project and the Town/Parish Councils must prioritise it as such.

2.4 On 19th May the Steering Group met again and the following key points arose:

- Election of Officers for 2015/16: Chair – Cllr Ray Georgeson; Deputy Chair – Cllr Stuart Bottomley (Burley-in-Wharfedale Parish Council); Secretary – Jason Knowles; Communications & Liaison – Ian Orton (Clerk to Burley-in-Wharfedale Parish Council);
- Sustrans outlined the work programme is proceeding although timescales have slipped slightly;
- Maintenance roles need to be agreed in order to satisfy the Sustrans Board. The role of each of the Parish Councils and local authorities needs to be carefully considered;
- The Ecology report is complete and identifies that the route is an important green corridor for wildlife, but subject to appropriate mitigation, there is nothing to stop the route creation;
- Reinforced that there is the need for Town/Parish Councils to develop Neighbourhood Plan policies that protect the route;
- Future press releases are planned on the sign off of the Ecology Report and to undertake radio interviews with members from each of the Parishes;
- An outstanding issue needs to explore routes into Otley Town Centre from the Greenway;
- Clarification is being sought over whether Leeds CC and/or Bradford MBC will be able to offer in-house services to assist with the design, construction issues such as bridge engineering.

3. Legal and Financial implications

3.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report. A £3k contribution towards costs has been set aside in the 2015/16 budget as agreed at January's budget setting meeting.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report and approve the actions taken to date.