

Report To:	CABINET
Date:	18 NOVEMBER 2024
Heading:	BRIDGES (TEVERSAL & SKEGBY TRAILS)
Executive Lead Member:	CLLR HELEN-ANN SMITH, DEPUTY LEADER AND EXECUTIVE LEAD MEMBER FOR PARKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
Ward/s:	STANTON HILL AND TEVERSAL, SKEGBY
Key Decision:	YES
Subject to Call-In:	YES

Purpose of Report

This report updates Cabinet on the project work currently being undertaken to assess the condition of the Bridges, Tunnel and Watercourse along the Skegby and Teversal trails.

The report also seeks approval for the temporary repairs needed, to two bridges along the Skegby trail, whilst officers explore alternative funding opportunities relating to the future maintenance and replacements.

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet -

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. Agrees on the initial revenue allocation of £51,211.54 to provide a temporary bridge repair, for the period of six months, whilst longer-term replacement and repair options are explored.
3. Agrees that the Executive Director of Operations takes forward the procurement of the temporary repair as per 2 above.
4. Agrees to receive an update and proposal for a longer-term solution within 6 months.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To allow continued access to the existing Skegby and Teversal trails, which are currently partially closed due to the unsafe condition of two existing bridges, whilst officers continue to:

- a) Undertake the remaining condition surveys which include a further twelve assets (eight bridges, three culverted water courses and one tunnel) situated along the Skegby and Teversal trails.
- b) Explore external funding opportunities available to the Council, for the replacement or repair of any assets identified from the surveys undertaken in (a) above.

Alternative Options Considered

The Council may decide to keep in force the existing 'closure order' of the Skegby and Teversal trails, whilst funding options are investigated. However, this would mean that the existing trails would not be accessible by the general public, visitors to Ashfield, and the adjoining landowners who require continued access.

The Council may consider not repairing or maintaining the current existing assets along the Skegby and Teversal trails; however, this does not reduce its statutory liability to the users of the trails. This option carries a risk of damage to the Council's reputation.

The Council may also choose to demolish the assets that are damaged. However, this option also carries a large reputational risk to the Council, in respect of the historic nature of the assets. **Not recommended.**

Detailed Information

Background

A project commenced in May 2024 to review the maintenance of several assets located on the Skegby and Teversal trails, which form part of the old railway lines.

The railways were utilised to transport goods and as a passenger service. The Skegby line officially closed in the 1950's. The Teversal line continued in operation until it was closed in 1978.

Over the years nature has colonised the original track beds on both lines, helping to create the attractive trails, adopted as a right of way by the Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) and now used for walking, running, cycling and horse-riding by residents and visitors to the district of Ashfield. The network of gravel tracks run for miles and link up much of North Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire with the old colliery railway stations. The trails have several abandoned platforms, impressive railway bridges and tunnels that provide access along, under, and over the old railway trails. There are adjoining landowners who require continued right of way access across (over and under) the existing trails.

The sites were transferred from the Great Northern Railway to the Sutton Urban District Council, and then later to Ashfield District Council in 1974. There are limited land and asset

historic records detailing the transfer of the assets, easements, rights of way or legal responsibilities.

The Council's legal team, through previous work with the Land Registry, is now confident that the Council owns all assets identified on the map (Appendix 1). It is therefore now known that the sites include fifteen Ashfield District Council owned assets, including eleven bridges, one tunnel, and three culverted watercourses.

Issue

A structural survey was arranged for the three bridges, starred 1, 2 and 8 on Appendix 1, and condition reports have now been received by the Council.

The three surveys identified that there are several assets on the old railway trails that now also require inspection. Recommended practice suggests that major structures such as bridges, tunnels and culverted water courses, should be visually inspected annually and a more detailed structural survey undertaken every six years. This will ensure that the assets remain maintained and safe for access and use.

Photos in Appendix 2 show the current condition of the three bridges.

Following the receipt and analysis of the first bridges Structural Condition Report, officers have worked with NCC to issue an access closure notice, until further analysis is completed. The temporary closure commenced in April 2024 and prevents access along a section of the existing Teversal Trail. This closure notice has now been extended until April 2025 and could be extended further until either a temporary fix is put in place, or the identified bridges replaced.

Project

A project is currently underway which aims to:

- Identify the legal ownership, rights of way, and easements relating to the assets identified, and codify this information within the Council's mapping systems.
- Survey the remaining twelve assets to understand their condition.
- To analyse the information provided by the surveys and produce informed recommendations for the future of the existing assets, to be presented to senior leadership and Cabinet in the new year.

The Council's legal team are now currently identifying the rights of way, easements, and other considerations for the identified assets.

The Council's GIS team has mapped all the assets along both trails and are exploring and finalising land ownership surrounding them.

The procurement of structural surveys for the remaining twelve assets is currently underway. Survey work is planned to commence in November 2024, with officers planning to analyse this data by the end of December 2024.

As part of the project, a separate report on the Teversal and Skegby Trail Assets was taken to the Environment and Communities Select Committee on 15/10/24. The purpose of the report was to update the committee on the ongoing project to understand the condition of the Council assets situated along the Skegby and Teversal trails. The Select Committee fed back on the following points:

- Capital costs and fundings
- Engagement with local interested parties
- Reputational risk for the Council
- Projected timelines and constraints

A separate discussion was held on funding opportunities open to the council and the methods of accessing potential funding streams.

Next Steps

The option for a temporary repair to two bridges exists with approval from Cabinet. This would provide temporary safety and access across the trails where the current closure is in operation. These are bridges 2 and 8 starred on Appendix 1. Temporary access would consist of a structure being built around the existing bridge, that would allow the assets to be used by landowners and residents.

Neighbourhood Services have undertaken market testing to understand the estimated cost of providing a temporary solution to allow continued access to the trails for a minimum of twenty-four-week period. The estimated cost for the erection and hire of 2 structures is £51,211.54. Additional weeks of hire are estimated at £600-£700 per week plus VAT.

As part of the above procurement process, officers will consider the cost of ongoing hire against the cost of purchase to ensure the Council achieves value for money, through its short to medium term temporary solution.

These measures would alleviate disruption to the use of the trail for a temporary period whilst permanent solutions are sourced.

Funding Opportunities

As part of the project, officers will, with the support of Cabinet, seek to explore external funding opportunities provided by various organisations with the support of external partners, such as Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) and local interest groups where identified, for the future repair or replacement of the assets.

Discussions are underway with NCC to understand their position in respect of the right of way along the trails. Further discussions with NCC are planned for November 2024 and Cabinet would receive a further update in March/April 2025.

Other external funding organisations to consider include, but are not limited to:

- Department of Transport
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Historic England
- Heritage England
- Pilgrim's Trust

Corporate Plan:

Cleaner & Greener - The project will ensure that the Council green spaces are well-maintained, as stated within the Council's priority.

Economic Growth & Place – providing alternative transport routes and enhancement of the visitor economy.

Legal:

The Legal Team are actively assisting with the project as set out in the body of the report to ensure the Council understands the extent of its legal responsibilities and liabilities. [RLD 30/10/2024]

Finance: As per within the body of the report and shown below. **[AP25/10/2024]**

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	Recent market testing has indicated an estimated cost of providing a temporary solution to allow continued access to the trails for a minimum of twenty-four-week period for the erection and hire of 2 structures is £51,211.54. Additional weeks of hire are estimated at £600-£700 per week plus VAT. Funding for the temporary structure to be provided from the Asset Renewal Reserve
General Fund – Capital Programme	None identified at present
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Risk to the health and safety of users of the site	Temporary closure notices are in place, however this restricts the access and use of the trails. Temporary access for the site will be considered to enable people to use the trails safely. The project will also present an options appraisal for the best course of action and future funding opportunities concerning the future of the assets

<p>Reputational damage to the Council stemming from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Closures, causing disruption of citizen's use of the trails. - Disruption to residents and landowners caused by surveying, or future the maintenance, of the assets - Reaction to proposed works once an options appraisal has been completed. 	<p>The Council's communications team will ensure any closures along the trails/cycleways are communicated in a timely manner to landowners who will be affected by surveying and maintenance works.</p>
<p>Limited external funding</p>	<p>The Council needs to undertake the initial engagement with potential funding sources before it can consider alternative funding models such as crowd funding, borrowing etc.</p>

Human Resources:

There are no HR implications contained in the report. **[KB30/10/2024]**

Environmental/Sustainability:

Surveying work and any future maintenance conducted on the assets will be done with regard to the environmental and ecological condition of the assets and surrounding area.

Equalities:

No direct implications at this stage of the project.

Other Implications:

N/A

Reason(s) for Urgency

N/A

Reason(s) for Exemption

N/A

Background Papers

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