



Project Initiation Document

Client: Countryside Access and Archives Service

Date: 23 October 2009

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Project : Outdoor Access and Greenspace Improvement projects

Author: Kevin Ward, Head of Service, Countryside and Archives

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1. Introduction

1.1 This bid is for expenditure to deliver the Outdoor Access Improvement and Green Infrastructure Plan (approvals inherited by Central Bedfordshire Council). It relates to development and enhancement projects on the public rights of way network and the Council's estate of Countryside and Heritage sites in line with the objectives in the Outdoor Access Improvement Plan and Green Infrastructure Plan.

The total cost of this work to Central Bedfordshire for 2009/10 is £224,000. It is likely that additional funding will be leveraged from **external sources to increase this CBC investment – see section 6 below** The £224,000 comprises 3 separate budget provisions operated by the previous legacy authorities:

- £42,000 - provision and enhancement of new public open space (South Beds District Council)
- £150,000 - delivery of the Outdoor Access Improvement Plan Action Plan (Beds County Council)
- £32,000 - former allocation for green infrastructure provision (South Beds District Council)

There is also a sum of £237, 000 in the programme which is the remainder of the compensation monies paid by the Highways Agency for spending on new replacement Open Space provision following the loss of Brogborough picnic site to allow the dualling of the A421 route.

2. Outdoor Access Improvement

2.1 Every local highway authority with a network of public rights of way has a legal responsibility under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (or Outdoor Access Improvement Plan)). The Plan, which has been adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council, is a 10 year programme of activity to improve and enhance access to the countryside to meet the current and future needs of the residents and visitors.

2.2 The Plan includes all aspects of countryside or outdoor access, including the rights of way ('linear access' network), open country and countryside sites and green space sites and the benefits that can be derived from such access in terms of health, environmental awareness, appreciation of local places, volunteering and general quality of life. It received the national accolade of being the most 'enterprising and innovative' plan and has been applauded for its cross cutting links with other important area strategies and plans such as the development of green infrastructure linked to the growth agenda, biodiversity, minerals and waste, transport, tourism, local business, and rural issues.

2.3 The Plan is structured around 7 outcome or impact themes that show how Outdoor Access to the Area's countryside contributes to people's 'well being', and provides social and economic benefits. Intrinsic to the Plan are benefits or 'outcomes' for residents and local businesses and also visitors - benefits that will make a difference to people's lives, often for the long term, and have a positive impact on the area as a place. For each theme there is a 10 year 'outcome statement' (*'What changes can I expect to see over the next 10 years?'*).

2.4 It is wide in its reach and impacts on Environment, Community, Culture, and Economic Growth and this illustrates its wide ranging nature and the potential impact of its actions. It recognises that its successful implementation depends on working with others - building on the wide range of existing partnerships involved in countryside access and management with a particular emphasis on third sector Trusts and local community groups. It also relies on bidding successfully for money as new investment to support its theme objectives.

2.5 The Plan identifies a number of projects which will enhance the linear and open spaces in the Council area and in the 5 year revision later this year, tighter linkage with the Children's Plan and the Every Child Matters outcomes will be developed as part of its continued evolution.

2.6 Many of the projects involve partnership working with the Third Sector and funding bids to external agencies that will provide value for money on the Council's investment. Some capital investment, often for pump priming of projects, was an essential aspect of the funding foundation of the Plan which split its funding requirement into 3 categories, each with relative percentages - % deliverable through existing resources and partnerships (revenue and capital), % only deliverable through new or extended partnerships and funding, and % only deliverable through significant new funding. This approach was commended by the Audit Commission in the 2006 CPA with positive

commentary on the Service's Value for money from 'low gearing' and 'external funding levels achieved – visible effect on services' and the 'procurement gain' from use of partnerships, on regeneration projects in particular, and volunteering.

3. Green Infrastructure

3.1 Central Bedfordshire's countryside estate, managed with third sector partners including the National Trust and Greensand Trust, amounts to over 63 sites in excess of 1050ha. of land area. These sites include tourist destination visitor sites, such as the Country Parks at Dunstable Downs and Stockgrove, heritage sites such as Swiss Garden and a wide range of local woodland, and other areas of public open space that get an estimated 2 million visits each year.

3.2 The Countryside Access Service is now responsible both for the management of this estate, comprising land from the 3 legacy authorities, and the delivery of the green space and linear access elements of the Green Infrastructure Plan for the area. One of the primary objectives of this Plan is the protection and enhancement of existing green infrastructure - e.g. woodland, nature reserves, historic landscape, open space and linear access - as part of providing for the impact of housing growth as a consequence of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub Regional Strategy.

3.3 The capital schemes in this Project therefore involve the enhancement and development of countryside estate assets and, more recently, as part of the Growth Agenda, supporting green infrastructure projects associated with the delivery of the Green Infrastructure Plan, involving both linear access and public open space. With over 20,000 new homes planned around Dunstable and Luton and over 5,000 at Leighton Buzzard, capital funding is essential to plan and upgrade facilities both to meet the needs of the existing local population (and realise the benefits that green space can contribute to their health, well being and quality of life) and to cater for the growing population, within the urban and rural areas.

3.4 There are opportunities for using this to match fund money obtained from external sources - e.g. the Growth Area Fund - so providing additional value for money. This is an area where the Countryside Access Service has capacity and experience and Audit Commission/CPA accredited experience, working for its host Council and with third sector and local community partners.

3.5 Of the money remaining from the Open Spaces provision to acquire and enhance public open space following the loss of Brogborough picnic sites, following the commitment of £350,000 to enable the purchase of Rushmere Park. £220,000 has been identified for a partnership project with the Bromham Millers consortium, The Greensand Trust and Leighton Linlode Town at Corbetts Hill Farm, Leighton Linlode. That project will be subject to a separate capital bid but is likely to generate spend of around £1.5m.

4. Objective

The work would meet the following Strategic Objectives:

4.1 Central Bedfordshire Council. The project schemes are directly relevant to the following strategic statements made by the new Council and would help to deliver potential outcomes that relate to wider ambitions relating, for instance, to health, social cohesion and quality of life according to the ways in which outdoor access opportunities are taken in relation to the Council's portfolio of countryside sites and public rights of way network.

- **Core values:** close to our communities – a range of projects that will benefit local communities across the Central Bedfordshire area;
- **Vision:** enhancing the unique character of our communities and our environment
- **Themes:** raising the profile of our area; protecting and enhancing our environment, green infrastructure and spaces
- **2009-2011 Priorities:** managing growth effectively – delivery of green infrastructure, and protecting the character of our communities and high quality of the countryside,
- **Delivering the Priorities:** responsiveness to communities – responding to community consultation associated with the developments of the 2 plans and Green Infrastructure strategies in the new unitary area including local GI planning work
- **General statements** – protecting our unique environment; playing a full part in shaping the sub region; and improving quality of life

4.2 The Council is committed to delivery of the countywide **Green Infrastructure Plan** which is aimed at enhancing open space, countryside sites, linear access corridors, nature reserves and other green infrastructure in the county and providing new green infrastructure necessary to meet and manage the leisure and well being demands arising from housing growth and meet sustainable community objectives. It has close involvement, at a more local level, with partners such as the Ouzel Valley Park consortium and Town Council and the delivery of their green infrastructure enhancement plans in relation to local parks, countryside sites, access routes and open space.

4.3 The **Outdoor Access Improvement Plan** has specific linkage with the Local Transport Plan and the following National Indicators

- **NI 175** -delivering services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling.
- **NI 198** -improving travel to schools and in particular looking at sustainable travel options including walking and cycling.
- **NI 199** - children and young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas in their locality

...and its project and development work also contributes and adds value to these others – NI6 (participation in regular volunteering), 197 (local bio-diversity – management and enhancement of our local green infrastructure), 120 (opportunities for healthier lifestyles), 7 (supporting the third sector) and 110 (young people’s participation in positive activities)

4.4 Demonstrating **Value for Money** is a theme that features in all local government and area strategy and assessment. Using external funding resources is a key approach for evidencing success – showing gearing gain from investment (e.g. Tring Road Crossing and Cycle England Bids in 6 below where the funding is mainly from external sources) - as are strengthening partnerships with community groups and green partners with a shared vision for the area. Both are areas where the Service’s achievements have been commended by Audit Commission Assessors both generally and specifically in connection with its Green Infrastructure initiatives.

“There are a range of initiatives aimed at improving...parks and open spaces and developing a green infrastructure for the county which will reduce the adverse impact of the proposed housing growth in the area” (Audit Commission)

5. Scope

The Plan covers the entire area of Central Bedfordshire and relates to the preservation and enhancement of existing linear access and green space, and the development of new access and green space, including the acquisition of land, for a wide range of public and area benefits and outcomes.

6. Description of Projects

Project	Capital Budget	Existing Capital Income (carried forward from 2008/9)	Opportunities for external funding	Estimated External Income	Status
	£	£K	£K	£K	
Outdoor Access and Greenspace Improvement Project Plan Delivery					
Baulk Wood – Car park enhancement / disabled bay creation and site enhancements	30				Out to Tender
Tiddenfoot Waterside Park – Accessibility path creation	30				Out to tender
Linslade Wood – Cycle route creation and site signage	22				To be complete by March 2010

Project	Capital Budget	Existing Capital Income (carried forward from 2008/9)	Opportunities for external funding	Estimated External Income	Status
	£	£K	£K	£K	
Outdoor Access and Greenspace Improvement Project Plan Delivery					
Tring Road Crossing, creation of equestrian / cycle crossing to connect Dunstable Downs to Totterhoe Lanes				100 (GAF 100% grant) 60 LTP - ancillary works (2010/11)	Finance won - To be complete by March 2010
Deadmans Hill Lay-by – compensation for the removal of restrictive covenant to facilitate creation of new facility (Working Woodland Centre)	15		Partnership with Greensand Trust – Working Woodland Centre. project is a £1.2 m project using external funding		To be complete by March 2010
Studham Common – resurfacing of car park	24				To be complete by March 2010
Development of phase 1 of Tiddenfoot and Linslade Wood development and enhancement project	34				To be complete by March 2010
Langford / Biggleswade - Creation of 1.8km of new Bridleway – delineation, fencing and hedging.	12				To be complete by March 2010
Creation of new Accessible Paths, entrance points enhancements, information points and signage across Central Bedfordshire	25				To be complete by March 2010
Project	Capital	Existing	Opportunities	Estimated	Status

	Budget	Capital Income (carried forward from 2008/9)	for external funding	External Income	
	£	£K	£K	£K	
Outdoor Access and Greenspace Improvement Project Plan Delivery					
Creation of cycleway from Heath and Reach (through Rushmere Park and Heath Wood linking to the National Cycle Route) to Leighton Buzzard	32		Cycle England bid 100% Grant – Bid submitted Greensand Trust (Partner)	200	Bid submitted - To be complete by March 2010
Sub -Total	224				
Open space. Capital compensation from Highways Agency for the loss of green space to A421 road scheme (2008), ring fenced to green space creation and enhancement in CBC area					
Corbetts Hill Farm Project –		220	Bedford Mencap Leighton Linlade TC The Greensand Trust LEADER	1,300	To be complete by March 2010
Enhancement to Open spaces		17			To be complete by March 2010
Rushmere Park Land Purchase		350	The Greensand Trust	573 (GAF) 250 (Greensand Trust)	Finance won - Purchase complete
Total	224				

7. Summary of project plan

7.1 Key tasks:

- Establishing Programmes of works
- Planning and design work
- Securing external funding (as/where appropriate)

7.2 Milestones

- Schemes identified for whole Project
- Approvals secured (as/where appropriate)
- Funding secured
- Completion of works

8. Roles and Responsibilities

The project will be led by the Project Manager. The full project team is:

Name	Location	Responsibility
Jonathan Woods	Riverside Building	Executive
Access Development Team	Riverside Building	Project Manager
David Leverington Clive Beckett Trevor Smith Lyndsey Bignell Paul Burgess	Riverside Building	Senior Users
Caroline Romans	Riverside Building	Business Assurance
Robin Pope Highways/Amey Mouchel Property Team Legal	Borough Hall/external	Expert advice and where appropriate senior supplier

9. Timescale

The key dates for the project are:

9.1 Milestones Dates:

- Programme of works completed – by July 09
- Works scheduled throughout year

9.2 Target Dates:

- All works completed – 31st March 2010

10. Conditions / Constraints / Risks

The key factors that will impact the success of the project are:

- Land surveys
- Engagement of new partners
- External funding availability
- Land negotiations
- Access to site
- Ground conditions and weather

- Project management and fund raising capacity