

8. LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE – ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT OFFER

1. Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Audit, Resources & Performance Committee to accept from Ofgem/National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund grants to deliver a series of landscape enhancement projects: -

- (a) a grant offer of £200,000 from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund (with a match funding requirement of £73,400) and
- (b) in anticipation of a second successful funding bid a grant offer of £180,000 (with a match funding requirement of £60,000) from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund (Ofgem/National Grid is due to make a decision in the week commencing 4 September 2017) and
- (c) in anticipation of a potential third funding bid to the Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund of up to £200,000 (with a match funding requirement of up to £67,000), should it be made, be successful and if match funding is secured from other partners.

The funding is to deliver landscape scale enhancement of the Longdendale Valley in the National Park. The Trans Pennine Trail runs along the valley and the Pennine Way crosses it as shown on the plan at Appendix 1. It is proposed that the enhancement works are carried out in two phases which are described in detail in paragraph 5, shown on the plans at Appendices 2 and 3 with costings in Appendix 4. There is also Potential for a future third phase) and bid.

Approval is sought from Committee now to ensure that all procedures have been followed and are in place so that:

- phase 1 of the proposed landscape enhancement for which funding has been secured can now be delivered; and
- the second funding bid for phase 2 of the proposed landscape enhancement, if successful, can also be accepted and the proposed works delivered.
- whilst a third bid to the Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund has not yet been made approval is also sought for acceptance of funding for a third phase of landscape enhancements should such a bid be made and prove successful.

Key Issues

- **Longdendale Valley Landscape Partnership** - the bid is a partnership approach led by the Peak District National Park Authority (as accountable body) with support from United Utilities (landowner, key partner and holder of part of the required match funding for the phase 2 scheme), Barnsley Metropolitan District Council (holders of part of the match funding on behalf of the Friends of the Trans Pennine Trail, i.e. £73,000 for Grant offer/phase 1 and £7,000 for Grant offer/phase 2), Friends of the Peak District, Natural England and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).
- **Project Management** - the project will require strong partnership liaison, and project management. The proposed lead officer is a Chartered Landscape Architect and the Authority's Project Management approach will be followed. This will involve drawing on the knowledge and experience of a wider team of Authority specialists – Ecologists, Tree Conservation, Archaeology, Built Environment, Access, Rangers, Volunteers, Farm Adviser, Planning and Legal as required and together with partner leads. It is proposed that the project will be delivered in two phases in line with the two separate funding bids with the possibility of a third bid and phase.

- **Capacity and expertise to lead and deliver the project** - there is the capacity and expertise within the Authority's Landscape and Conservation Service to manage and deliver all phases of the project if the funding bids are successful.
- **Match funding** - the required match funding will be provided by partners paying for and delivering agreed enhancement works within the Longdendale Valley. This partner expenditure has formed part of the total project cost for each phase and Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund application. The match funding for both phases 1 and 2 has been secured and detailed written confirmation is in the process of being agreed. Match funding for a third bid is yet to be identified as the details of such a bid have not yet been fully developed. However approval for the acceptance of third grant funding bid would be subject to match funding being secured and in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Audit, Resources & Performance Committee.

2. Recommendations(s)

- 1. That the Committee approves the proposal to accept the offer from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund of £200,000 for phase 1 of the Longdendale Valley Landscape Enhancement Project.**
- 2. That the Committee approves the proposal to accept a further grant offer from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund of £180,000 if the funding is offered for phase 2 of the Longdendale Valley Landscape Enhancement Project.**
- 3. That the Committee approves (in principle) the proposal to apply for and accept a further grant offer from the Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund of up to £200,000 if the funding is offered and if match funding is secured for phase 3 of the Longdendale Valley Landscape Enhancement Project, subject to consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Audit Resources and Performance Committee before final acceptance of this grant offer.**
- 4. That the Authority may, subject to compliance with procurement standing orders, enter into contracts for the delivery of each phase of the project.**

3. How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

Core purposes

This project will deliver for our core purposes in that it will conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Longdendale Valley. It will also enhance the setting of the Trans Pennine Trail and Pennine Way and promote recreational and volunteering opportunities for the public. By mitigating the impact of the pylons and overhead wires it will also help to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the national park.

Corporate Strategy 2016 – 19

The project will support our Corporate Strategy 2016 – 19 by delivering for:

Shift 1: The Place and the Park, on a landscape scale - conservation on the ground at a large scale: for wildlife, cultural heritage and the landscape of the Dark Peak.

It is also an example of a landscape scale project for the Whole of the National Park.

Shift 2: Connect People to the Place, the Park - Enabling everyone, especially those who currently don't benefit, to connect with the National Park so that they value and support the Park. This will be achieved by the provision of specialist advice in developing the project, provision of additional circular routes and track improvements making the trail more accessible to all, the involvement of volunteers and engagement of the local community thereby building support for the Park.

Shift 3: Visitor Experiences that Inspire and Move - Providing and developing opportunities to enjoy the NP so people are moved to care and willing to pay.

Shift 4: Grow Income and Supporters - Diversifying and growing our funding, building on our valued government grant.

Cornerstone 2: Our services - Delivering our planning and other advisory services in a way that helps communities deepen their understanding and support for the special qualities of the National Park.

Landscape strategy

The project area is located within Dark Peak Landscape Character Area and the 'Reservoir Valleys with Woodland' Landscape Character Type. The key landscape guidelines for this are to:

- Protect and maintain historic drystone walls
- Manage the network of tracks and footpaths to maximise opportunities to enjoy the landscape
- Manage and enhance woodlands
- Manage and enhance plantation woodlands
- Manage and enhance semi-natural grassland and wetland landscapes
- Manage and enhance landscape around reservoirs

The first, second and potential third phase of this project tie in with these guidelines and allow the Longdendale Valley partnership to deliver landscape-scale enhancement.

4. Background Information

Undergrounding of High Voltage electricity Lines

The high voltage above ground transmission lines in the Longdendale Valley were shortlisted for undergrounding as part of Ofgem/National Grids Visual Improvement Project. Unfortunately this proposal whilst one of the twelve projects shortlisted it was not selected by the Steering Group for implementation. The proposal to underground a short section of the high voltage transmission lines at Dunford Bridge was successful. This is currently under development and a planning application and accompanying EIA for the section within the National Park is expected shortly.

Mitigation of above ground High Voltage electricity Lines

The Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund is a grant scheme of £24 million available from Ofgem/National Grid. The overall objective of the scheme is to reduce the landscape and visual impact of National Grid's existing electricity infrastructure and enhance the quality of the affected designated landscapes. Where the visual impacts of the electricity transmission line cannot be directly screened or otherwise mitigated it may be possible to shift emphasis away from the transmission line by enhancing the landscape in other ways. It applies to the 30 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks which contain or are impacted by National Grid's transmission infrastructure. Each can submit up to three bids of up to £200,000 for each bid.

Undergrounding of Low Voltage electricity Lines

Ofgem/Electricity Distribution Operators run an Undergrounding for Visual Amenity Scheme within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks. This scheme aims to underground intrusive low voltage electrical infrastructure in these valued landscapes. Authority Officers have been working with Electricity North West to underground intrusive low voltage overhead wires in the Longdendale Valley. Initial costings for this work are approximately £400,000 which would be directly funded by Ofgem. The project will only go ahead if any technical and wayleave issues can be resolved.

Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund applications for the Longdendale Valley.

On the 21st January 2016 a business case was presented to Strategic Management Team for the submission of an expression of interest for an initial bid for a first phase of landscape enhancement works along the Longdendale Valley. SMT Minute 6/21/1/16 recorded support for the submission of an Expression of Interest to Ofgem/National Grid with a subsequent report to RMT with costing details for a full application if the Expression of Interest is well received. Strategic Management Team supported this landscape scale project with a clear focus on our role as convener, bringing partners together using our existing staff resource. The project needed to link with our National Park Management Plan Review and feed into Service Planning with the development of the bid in line with our financial framework.

On the 19th July 2017 a report was presented at the Strategic Development Meeting updating on the progress of the funding bids to the Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund, match funding and seeking support for further bids. Minute No. 27/17 records support for the acceptance of the grant from Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund to enhance the landscape and mitigate the effects of the pylons within Longdendale, subject to Audit Resource & Performance Committee acceptance of the proposal.

So far two bids have been submitted, one bid for £200,000 (which we have been offered) and one of £180,000 (for which we are still waiting for the decision at the time of writing the report). There is the opportunity for a third bid to be made in 2018.

Standing orders part 7.C-2 requires that committee approval is needed to accept grants over £200,000; up to £200,000 the relevant Director together with the Head of Finance can accept the offer of grant. As none of the grants which form part of this report are over £200,000 Committee approval is not required to accept these grants. However standing orders part 3.C-3 states that expenditure forming a scheme or a project over £150,000 does require Committee authority. Each proposed phase of the Longdendale Valley Landscape Enhancement is a separate project with its own budget, schedule of works and timescale.

5. Proposals

The proposal is for the Authority to accept the current grant offer of £200,000 for phase 1, the anticipated offer of £180,000 if the bid for phase 2 is successful and a further offer of up to £200,000 if a third bid is submitted and proves successful from the Landscape Enhancement Fund; and for the Authority to deliver these landscape scale improvements for the Longdendale Valley Landscape.

Outline of the project proposal:

- The Longdendale Valley runs through the Peak District National Park, from Tintwistle to Woodhead. The overhead electricity wires and pylons along the route negatively impact on the landscape of the valley and the setting of the Trans Pennine Trail and Pennine Way.
- The proposal is to make a real difference to the Longdendale Valley and its landscape in terms of accessibility by walkers, horse riders and cyclists; enhancement of the grassland and woodland habitats, restoration of traditional dry stone walls; the setting of the trails in the wider landscape and in particular mitigation of the impact of the overhead electricity wires and pylons.
- The Landscape Enhancement Initiative funded works include: -
 - Phase 1 - creating additional accessible circular routes from the trail (with the potential to be 'miles without stiles'), upgrade bridge crossing points, removal of invasive rhododendrons, removal of encroaching scrub to open views of the Peak District landscape, positively manage grasslands along the trails for habitat and

biodiversity enhancements and undertake tree planting to screen/filter views of electricity pylons. Specific outputs include: -

- 3,000 m2 of path repair (this equates to 1.5km of path at a width of 2m)
 - Re-build one footbridge
 - Improvements to one car park (Torside)
 - 15 new benches along the route
 - 2,500 m2 Rhododendron control
 - 2,500 m2 grassland management
 - 2,000 m2 scrub clearance
 - 1,500 m2 tree management
- Phase 2 - woodland management, naturalisation of conifer plantations and dry stone wall restoration. Specific outputs include: -
- Up to 1 ha of clough woodland /screen tree planting
 - Up to 1,500 linear metres of dry stone wall restoration mainly in difficult to access locations and requiring additional stone to be brought in.
 - Minimum of 6 ha plantation woodland management in a number of blocks
- Phase 3 – works yet to be identified and agreed but likely to include additional access enhancements, dry stone wall restoration, clough woodland planting and existing coniferous plantation diversification.

6. Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

Financial:

Cost of the project

Phase 1 – the total cost of the proposed work is £273,400 of which £200,000 will be from the Landscape Enhancement Fund and £73,400 from a legacy of £80,000 which has been left to the Friends of the Trans Pennine Trail and which is held on their behalf by Barnsley Metropolitan District Council.

Phase 2 - the total cost of the proposed work is £240,000 of which £180,000 will be from the Landscape Enhancement Fund, £6,600 remaining from the £80,000 legacy left to the Friends of the Trans Pennine Trail and referred to above and allocated funding which is potentially available from United Utilities Asset Management budget for works within Longdendale (£53,400).

Phase 3 - the total cost of and third bid would be for up to £267,000 of which £200,000 would be applied for from the Landscape Enhancement Fund, and £67,000 of required match funding (which would potentially be available from United Utilities Asset Management budget for works within Longdendale).

There is capacity within the Landscape & Conservation Service as this project has been identified in the current Service Plan and in the forward planning for the Service should the bids prove successful. Support for onsite supervision and engaging volunteers will be provided by Outreach Development Service. There is provision for partial cost recovery for officer time in delivering each phase.

Potential cash flow implications for the Authority are minimised as the Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund grants are paid in advance at the start of each financial year.

Risk Management:

Securing the required match funding - a figure of £80,000 is available from the legacy left to the Friends of the Trans Pennine Trail and which is held on their behalf Barnsley Metropolitan District Council. It is a requirement of the legacy that the funding is spent on the Trans Pennine Trail in the vicinity of Torside. There is also match funding available from United Utilities Asset Management budget for works within the Longdendale Valley. The Authority's Chief Finance Office and Head of Law are advising on the necessary legal agreements.

Delivery of agreed outputs – this will be controlled by effective project management including regular monitoring of progress and output delivery by the project manager and team.

Quality of project work – risk of poor quality delivery by contractors engaged to undertake the works. This will be controlled by effective design and specification of the contract works, the appointment of a suitable contractor and control of the works by a suitable contract (either the Joint Council of Landscape Industries or Joint Contracts Tribunal, depending on the nature of the works). The Authorities Landscape Architect will act as Contract Administrator and be assisted on the ground by the Authority's Outreach Development Ranger for Longdendale.

Lack of community engagement – again the involvement of the Outreach Development Service will be key to involving the local community. However, community engagement and volunteer involvement are not agreed outcomes of the bid: this element of the work will help deliver both long term sustainability of the project works and delivery of the objectives of the Authority

Extreme weather events – the length of the agreed /estimated delivery period

- Phase 1 – 2017 - 2020
- Phase 2 - 2017 – 2020.
- Phase 3 – 2019 – 2022

means that the risks caused by potential weather delays can be minimised.

Sustainability:

The 'Legacy' of the project is important to the Authority, the funders (Ofgem/National Grid, Friends of the Trans Pennine Trail/Barnsley Metropolitan District Council and United Utilities) and the landowner United Utilities as well as to the long term success of the project. As well as delivering the landscape enhancements outlined, the aim is to also:

(a) grow the awareness of, understanding and support for this landscape asset by stimulating and developing the aspirations of the landowner, United Utilities and the local community (through engagement and volunteering opportunities) so that the improvements are managed on an ongoing basis after the completion of the project; and

(b) to develop a Management Plan to guide the activities of land owners and managers in the future

Equality:

An aim of the project is to increase 'access for all' within the valley by creating accessible circular routes from the trail and providing benches for rest stops. Volunteers of all backgrounds will be encouraged to engage with the project through volunteering opportunities.

7. Background papers (not previously published)

Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund applications for phases 1 and 2.
Landscape Enhancement Initiative Fund grant offer for phase 1.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Longdendale Valley Context

Appendix 2 - Longdendale Landscape Enhancement Initiative Phase 1 works.

Appendix 3 - Longdendale Landscape Enhancement Initiative Phase 2 works

Appendix 4 - Longdendale Landscape Enhancement Initiative - 3 Year Implementation
Budget Estimate for the Phase 1 and 2 Works

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Rob Meetham, Landscape Architect, 06 September 2017