

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

14 July 2016

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

**Arts Leisure and Culture Lead Member – Councillor Norma Wilburn
Environment and Housing Lead Member – Councillor Mike Smith
Regeneration and Transport Lead Member – Councillor Nigel Cooke**

RIVER TEES LEISURE ACCESS AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Summary

The River Tees is an important strategic asset providing recreational and leisure opportunities and adding character and value to development sites, in addition to its general contribution to the image and identity of the Borough and the wider conurbation. There are a number of sites adjacent to the Tees within Stockton Borough which have the potential for further development to increase access to and use of the River. This report outlines a planned review of key sites being undertaken by SBC in conjunction with its key partners. It also updates on the arrangements to support access and enjoyment of the river corridor, including the River Users Group and the River Tees Rediscovered project.

The planned review of sites and opportunities is a focused and pragmatic piece of work to update existing plans, rather than a more comprehensive and definitive study. Subject to the effective input of partner agencies a further report will be presented to Cabinet later this calendar year.

2. Recommendations

1. Cabinet are asked to note the report and endorse the scope of the proposed limited review of key sites and access opportunities along the Tees corridor within the Borough.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

Cabinet is asked to consider the scope and purpose of this planned limited review of the Tees corridor opportunities to provide guidance to officers on relevant matters and priorities and to empower officers to explore development opportunities with partner agencies.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct

and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, 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 and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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SUMMARY

The River Tees is an important strategic asset providing recreational and leisure opportunities and adding character and value to development sites, in addition to its general contribution to the image and identity of the Borough and the wider conurbation. There are a number of sites adjacent to the Tees within Stockton Borough which have the potential for further development to increase access to and use of the River. This report outlines a planned review of key sites being undertaken by SBC in conjunction with its key partners. It also updates on the arrangements to support access and enjoyment of the river corridor, including the River Users Group and the River Tees Rediscovered project.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are asked to note the report and endorse the scope of the proposed limited review of key sites and access opportunities along the Tees corridor within the Borough.

DETAIL

1. There have been many studies of the River corridor, reflecting its significance in relation to the image and character of the area and to its economic and industrial contribution. Major studies in 1998 and 2002 highlighted sites like Middlehaven, North Bank (now North Shore), and the International Nature Reserve (now Salthome) which have been effectively developed. Others like the Tees Marshalling Yards, St Marks Basin and Bowesfield Farm have not yet progressed.
2. Since that time a number of initiatives have increased access and raised awareness of the heritage and natural landscape value of the Tees corridor, and a number of events have been developed that raise awareness of the quality of the River.

3. In recent years, some of the partners have changed in their form and function, such as the transition from British Waterways to Canal and Rivers Trust. Against this backdrop the report by Lord Heseltine of Thenford; *'Tees Valley: Opportunity Unlimited'* recommends that:
 - the Combined Authority should take a lead on the natural environment, recognising the significance of the river corridor and enabling increased access through strategic footpaths, pedestrian and cycle river crossings, and further development of moorings, marinas, and completing the 'missing link' in the new England Coastal Path. (Chapter 10.3.2).
4. In general the character of the River and the river corridor changes at the Barrage, static water level, fresh rather than salt water, and predominantly green rather than industrial or brown-field banks typify the upstream section. The navigable sections of the Tees, upstream of the barrage are contained within the boundary of Stockton Borough. On this basis, notwithstanding anticipated wider work by the Tees Valley Combined Authority, SBC is leading a limited re-evaluation of key sites and development opportunities within the Borough.

River Users Group

5. Following a review of river based leisure facilities by the Arts, Leisure and Culture Select Committee in 2007/08 a River Users Group (RUG) was established to support development of and access to the river corridor, the marketing of activities associated with the river and its ongoing stewardship. The RUG comprises a wide range of organisations with representation from key personnel, including the Canal and River Trust (CRT), Environment Agency, Tees Rivers Trust, Friends of Tees Heritage Park and the various water sports centres, clubs and associations located along and operating on the river.
6. The RUG has facilitated effective collaboration between partners, helping to support the development and use of the river corridor. For example, RUG partners have identified key destination points along the river where additional moorings, landing stages and launching slipways could be provided. The RUG also provides an effective forum to consider proposed developments within the river corridor and to address a range of management issues: helping to ensure a coordinated approach to the use of the river for a wide range of leisure activities; promoting access on land while addressing anti-social behaviour issues; and maintaining environmental quality (e.g. controlling invasive species).
7. The Council has a close working partnership with the CRT, supporting the organisation's stewardship of the river to ensure navigation is maintained with regular debris clearance operations undertaken. The Council and CRT also work jointly to enhance the river corridor through the regeneration and provision of facilities that improve the tourism, recreational, amenity and community value of the River Tees for river users, anglers, walkers and cyclists, as well as businesses and local residents. Through engagement with the RUG the CRT are developing proposals for the future use of the North Pavilion at the Barrage, which will see greater community and leisure use of this asset. CRT also continue to work closely with Tees Active and RUG partners to develop the wider Tees Barrage site.

River Tees Rediscovered

8. Supported by a £1.9 million grant under the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnerships programme, River Tees Rediscovered (RTR) aims to conserve and restore the heritage of the river corridor, increase community participation, promote greater access, encourage learning and develop heritage skills. The programme covers an area of approximately 140 square kilometers, focusing on the river corridor downstream of Piercebridge. In Stockton the programme area incorporates the Tees Heritage Park, the

urban river corridor downstream from Victoria Bridge and much of the land around the Tees estuary.

9. RTR comprises a series of linked projects and activities, delivered by wide range of organisations including the five Tees Valley local authorities, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Tees Archaeology, Tees Rivers Trust and others. Groundwork North East and Cumbria are the lead partner, with responsibility for delivering certain activities and coordinating overall delivery of the 5-year programme. Projects include the development and promotion of the Teesdale Way and associated heritage trails, the creation of a new section of the England Coast Path, a community archaeology programme, schemes to conserve and interpret heritage and landscape features, and initiatives to develop local craft and heritage skills. A diverse range of public events and educational activities are engaging both urban and rural communities.

Key sites and access opportunities

10. As outlined above, there have been many improvements to access and use of the River. New landing stages in Preston Park have enabled the Teesside Princess pleasure-cruise to be complemented by rowing boat hire and smaller boat trips to Yarm run by the entrepreneurial commercial partner Rivershack.
11. Recent negotiations with The Environment Agency (EA) have identified a contractual framework within which SBC can facilitate increased leisure use of the Yarm Quay, potentially unlocking this key access point to the Tees for recreational and commercial use.
12. Key cycle and footpaths have been linked more effectively, enabling long distance and local routes to connect with the river more easily.
13. The following sites remain underdeveloped or unresolved and it is proposed that each is appraised in this review to check whether previous priorities and parameters apply and to ascertain if development could be progressed in coming years. This list is provisional and subject to ongoing discussions with Canal and Rivers Trust and other interested parties;
 - Barrage/Marshalling Yards/Maze Park/Portrack Meadows (site of former incinerator)
 - North Shore/Riverside Road/casino river front
 - St Marks Basin
 - Bowesfield
 - Preston Park (footbridge)
 - Yarm Quay
14. It is expected that this site based review will also highlight issues of land ownership, permissions, licenses and restrictions on a case by case basis. As with the current discussions with the EA, it is our intention to explore a framework within which future commercial and leisure use of the river can be facilitated more easily.
15. In parallel to the review of key sites, the Council will continue to work with River User Group and River Tees Rediscovered partners to implement wider measures which will increase use and enjoyment of the river corridor.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

16. Developments in any site will have an impact on certain communities and those impacts will be considered within the evaluation of options for each site. This report, setting out the scope of this limited review does not have any community impact implications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. There may be some costs associated with the review and development of outline schemes for selected sites but these can be accommodated within current budgets. Cost implications of development works for the various schemes will be included in the follow-up report where they are known.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

18. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

19. This River Tees Leisure Access and Development report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

20. Whilst the report per se does not impact on any of the policy principles, the resulting work and subsequent developments are expected to make a significant contribution to the following Policy Principles:

- Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention
- Developing strong and healthy communities
- Creating economic prosperity

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

21. This report does not contain corporate parenting implications.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

22. There has been no consultation in the preparation of this report but there will be consultation with Ward Councillors in relation to the selected sites as part of the evaluation of those sites. In pursuit of further development at a later stage there would also be more general consultation, but proportionate to the scale and type of development being proposed.

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Education related? No
Background Papers

Tees Valley: Opportunity Unlimited, An independent report by The Rt Hon Lord Heseltine of Thenford CH, published by the Government and available at www.gov.uk/dclg

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: All

Property

There is no impact arising from this report and any impact arising from the subsequent review will be highlighted in the report of the review findings.