

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17 DECEMBER 2009

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Regeneration and Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mr Bob Cook

CONNECT2 - UPDATE

1. Summary

'Connect2' is a scheme designed to link Ingleby Barwick with Eaglescliffe, Preston Park, Thornaby and Yarm via a series of pedestrian and cycle routes, including new bridges across the Rivers Leven and Tees.

New pedestrian and cycle links between Ingleby Barwick & Eaglescliffe and Ingleby Barwick & Yarm were identified as priorities for implementation over the life of the Second Stockton-on-Tees Local Transport Plan. Accordingly, the Council worked with the sustainable transport charity Sustrans to develop a scheme designed to link the communities of Ingleby Barwick, Eaglescliffe, Thornaby and Yarm via a series of pedestrian and cycle routes, including new bridges across the Rivers Leven and Tees.

As a result of a successful bid for Big Lottery funding in December 2007, Sustrans secured £50 million of grant funding for 'Connect2', a national initiative designed to link communities currently severed by a physical barrier such as a road, river or railway. Each of the 79 Connect2 schemes across the UK would receive a share of this grant over the five years from 2008/09 to 2012/13 inclusive, with the Stockton Council in line to receive £600,000 towards the cost of providing the bridge links between Ingleby Barwick and Yarm and Ingleby Barwick and Eaglescliffe.

The estimated costs for the two schemes is £6million leaving a funding shortfall of £5.4million. A number of options to plug that gap have been explored such as the Regional Funding Allocation from the Department for Transport and landfill tax funds to no avail. There was also an expectation that some of the funding would come from developer contributions on sites within Ingleby Barwick which is not going to be possible in the near future.

The conclusion is that we will not be able to deliver the schemes within the timescales attached to the funding source and therefore it would be prudent to inform Sustrans of this position in order that the money could be re-allocated and good relations are maintained with our partners.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Officers continue to actively seek the necessary funding for the pedestrian and cycle linkages that connect the communities of Ingleby Barwick, Thornaby, Yarm and Eaglescliffe.
2. The Acting Head of Technical Services work with Sustrans to explore other opportunities to deliver the objectives for which the £600k was allocated within the timescales set and should this prove to be challenging then Sustrans are informed accordingly.
3. That the community are informed of the continued commitment to deliver these schemes as and when resources become available.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

1. The funding gap of £5.4 million is unlikely to be met within the time period set by the Big Lottery fund and Sustrans.
2. There is a need to retain good working relations with our partners Sustrans to ensure future schemes are not jeopardised.
3. Detailed designs have been worked up for these schemes which places the council in a good position to bid for alternative funds as and when they become available.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SUMMARY

As a result of a successful bid for Big Lottery funding in December 2007, Sustrans secured £50 million of grant funding for 'Connect2', a national initiative designed to link communities currently severed by a physical barrier such as a road, river or railway. Each of the 79 Connect2 schemes across the UK would receive a share of this grant over the five years from 2008/09 to 2012/13 inclusive, with the Stockton Council in line to receive £600,000 towards the cost of providing the bridge links between Ingleby Barwick and Yarm and Ingleby Barwick and Eaglescliffe.

The estimated costs for the two schemes is £6million leaving a funding shortfall of £5.4million. A number of options to plug that gap have been explored such as the Regional Funding Allocation from the Department for Transport and landfill tax funds to no avail. There was also an expectation that some of the funding would come from developer contributions on sites within Ingleby Barwick which is not going to be possible in the near future.

The conclusion is that the opportunities to deliver the schemes within the timescales attached to the funding source are reducing. Officers will continue to exhaust all opportunities for funding and work closely with Sustrans to ensure they remain acutely aware of the difficulties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Officers continue to actively seek the necessary funding for the pedestrian and cycle linkages that connect the communities of Ingleby Barwick, Thornaby, Yarm and Eaglescliffe.
2. The Acting Head of Technical Services work with Sustrans to explore other opportunities to deliver the objectives for which the £600k was allocated within the timescales set and should this prove to be challenging then Sustrans are informed accordingly.
3. That the community are informed of the continued commitment to deliver these schemes as and when resources become available.

DETAIL

Background:

- 1 Previously Cabinet agreed at the meeting in April 2008 that:
 - i. The proposed Connect2 scheme be approved in principle.
 - ii. Officers be authorised to pursue the preferred strategy for the delivery of the scheme, as highlighted within the Report, and to investigate potential sources of funding.
 - iii. Members note that an External Project Board is to be established to ensure that key stakeholders are fully engaged throughout the scheme development process.
 - iv. A further Report, updating Members on progress made with regard to funding, land acquisition and risk management, be brought to Cabinet in February 2009.
- 2 Since that meeting we have seen the arrival of the worst recession in modern history and the funding opportunities that were originally envisaged to support the schemes have all but disappeared. Despite this the design of the linkages was taken to the stage where routes have been examined and reviewed or re-aligned in order that we had a clear understanding of the total costs and the deliverability of the schemes. The main elements of the scheme are the two bridges, links 1 and 2. Despite funding difficulties, links 3 and 4 remain deliverable through the Local Transport Plan and other grant opportunities.

Progress to date:

Link 1 - Ingleby Barwick to Yarm:

- 3 Feasibility study carried out to identify the best alignment for a bridge link across the River Leven. Two options were identified within the report. The results of this can be seen in **Appendix 1**, pages 14 - 18. Bridge options identified and estimated costs produced. Estimated costs for the identified options can be seen in the Table in **Appendix 2**.

Link 2 -Ingleby Barwick to Eaglescliffe:

- 4 Feasibility study carried out to identify the best alignment for a bridge link across the River Tees. The results of this can be seen in the **Appendix 1**, pages 20 - 23. Bridge design options were identified and estimated costs produced. Estimated costs for the identified options can be seen in the Table in **Appendix 2**.

Link 3 - Ingleby Barwick to Thornaby:

- 5 Feasibility study carried out to identify best alignment for a route between Ingleby Barwick and Thornaby. The results of this can be seen in **Appendix 1**, pages 10 – 13. The scheme has been taken to detailed design stage with full construction costs identified. Estimated cost £270,000.
- 6 This route is feasible to deliver and will be looked at as part of the development of the next Local transport Plan.

Link 4 - Ingleby Barwick to Preston Park:

- 7 Feasibility study carried out to identify best alignment for a route between Queen Elizabeth Way and Preston Park. The results of this can be seen in **Appendix 1**, pages 5 – 8. The

scheme has been taken to detailed design stage with full construction costs identified. The total estimated cost is £200,000.

- 8 In addition, a link from The Rings along the west side of Queen Elizabeth Way to link in with the existing cycleway/footway was identified as beneficial towards the scheme. The estimated cost for this extra link is £50,000.
- 9 It is very likely that this scheme will be delivered in 2010/2011 as £150,000 has been allocated from the 2010/11 LTP, with the remaining £90,000 of the funding to be confirmed as part of a bid by the Friends of Tees Heritage Park to the Community Spaces Flagship fund administered by Groundwork. The outcome of this bid will be known in March 2010, and we are confident of the success of that bid.
- 10 The landowners affected by all of the proposed routes have been identified and contacted, both to make them aware of the scheme and to canvass their initial views on the proposals. Most of those contacted are broadly supportive of the proposed links.

External Project Board:

- 10 It was agreed by cabinet in April 2008 that an external project board should be set up to manage the development of the scheme. This action has not been taken forward as the deliverability of the scheme was in doubt because of the lack of funding to make up the significant shortfall. However, consultation has been carried out with key stakeholders, including Sustrans, Friends of Tees Heritage Park, the Wildlife Trust, and land owners.

Funding:

- 11 As highlighted earlier in this report Sustrans offered £600,000 of Big Lottery funding towards the costs of completing the links between Ingleby Barwick and Yarm, and Ingleby Barwick and Eaglescliffe. The estimated costs for the two schemes is £6million leaving a funding shortfall of £5.4million.
- 12 The potential and secured sources of funding were highlighted in the earlier cabinet report in April 2008 and are in the attached table at **Appendix 3**.
- 13 The following funding options have been investigated:
 - The Council's annual '**Integrated Transport**' **Block Allocation** from the Department for Transport (DfT) to deliver the Local transport Plan. The contribution from this source is likely to be up to a maximum of £200,000 per annum.
 - A bid for **LTP Major Scheme Funding**. This possibility was formally raised with the DfT and the Government Office for the North East, and further explored in partnership with the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (JSU) with the potential to provide between £1.7million and £5.7million. Government Office for the North East have indicated that this funding is now fully allocated, and although the allocation may be re-profiled this is unlikely to happen within the timescales required for the Sustrans funding.
 - Funding released through the **Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy**, coordinated by the JSU. This possibility was investigated but is unlikely to offer significant funding within the timescale required.
 - **Developer Contributions**. Due to the economic downturn there is unlikely to be significant developer funding available for the project, much of which were to come from the significant planned housing development at Ingleby Barwick.

- **Other External Funding Sources.** A joint bid with Middlesbrough Council was submitted to Cycling England's 'Cycle Demonstration Town' project in autumn 2008. Unfortunately this was unsuccessful.

- 14 The use of the £600,000 Sustrans funding for Links 3 and 4 of the scheme, and other related schemes (a bridge to Preston Park) was also explored with Sustrans and the Big Lottery. Sustrans initially advised that this was not possible as Links 1 and 2 were essential to provide the community link benefits that the national Connect2 project aims to achieve.
- 15 The result of these investigations is a funding shortfall for the two bridge links of £5.4million remains. Officers will now engage in further detailed discussions with Sustrans to seek opportunities to look for underspend on other Connect2 projects Nationally, in order to reduce the funding gap.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 16 None at this stage, although funding will be sought from external sources to deliver these schemes as it becomes available.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 17 Not at this stage.

RISK ASSESSMENT

- 18 No direct risks attached to the decision not to proceed with the funding offer from Sustrans.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Regeneration and Transport

- 19 The inability to proceed with these schemes does have a negative impact upon our delivery of some of the Local Transport Plan objectives.
- 20 Sustainable transport links are important to connect communities where there are physical barriers in place such as the river Tees.

Environment and Housing

- 21 Sustainable transport choices can reduce air pollution from motor vehicles.

Safer Communities

- 22 Connecting communities could lead to enhanced feeling of community and belonging.

Children and Young People

- 23 The connect2 linkages could have offered a more sustainable and healthy means to travel to school.

Liveability

- 24 No specific benefit other than overall reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 25 Not required.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

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Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Route Appraisals: Links 1-4
Appendix 2 – Link 1 and 2 estimated costs
Appendix 3 – Secured and Potential sources of funding

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Not ward specific.

Property

Not at this stage.