

Notes of joint meeting of Bishopsteignton Parish Council Working Group and Teign Estuary Trail Campaign Group on 11 July 2023 at 7pm at Bishopsteignton Community Centre

Present:

Bishopsteignton Parish Council: Cllrs Kate Benham, Nigel Edwards, Henry Merritt (Chair)

Teign Estuary Trail Campaign Group members: Richard Ash, Bill Bailey, Norman Maudsley, Claire Quelvennec (from 7.30pm), Judith Sharples (note taker)

Devon County Council: Hannah Clark, Cllr Ron Peart

Teignbridge District Council: Estelle Skinner, Cllr Andrew MacGregor

Apologies:

Rona Boyne, Roger North, Ben Northcott

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Attendees introduced themselves.

2. Update from Hannah Clark

Hannah advised that the Teign Estuary Trail remains one of DCC's ambitions and aspirations. She reported that, in any scheme of this nature, there are 3 key challenges which must be overcome:

- Getting planning permission;
- Acquiring land;
- Securing funding.

In the case of the Teign Estuary Trail, planning permission was secured in December 2021 but will expire if work does not commence by December 2031. Funding is required to acquire the land but external funding bids are unlikely to succeed if the land has not yet been acquired. The criteria for government funding normally require delivery within a very short timescale which is another major obstacle. If agreement cannot be reached with landowners, DCC could only exercise its CPO powers once it has secured the funding required to purchase the land.

DCC's main focus at present is on building up a pot of money to acquire the land. £400k is in the pot at present. Rather than wait for sufficient funding to be allocated to acquire all the land, the project could be progressed and land acquired in phases.

Any design work to progress other sections of the Trail would have to be funded from the £400k pot and so would reduce the funding available to acquire the land.

It was noted that Hannah had replied to the list of questions Judith had sent her and Estelle in advance of the meeting. This list of questions and replies is appended to these notes.

3. Questions and suggestions

The following points were discussed and actions agreed:

- DCC had managed to avoid overspending its revenue budget last year which was good news but would not result in more funding being available for the Teign Estuary Trail;
- Hannah has asked for feedback on why the Active Travel funding bid for development funding for the Teignmouth to Dawlish section was unsuccessful;
- Hannah will explore whether Network Rail could contribute any funding towards the cost of the Teignmouth to Dawlish section as they had previously indicated they could fund the section at the side of Eastcliff Park;
- DCC's annual government capital funding allocation for transport schemes is only £3.6m – the funding is normally used as match funding when external funding is secured;
- DCC is concerned that most government funding is for schemes in large urban areas and is encouraging MPs to lobby for more funding for multi-use trails in rural areas;
- It was noted that the Devon MPs had succeeded in lobbying collectively for more government funding for potholes and could be asked to adopt a similar approach in relation to funding for multi-use trails;
- Hannah agreed that Devon's network of multi-use trails could be a major economic asset for the county on a par with the South West Coastal Path and DCC is developing a countywide Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) to make the strategic case for this – the Teign Estuary Trail is likely to be included in this;
- The need to keep members of the public and other councillors updated on the plans as there is a huge public desire for the Trail and a lot of anger and frustration that progress has been so slow. It was noted that the wider meeting with councillors that was due to be held in March was cancelled because it fell within the pre-election period but it is intended that it will be rearranged for a later date.

Cllr MacGregor proposed that DCC should aim to construct one section of the Trail as soon as possible using some of the £400k already set aside to acquire the land. He suggested that DCC could identify and work with a landowner who was supportive. He suggested that there could be some creative approaches to securing funding for construction including the possibility of a loan from the Public Sector Loans Board which BPC could potentially apply for with DCC acting as guarantor. Hannah said she would seek advice from a Finance colleague on this but the DCC general policy was not to fund capital projects through borrowing. He also mentioned the capital funding set aside for a replacement boiler at Teignmouth Lido (£100k) which was no longer required for that purpose and the £0.5m that TDC would have invested in the South Devon Cycleway had the Levelling Up Fund bid been successful. The possibility of town and parish councils contributing some of their CIL funding was also discussed.

Cllr MacGregor also referred to the importance of seeing the connections between this and other projects being pursued by TDC such as the Newton Abbot town centre improvement programme. Evidence from other areas shows that the Trail would bring many more visitors to Newton Abbot town centre and so would support TDC's economic objectives for the town.

It was also noted that the new housing developments in Newton Abbot and Kingsteignton would result in a significant increase in traffic on the already congested main road between Newton Abbot and Teignmouth and that cyclists on the road also slowed down the traffic as overtaking is not safe.

On behalf of the campaign group, Judith offered to assist with putting together the strategic and business case for the Trail.

4. Conclusions

It was agreed that a workshop session would be arranged for early September to explore the approach proposed by Cllr MacGregor in more detail. Henry and Hannah agreed to liaise on the arrangements for this and to identify the key people who would need to attend.

Henry thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Appendix

Questions for Hannah and Estelle re. progress with Teign Estuary Trail

Dawlish to Teignmouth sea front

We understand Sustrans has conducted a review of the plans previously drawn up to assess the extent to which the plans complied with LTN 1/20.

Has this review been completed?

What changes have been made to the previous plans as a result of this review?

This Sustrans work has concluded. The scope of their work only covered an options assessment of the route; this demonstrated that their recommended route aligns with the DCC proposals. The next step would be to look at the design in more detail to consider LTN1/20 alignment. However, there is no funding available for this extension of their brief following the unsuccessful ATF4 bid.

We understand that DCC's application for Active Travel Fund 4 funding for design work in relation to this section was unsuccessful.

How much funding was the application for?

Has the Government provided feedback on why the application was unsuccessful?

How will the design work now be funded?

Sustrans have estimated that in excess of £200k will be needed to progress the designs between Dawlish and Teignmouth to ensure LTN1/20 compliance. DCC included this work in their bid to ATF4, seeking £200k with £50k match funding. In total, DCC submitted 19 schemes as their package of measures with only 6 receiving funding. We are due to receive feedback on the submission shortly, but it is unlikely this will go into detail on individual schemes.

DCC are continuing to discuss the Teign Estuary Trail with Sustrans and were disappointed to hear that no further Sustrans funding is available to continue this work this financial year.

DCC have a very limited capital budget, with funding needing to be allocated towards land acquisition for Newton Abbot to Teignmouth to enable negotiations to progress.

Jamie Hulland advised in December 2022 as follows: "*We are awaiting publication of the DfT's Rural Cycle Design Guide, which Active Travel England indicated was being produced in response to feedback from rural authorities like Devon County Council about the urban-focused nature of LTN 1/20*".

Is there any further news on when this design guide will be published?

No further information on this has been received.

Keir Duffin advised in March 2023 that the business case and technical work for the route from Dawlish to Teignmouth would be completed by the end of March.

Has this work now been completed and can the business case be shared with us?

A draft Strategic Outline Business Case was received in April. Note this has not been formally adopted by DCC or TDC but we hope to use elements of it in future funding bids.

Teignmouth town centre to Morrisons

We understand that DCC is doing no work on this section at present. The plans which DCC consulted on in 2002 included a boardwalk from the Riverside boatyard to Polly Steps which would then link to an existing public right of way through the docks to Teignmouth town centre. However, we understand that ABP objected to the Trail going through the docks on safety grounds and Roger North advised us several years ago that plans for an alternative route north of the railway line from Shaldon Bridge to Teignmouth town centre were being developed.

A big opportunity to revisit these plans now exists. A local developer is developing plans for the redevelopment of the Riverside boatyard and has suggested that the CIL funding this scheme would generate could be used to construct a boardwalk to Polly Steps. There have been changes of personnel at ABP since the initial consultation took place in 2002 and so they may now have a different view about the Trail going through the docks.

Can DCC and TDC officers explore with the developer and ABP what might now be possible to create a safe route for cyclists and pedestrians to get from Morrisons to Teignmouth town centre?

Due to the limited resources available, DCC have an adopted strategy for the progression of the Teign Estuary Trail. There are many constraints associated with the Teignmouth Town Centre to Morrisons section and therefore it is not currently being worked on. Any work being undertaken would need to use budget that is currently being allocated towards land acquisition. Application 20/00961/MAJ Riverside Boatyard, for nine dwellings, industrial units, offices, beach huts, boat storage & repair, and parking was refused in October 2022 for multiple reasons, as given in the Decision Notice.

Morrisons to Bishopsteignton

Plans for a route on the northern side of the A381 have been drawn up. We understand this would be permitted development and that there are also plans to introduce a 30 mph speed limit between Morrisons and Bishopsteignton and a new crossing for cyclists and pedestrians from La Roche Maurice Walk to the south side of the A381.

How are these plans being taken forward?

In order to move these plans forward, we will need to allocate budget towards their development. There are very limited resources currently available and therefore funding is allocated towards land initially due to the time associated with land acquisition. Should additional funds be available, above those that are required for land, then the engineering team would be briefed to develop this section.

Bishopsteignton to the Passage House Inn

Conditional planning permission was granted for this section in December 2021. One of the conditions is that the work must commence by December 2031.

Can work commence on any of this section in advance of the land being acquired?

Not without some land acquisition as all the planning extent is on third party land.

We understand that the DCC capital programme approved in September 2022 included £150k in 2022/23 and £300k in 2023/24 towards the cost of acquiring the land.

Is this £450k still earmarked for this purpose and will any additional funding be allocated in this year's capital programme?

Some funding has been spent on engineering inputs to the Sustrans work and land agents fees. £400k is earmarked currently, with additional funds to be allocated in 24/25. The transport capital programme is scheduled to go to Cabinet in October to confirm the budgets.

What is the latest position regarding negotiations with landowners?

DCC's land agents are progressing negotiations. This is likely to be in a phased approach.

Rather than waiting for all the funding to be secured before negotiations with landowners are concluded, could a legal agreement be negotiated with landowners for their land to be transferred to DCC once DCC secures relevant external funds?

DCC's land agents are progressing negotiations and will consider the most appropriate way to conclude these.

Can TDC allocated any CIL or other funding towards the cost of acquiring the land?

Other questions re. funding

I asked some of these questions in an email I sent Hannah and Estelle on 15 March 2023 but did not receive a reply.

Is there any further clarity on the timetable and criteria for applying for Round 3 of the Levelling Up Fund?

No further information available currently

Will DCC and / or TDC consider applying for funding from Round 3 of the Levelling Up Fund for any sections of the Teign Estuary Trail?

This will depend on a number of factors, including what the fund criteria is and what other schemes TDC are considering as potential LUF schemes. Very few schemes in Tier 3 received funding nationally. Submissions to Round 3 will be subject to a decision by TDC councillors.

Was feedback received on why the bid for the South Devon Cycleway was unsuccessful and can this feedback be shared with us?

Some high level feedback was received and highlighted issues around consultation and data. It was confirmed that it was a strong bid, albeit in Tier 3. Funding was focused on Tier 1 and secondarily Tier 2 localities.

What will the match funding of £1.1m from DCC and £0.5m from TDC which was going to be spent on the South Devon Cycleway now be spent on?

DCC match funding was from corporate sources and was entirely dependent on the bid being successful. This will be allocated elsewhere in the corporate capital budget. TDC has funding earmarked for use on active travel project delivery and it will be for the Councillors to decide how to prioritise funding. We are currently looking at the potential for further use of active travel earmarked CIL towards Teign Estuary Trail project delivery. We are reviewing options for how this could most effectively support the project. This will require internal discussion, discussion with Devon County Council, and subject to that we hope to present to all of our Councillors for their consideration later this year.

Are any DCC or TDC officers actively seeking other external sources of funding to enable the plans for the Teign Estuary Trail to go ahead?

Teign Estuary Trail remains a priority for both DCC and TDC. We remain looped in with key funders of this type of infrastructure (DfT, Sustrans etc) and are made aware of funding opportunities on the horizon. However, funds need to be prioritised to land acquisition to provide confidence of delivery. The issue of lack of multi-use trail funding has been raised with government bodies and the local MP.

Judith Sharples on behalf of the Teign Estuary Trail Campaign Group

28.6.23