

Item 4

KEY DECISION

REPORT TO CABINET

DATE 16th NOVEMBER 2006

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF
STRATEGY & REGENERATION**

Portfolio: Social Regeneration & Partnership, Community Health

**LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – GREAT AYCLIFFE TOWN
COUNCIL – GREAT AYCLIFFE WAY EXTENSION AND NATURE PARK**

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report highlights a Local Improvement Programme (LIP) application submitted to and appraised by the Capital Programme Team within the Strategy and Regeneration Division. Following endorsement of the project by the Area 5 Forum, this report provides information to Cabinet for their consideration.
- 1.2. The project aims to extend the existing Great Aycliffe Way to the south east of the town. An area of unused industrial land that has been converted into a Nature Park will also be further improved and made more accessible to all members of the community.
- 1.3 The applicant has requested a minimum of £183,505 LIP grant to implement the project. Further information is contained in para.5.2.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Cabinet consider the report and...

- 2.1 Approve the application for LIP Funds based upon the information provided.

3. LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (LIP)

Background - Purpose and Process

- 3.1 The purpose of this programme is to improve community assets and support community engagement in the regeneration of local areas. As part of this, Local Communities groups and partner Town and Parish Council's can propose projects against criteria agreed by Cabinet. As part of this programme resources can be released to improve sites / buildings and the usability of community facilities throughout the Borough.

- 3.2 Once an application is received, officers from the Strategy & Regeneration Division appraise it against set criteria to ensure compatibility with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) definition of Regeneration and the broad 'Grant Criteria' highlighted in the June 2005 report to Cabinet. This includes evidence that the project is able to address clear local need and meet key targets linked to the Community Strategy. The Area Forum view as to the local priority of the project proposal is also key to this appraisal stage.

Background – Project Proposal and History

- 3.3 The Great Aycliffe Way was established in Newton Aycliffe in 1998 as a five and a half mile circular footpath to commemorate fifty years since the designation of the new town of Newton Aycliffe. This walk has proved to be very popular and the Town Council would now like to extend it to the south east of the town.
- 3.4 The new 4.5km link will start at the rear of Woodham Community College continue through woodland plantations and open spaces and link to the Aycliffe Nature Park continuing along the disused Simpasture Railway line and meet the original path adjacent to Westmorland Way. Suitable surfacing will be used to ensure that the path is accessible to all. Way markers will be erected to enable residents to follow the route. Appropriate arts features and seating will also be installed.
- 3.5 An area of unused industrial land which has been converted into a Nature Park will be further improved and made more accessible to all members of the community and ensure that the park is brought into effective use. The works will mean that the Nature Park is identifiable as such and therefore will encourage usage by the general public and local community / school groups. Signage and interpretation panels will be erected. Pond improvements and scrub clearance will be carried out. Picnic tables, benches and bins will also be installed to encourage wider family usage. The area will be fenced to prevent inappropriate use of the land and discourage anti-social behaviour.
- 3.6 A key driver for the scheme apart from the obvious biodiversity and wildlife enhancement is to encourage people to use the walkway as a means of positive physical exercise and to help address aspects of improved mental health. Once completed the project will link to the work of the Sustainable Communities Team of Sedgfield Borough Council including promotion through the Walking the Way to Health Initiative.

4. CORPORATE POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Great Aycliffe Town Council have worked with the Reserves Officer – Sustainable Communities Team throughout the development of the project. This relationship will be further developed following the implementation of the project.

4.2 Great Aycliffe Town Council have also worked with the Council's Arts Development Officer and Commissions North to discuss the public art element of the project.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Area Forum 5 has been allocated £1,140,000 of LIP Capital resources between 2006 and 2009, none of which has been allocated to date. £380,000 has been allocated for 2006/07.

5.2 The applicant has requested a minimum of **£183,505** of LIP funding, which is 89% of the total capital project costs. The remaining capital costs (£21,000) have been applied for from the County Durham Environmental Trust (CDENT) - £20,000, and The Conservation Foundation - £1,000. Decisions on the funding applications are to be made on Wednesday 8th November. A verbal update will be provided to Cabinet as to the outcome of these external funding decisions.

5.3 A full breakdown of costs is as follows:

Expenditure	Costs
Footpath Works- New loop	£71,280
Footpath Works – Simpature rail line loop	£72,360
Nature Park works	£40,865
Arts Features	£20,000
Total	£204,505

5.4 Great Aycliffe Town Council have explored many avenues of funding in an attempt to attract match funding to the project. Unfortunately, due to their applicant status and the availability of monies for such projects, this has proved difficult and therefore the £21,000 level stated above is likely to be the maximum match funding available, subject to a positive outcome on the funding applications.

5.5 In addition to the above, Great Aycliffe Town Council will undertake the maintenance of the Great Aycliffe Way and the Nature Park upon completion of the project. This amounts to approximately £35,000 over the next 8 years and will be funded from their own funds.

5.6 The Technical Services Section of Sedgefield Borough Council have prepared initial scheme cost estimates and will manage the tender process to ensure value for money is achieved from letting the programme of works.

6. CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 The project was established during the Parish Plan production process when local residents awareness of Aycliffe's environment and the need to maintain and improve the quality of leisure facilities were highlighted. The Aycliffe Nature Park Association, together with SBC and Durham Wildlife Trust, has recently surveyed the wildflower meadow and pond area and concluded that work is urgently required to preserve this habitat.
- 6.2 Consultation on this project has also been carried out with the Friends of Byerley Park Local Nature Reserve, The Nature Park Association and the Newton Aycliffe Walking the Way to Health Group who are all supportive of the project.
- 6.3 Extensive use of the existing footpath network has highlighted the popularity of such a facility – by extending it, the Town Council aim to encourage more members of the community to take an interest in their local environment, while at the same time gaining the obvious benefits of healthy exercise and an educational opportunity.

7. AREA FORUM RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 The Area 5 Forum agreed to support the progress of this project through the Council's decision-making process.

8. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The application has undergone an appraisal and been assessed against the LIP criteria. The application has met key elements of the LIP criteria, and demonstrated links to the Community Strategy priorities as detailed above.
- 8.2 Further discussions will be held with the Planning Department to assess the future need for planning permission, particularly for the Arts features.
- 8.3 Procurement - The funding requested represents a grant to an external organisation. All elements of the project will be subject to a full tender process upon approval in order to ensure value for money is ensured. See Para. 5.6
- 8.4 Sustainability – The project represents a clear opportunity to enhance the local environment and encourage interest and community ownership of local Nature Reserves.
- 8.5 Crime and Disorder - In line with the Council's Community Strategy, this project has identified a clear link with providing facilities that hope to result in a fall in crime and anti-social behaviour rates within this community. The

facility will need to be actively managed by the Town Council and its partners to ensure that opportunities for antisocial behaviour are minimised. This will include the designs being considered by the Police Design Liaison Officer prior to implementation.

9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There has been no previous consultation or engagement with the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on this particular project.

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Ward: West Ward and Neighbouring Wards in Newton Aycliffe

Key Decision Validation: Amount requested represents a grant of over £100,000 from LIP resources.

Background Papers:

Internal		
1	Promotion Of The Regeneration Of The Borough Housing Land Capital Receipts To Support Regeneration And Affordable Housing Provision	June 2005 Cabinet Report
2	Area 5 Forum Report – July 2006 – Sedgefield Borough Local Improvement Programme Application	July 2006

Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council’s Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

