

PROPOSED WEST CUMBRIA CYCLEPATH PARTNERSHIP

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Cllr J Hewitson/Cllr H Wormstrup

LEAD OFFICER: Mike Tichford

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Summary:

This report outlines proposed new arrangements for managing the cycle way network in West Cumbria following the winding up of the Cyclepath Company last summer. It includes recommendations for Council representation in a new partnership between the local authorities and Sustrans together with an annual contribution of £10,000 – the same amount which the Council contributed annually to the Cyclepath Company.

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| Recommendation: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the Executive agrees to Council membership of the Partnership and endorses the management arrangements set out in the Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix 1 of this report)• That a Member is appointed to the Partnership Steering Group as the Council's formal representative, to be confirmed by Full Council• That an annual £10,000 contribution to the Partnership's running costs be agreed subject to confirmation each year through the budgetary process• That officer responsibility for engagement with the Partnership be vested in Leisure and Environmental Services rather than Regeneration and that the budgetary arrangements be altered accordingly |
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Impact on Delivering Corporate Objectives

Maintaining the cycleway assists both economic and social inclusion objectives including access to education and jobs and tourism and healthy lifestyle themes.

Impact on other Statutory Objectives

None

Financial and Human Resource Implications:

£10,000 from revenue budget as annual contribution – replicates previous arrangement for Cyclepath Company. Already included in 2006/07 bids. The current year contribution has already been approved.

Project and Risk Management

Without the Partnership there would be no dedicated Cyclepath Ranger, maintenance of the network would be patchy and could eventually lead to fragmentation.

Key Decision Status

- Financial: No
- Ward: No

Other Ward Implications: None

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will be aware that following Groundwork West Cumbria's demise the Cyclepath Company was formally wound up in August last year. The Company had been established as a community business venture in 2000/01 being incorporated as a charity with Trustees drawn from Cumbria County, Copeland and Allerdale Councils together with Sustrans, the national cycle way building charity. It had aims of encouraging greater use of cycle ways and providing employment and training for local people but its main job was to ensure an even level of maintenance over the whole of the West Cumbria network which extends to nearly 49 Km. About two thirds of this is within Copeland and the Council owns a total of 4.6 Km. It has also made an annual contribution of £10,000 to the Company's running costs but even before Groundwork ceased to operate it was obvious that the Company no longer had the funding regime in place to effectively maintain the network and alternative arrangements needed to be agreed.

2. PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP

- 2.1 Officers of the four organisations behind the Cyclepath Company met during the summer to discuss possible options for the future. These included County Council adoption (though this has always been rejected by Cumbria CC) and all the owners looking after their own sections separately. **The feeling was that if at all possible the network should be managed and ultimately marketed as an entity:** its value to local people and visitors alike is in long-distance connections and varying maintenance regimes would eventually lead to fragmentation.
- 2.2 Accordingly a draft **Memorandum of Understanding** was drawn up based on a streamlined version of what the Company had originally been set up to deliver. **Appendix 1** to this report sets out the proposed arrangements with all the day to day matters being looked after by a **dedicated full-time Ranger employed by Sustrans**. This person would undertake regular inspections and minor repairs, organise routine grass cutting, oversee the work of Sustrans' Voluntary Rangers (there are currently 7 in West Cumbria) and of voluntary groups (who occasionally undertake litter-picking and other works in rural sections) and generally be the first point of contact for the public on all matters relating to the network. They would liaise with all Statutory Authorities and report on larger maintenance issues to the relevant owners of the affected section. A full description of these duties is in 6.5 of the Memorandum in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 A first-year indicative **funding package is set out in Section 7 of Appendix 1** which is about £15,000 less than the last operating year of the Cyclepath Company. The saving is mainly on management fees previously charged by Groundwork. The package envisages a continuation of the Council's £10,000 annual contributions alongside similar levels of contributions from the other local authorities as before – with the County Council split between the two Area Committees in proportion to the length of routes involved.
- 2.4 All owners of cycleways would bear responsibility for public liability **insurance** over their sections. This was the case previously – the Cyclepath Company had investigated the possibility of taking on overall public liability but it had never done so. Insurance for the Ranger, the Voluntary Rangers and any work parties they supervise would be the responsibility of Sustrans.
- 2.5 The Council's existing responsibilities/contracts for **grounds maintenance and cleansing** are not altered by the proposed arrangements. The main area of grass cutting has been on either side of the route through the Mirehouse valley. which is undertaken over a wide area and more

frequently than the strips alongside all other sections of the network. This is set to continue under Copeland Homes ownership of the greenspace. The Council will continue to operate litter picking under current zoning arrangements i.e. the urban sections. The Rangers and volunteer parties will deal with rural sections.

- 2.6 The Council would also have to deal with long-term renewal of sections of route and associated facilities in its ownership. Again this is no different from previous arrangements.
- 2.7 The new Cyclepath Partnership would operate through a **Steering Group** composed of Member representatives from each of the local authority partners and a senior Sustrans representative. One of the Council representatives would chair the group and it would meet twice a year. Other partners would be invited to join as appropriate. **A Working Group** would look after the operational side of things and be composed of officers from each of the partners. It would oversee the work programme and performance of the Ranger, consider policy and financial issues and report directly to the Steering Group. The Council would need to formally appoint a Member representative to the Steering Group and confirm officer involvement. Given the nature of the business involved and bearing in mind the Council's recent restructuring it would seem more appropriate to vest responsibility for this function in the Leisure and Environmental Services Department rather than Regeneration

List of Appendices

[Appendix A – Memorandum of Understanding](#)
[Appendix B – Description of routes in Copeland](#)

List of Background Documents:

List of Consultees: Keith Parker, Martin Jepson, Catherine Nicholson