

Cricklade Country Way

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Executive on progress regarding the Cricklade Country Way project, which includes the North Wilts Branch of the Wilts & Berks Canal, and to seek approval to submit a Living Landmarks Lottery Bid in January 2006.

2. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that the Executive: -

- 2.1 Approve the Wilts and Berks Canal Partnership request that the Council acts as lead authority and submits a Living Landmarks Lottery application for c£15-£18m for the Cricklade Country Way project.**
- 2.2 Note that if the scheme is successful in reaching Stage 2 of the bid process, a capital budget bid of no more than £50k for each of five years, would be made to the 2007/08 budget process.**

3. Links to the Corporate Business Plan Priorities and Corporate Aims

- 3.1 This report links to the current Corporate Plan: Buoyant Economy priority area, which encompasses rural regeneration. One of the specific actions in this section is to:
- Implement the Countryside and Open Space Strategy, which has been approved by Council.
- 3.2 One of the approved policy statements in the Countryside and Open Space Strategy is that:
- The Council will support the restoration of the Wilts and Berks Canal, seeking complete restoration, through the appropriate targeting of resources.
- 3.3 Northern Community Plan: One of the policies supported by the community is the canal restoration and the completion of the Cricklade Country Way, which includes the Wilts & Berks Canal.
- ### **4. Background information**
- 4.1 The restoration of the canal, in line with national trends, has been seen as a priority by Local Authorities as a focus for rural regeneration in economic, social and environmental terms. Local Authority partners are increasingly demonstrating their commitment.
- 4.2 The Government waterways watchdog Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council is set to confirm the national status that British Waterways conferred last year on the Wilts & Berks Canal: one of nine Priority 2 national schemes.
- 4.3 The Wilts & Berks Canal has undertaken seven major studies to determine the line of the canal, including a study by British Waterways on the Cricklade Route Options, and for the first time since 1914, a whole Canal route is being adopted and safeguarded in Local Plans.

- 4.4 A 10 year Implementation Plan has been agreed and four flagship schemes have been prioritised to re-connect to the main British Waterways network for the first time in 100 years. All four schemes are being developed with partners and three have finance in place. The Inland Waterways Association has just awarded the Wilts & Berks their Silver Jubilee National Award of £100k to construct the Abingdon/Thames junction. There is now an opportunity to attract funding for the fourth project (Cricklade Country Way), from the Living Landmarks fund.

5. The Cricklade Country Way Bid Project

- 5.1 The Bid project comprises

- The North Wilts Branch of the Wilts & Berks Canal from Swindon to Cricklade/Thames
- The Cricklade Country Way
- The Steam Railway
- Cricklade Sports & Visitor Centre
- Forests & Landscapes
- Cycle ways and footpaths
- Links to the Cotswold Water Park and other features

Included as **Appendix 1** are two maps illustrating the project.

- 5.2 Indicative costs and funding for the overall scheme are as follows:

- Total Amount £15m
- Funded by:

Lottery	£11.25m
Partners (including NWDC)	£2m
Other	£1.75m

6. Living Landmarks Fund - Description of Fund

- 6.1 The Living Landmarks Programme has been designed to inspire communities to transform, revitalise and regenerate the places where they live, through social and community projects and major infrastructure investments. It was launched in July 2005.

A small number of grants between £10 and £25 million will be made. Total funds available are £140 million.

Living Landmarks aims to:

- Encourage partnership working and community engagement and participation
- Champion innovation and excellence in the design of the physical environment.
- Encourage best practice in the design, construction and management of projects

- 6.2 Fund Timetable:

Jan 6 th 2006	closing date for Stage One applications
April 2006	long-listed projects visited
May 2006	Development Grants offered
Jan 31 st 2007	closing date for Stage Two applications
June 2007	recommendations made to selection committee
July 2007	Grants confirmed

It should be noted that not every applicant who is successful at Stage 1 will be successful at Stage 2. Any development grants awarded in 2006 (up to £250k) will be retained by applicants, even if they fail to make the final pool.

6.3 Funding Available:

Capital: Up to 75% of total capital costs
At least 25% to be secured through partnership funding
Operation and maintenance costs not eligible.

Revenue: Up to 10% of total capital costs can be requested as revenue funding. Pre-operational and operational costs incurred from six months before the opening of the capital project, to three years after. Activities directly associated with the use of the capital project, which support the delivery of the project's outcomes. Eligible revenue costs could include:

- community development & outreach
- staff recruitment directly involved in delivering project's outcomes
- marketing
- training and capacity building
- website
- travel outside the UK.

6.4 At the September Wilts & Berks Partnership meeting, all 15 partners agreed to support the Bid. While all partners are being asked to consider providing some match funding, the main partners in the project area are this Council, Swindon Borough Council, the two Canal Trusts, Railway Trust and Sustrans. Potential funds are to be identified by April 2006. Volunteer contributions (considerable sums annually) from all charities involved in the Bid are counted towards the match funding. Swindon Borough Council has already indicated a commitment of at least £250k over the 5 years. The Partners ask this Council to consider the same amount, £250k over a 5 year, (£50k pa) programme period.

6.5 Initial presentations on the Lottery Fund and the proposed bid were made to lead Councillors and Officers of this Council as well as other partner authorities in August and September. Subsequent to this, a project team was formed for the bid and considerable work has been undertaken to date. For example, a rigorous project selection process has identified those schemes that are fundable and achievable in the period and helicopter filming of the project area has been arranged for free with the BBC.

6.6 The funding commitment that the Lottery seek is that by Stage 1 (April 06), they expect to see that partnership funding has been identified from partner organisation(s) for a minimum of 25% of the total capital costs for the project. By stage two (July 2007), they expect partnership funding to be formally secured and will look at the statements of financial commitment at that stage. Project implementation and fund draw-down would not expect to commence until winter 2007/08.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The Council has invested significant funds in the Cricklade Country Way and the Canal, which has ensured steady development of both projects over a 8 year period. Over and above capital funds and 3rd party funding to lever in other sources of money, three Project Officers have been overseeing these schemes. If the Lottery bid is approved, the Council's funding will lever in major funds to complete the delivery of all these schemes; this represents a good return on a long term investment.
- 7.2 The cost of preparing the bid can be met from existing resources.
- 7.3 At this stage the Council is not exposed to any significant risk. The Council will not be fully financially committed until the budget process 2007/08, should the Lottery Bid be approved.
- 7.4 If the Stage 2 Bid is successful, a capital budget bid of £50k for each of five years would be made to the 2007/08 budget process.
- 7.5 Finance Officers have agreed, in principle, to provide accounting services to assist the Wilts & Berks Canal Partnership, if they are successful at Stage 1.
- 7.6 If the Partnership is successful at Stage 2 a Project Board will be established.
- 7.7 The Board will prepare a formal Business Plan and will be staffed by appropriate professionals with project/partnership working experience, including the Project Officer whose post funding would be enhanced by bid approval and who would continue to take the lead.

8. Community & Environmental Implications

- 8.1 The funding of this major project and its associated features will deliver a significant economic uplift to Cricklade and surrounding communities, a much needed boost to rural parishes, landowners and farmers, improved access to countryside and an early income stream for all project partners. It will act as a major tourism and recreation catalyst for the completion of the Water Park, Town canals and the Steam Railway, and deliver a significant number of new jobs during and post restoration. Completion of these sites over a five year period will create the opportunity to provide new countryside facilities for North Wiltshire communities and afford greatly improved access to other linked public footpaths and rights of way.

9 Human Resource Implications

- 9.1 None

10. Legal Implications

- 10.1 The Council will be under no legal obligation at this stage.

11. Equal Opportunities Implications

- 11.1 There are no direct equal opportunities implications of this report.

12. Documentation used in the preparation of this report

12.1 None

REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT STRATEGIC MANAGER TO THE EXECUTIVE - 1st DECEMBER 2005

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