

Treacle Bolly Bridleway Upgrades

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To seek match funding from the Marlborough Area Board towards the proposed surfacing and drainage works at Treacle Bolly, Marlborough

2. Background

2.1 Bridleway MARL33 (Treacle Bolly) is an attractive link between Manton and Marlborough which can be used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. It provides a safe, quiet link away from the A4. The route is used for both local journeys (such as shopping and to get to Preshute school in Manton) and longer distance journeys as it is part of National Cycle Network (NCN) route 403, which links to Avebury and Chippenham

2.2 In January 2013 Andrew Jack was contacted by Transition Marlborough (the local environmental group). Transition Marlborough have worked with Wiltshire Council to develop a cycle network across the town using quieter roads and off-road paths where possible. Treacle Bolly forms part of this network but the group raised the issue that during the winter it can become flooded and very muddy, which makes it difficult to use. Problems can occur at both the eastern and western end

2.3 The Area Board, which includes town and county councillors, has allocated £1,000 towards directional signs on the cycle network and support the principle of improving the surfacing at Treacle Bolly. Marlborough Community Area Transport Group (CATG), made up of town and parish councillors from across the community area, has also said they support the proposal. Sustrans, the national sustainable travel charity, are also keen to see works here (the NCN was originally set up by them). As the route is a public right of way, Andrew referred the issue to the rights of way and countryside team at Wiltshire Council. When the issue was investigated, it was felt that the condition and level of use meant it would be a high priority to undertake works here

3. Main Considerations

3.1 Discussions have been held with Marlborough College about the issues at the western end, which they own. It appears that they may be prepared to undertake surfacing works here and have already improved the drainage

3.2 At the eastern end, Wiltshire Council proposes drainage and surfacing works which would enable the path to be more accessible year round. It is difficult to say how long the

works would last as rights of way are subject to the weather, but it is hoped it would be 10 – 15 years and possibly more. 3 quotes have been sought, the cheapest of which is £4,000

3.3 Wiltshire Council's Rights of Way and Countryside team submitted a bid to the North Wessex Downs AONB's Sustainable Development Fund for half the funding. This bid was successful. It was originally planned to match fund the other half of the funding from the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) budget, which is capital. However, in mid-December, a review of budgets by senior management meant that many teams in the council, including the Rights of Way and Countryside team, were told to stop revenue funding on non-urgent schemes that hadn't already been committed. While this has not frozen the RoWIP budget itself, there are now additional demands on it as the focus of the wardens has had to switch more from revenue to capital works

3.4 The Rights of Way and Countryside team are therefore asking if the Area Board feel they would be able to provide the match funding for this scheme. This would then free up this funding for other capital schemes the team are seeking to do while their normal revenue streams are frozen. The contractor is hoping to undertake the works in late February 2015

4. Implications

4.1 Environmental Impact of the Proposals

If these works were not undertaken, the surface of Treacle Bolly would degrade further. Undertaking these works would greatly improve the surfacing and drainage for a period of around 10 – 15 years.

4.2 Financial Implications

Half of the required £4000 has already been offered by the North Wessex Downs AONB's Sustainable Development Fund. The other half is now being sought from the Area Board, ie £2000

4.3 Legal Implications

Wiltshire Council has a statutory duty to maintain rights of way to a level that is safe for users. The route is currently safe, the surfacing would be an enhancement. Once the upgrades have been undertaken, Wiltshire Council will be responsible for the future maintenance

4.4 HR Implications

There are no HR implications with this scheme

4.5 Equality and Diversity Implications

The route is flat and has no rights of way furniture on it (ie gates, stiles etc.) so is accessible by all. The upgrades will benefit all users, making it easier to use for utility and leisure purposes right through the winter

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that:

The Marlborough Area Board provide £2000 match funding to enable the Treacle Bolly scheme to progress in early 2015

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Appendices:

Background papers: