

Transport & Environment Committee

10am, Tuesday, 30 August 2016

Water of Leith Valley Improvement Proposals (Dean to Stockbridge Section)

Item number 7.8

Report number

Executive/routine

Wards

Executive Summary

Dean Valley Regeneration Limited has an ambition to improve the infrastructure and landscape of the Water of Leith valley between Dean Village and Stockbridge. The Council owns and manages land within this valley, specifically the Water of Leith walkway and adjacent land and water. This report seeks the Council's formal support of the Dean Valley Regeneration Limited applying for external funding to carry out a feasibility study and conditions appraisal to enable the further development of improvement proposals.

Links

Coalition Pledges

Council Priorities

Single Outcome Agreement

Transport & Environment Committee

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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee formally agrees to support Dean Valley Regeneration Limited in its application to secure external funding to carry out a feasibility study and conditions appraisal as part of the development of proposals for improving the area along the Water of Leith between Dean Village and Stockbridge.

2. Background

- 2.1 Dean Valley Regeneration Limited (DVRL) has been established as a charitable limited company by community representatives seeking to renew the historic designed landscape along the Water of Leith between Dean Village and Stockbridge. The group includes local representatives with a wide range of professional experience, community engagement, legal, architectural, landscaping, project management and business expertise.
- 2.2 The DVRL's predecessor group commissioned a Conservation Statement in 2015, and it is the recommendations from this Statement that form the basis for proposed environmental improvements. These include walkway and railing renovation, embankment and wall repair, walkway upgrading, and local power generation.
- 2.3 The DVRL is currently engaged in raising funds to cover the costs of producing a project feasibility study, including capital cost estimates. It is also working with Council tree officers and the Water of Leith Conservation Trust on a detailed tree condition survey. These in turn will inform a grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other potential funders.

3. Main report

- 3.1 The Council is being asked to support Dean Valley Regeneration Limited (DVRL) in its desire to improve the physical environmental quality of the Water of Leith Valley between Dean Village and Stockbridge. It should be noted that the Conservation Statement was commissioned by an external organisation and the recommendations do not necessarily represent the views of the Council. Details on the form that improvements will take will require further information gathering,

discussion and consultation. The additional information will require an appraisal of the condition of the Water of Leith walkway and associated structures (walls, embankment, railings etc), and a works/project feasibility analysis

- 3.2 Potential improvements are likely to include upgrading the walkway, restoration of structures such as railings, walls and embankments, landscape conservation measures, and possibly the creation of power from a micro-hydro scheme.
- 3.3 Funds have already been secured by DVRL (and its predecessor group) to resource a Conservation Statement and biodiversity scoping study, as well as initiate historical research. However, in order to access additional funds to undertake a project feasibility study and condition appraisals, the group now needs the formal support of the City of Edinburgh Council, which owns and maintains the Water of Leith walkway as well as part of the river itself and most of the structural and natural features pertaining to both. Once the feasibility study has been completed the DVRL will share its findings with the Council and agree the next stages of the project. These are likely to include consideration of a funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- 3.4 In the meantime, DVRL has been awarded a grant from Sustrans to meet part of the costs of a feasibility study relating to the footpath/cycleway. The balance of the costs of this feasibility study are being met by a small funding award from the Council and funding raised by Dean Valley Regeneration Limited. The group, in partnership with the Council and the Water of Leith Conservation Trust, will shortly complete a tree survey to identify essential tree removal. A technical review of renewable energy options and costings, structural surveys of built structures and the water embankments, and preparing related cost estimates for different development options is also being planned.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 Dean Valley Regeneration Limited having formal support from the Council to pursue external funding to progress and implement an environmental improvement programme.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no costs to the Council in approving the recommendations of this Report. Dean Valley Regeneration Limited is seeking the approval of the Council to pursue external funding opportunities, but needs the Council's support, as landowner, to do so.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 Officers will work with Dean Valley Regeneration Limited to agree ongoing procedures for joint working, including key contacts, interim and periodic reporting. This will include the Council receiving copies of minutes from the monthly meetings of the DVRL Project Board and quarterly joint meetings with the Council.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 This proposal aims to improve and enhance the physical environment of the area. As part of these improvements, accessibility will be up upgraded allowing people with a wide range of physical abilities to further utilise the area. A detailed impact assessment will be produced as part of the Heritage Lottery fund grant application.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The project seeks to enhance the natural and historic environment of this stretch of the Water of Leith walkway. Additional sustainability benefits may arise from a related micro-hydro initiative.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 A number of stakeholder meetings and conducted walks have been held since project inception in 2013, leading to the commissioning of a Conservation Statement report jointly funded by the North Edinburgh Neighbourhood Partnership and Historic Scotland in partnership with Edinburgh World Heritage.
- 9.2 Presentations have been made at various local community organisation events, including Neighbourhood Partnerships, Stockbridge Community Council, and Dean Village Association. The findings of the Conservation Statement, including participant feedback and a summary report, were also presented at a major public event in November 2015.
- 9.3 Subsequent discussions have been had with the City of Edinburgh Council, the City Centre Neighbourhood Partnership, Dean Village Association, Dean Gardens Association, Edinburgh World Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland, Living Streets, Lothian and Edinburgh Green Spaces Trust, Inverleith Neighbourhood Partnership, National Galleries for Scotland, Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage, SPOKES, Abertay University, Stockbridge Community Council, SUSTRANS, the Water of Leith Conservation Trust, and West End Community Council.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 Dean Valley Conservation Statement:
<http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org/post/agenda/valley-of-the-water-of-leith-between-stockbridge-and-dean-village-update-2015/>

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11. Links

Coalition Pledges	P31 Maintain our City's reputation as the cultural capital of the world by continuing to support and invest in our cultural infrastructure. P40 Work with Edinburgh World Heritage Trust and other stakeholders to conserve the city's built heritage.
Council Priorities	CP9 An attractive city. CP12 A built environment to match our ambition.
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4 Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric.
Appendices	None.