

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>26 NOVEMBER 2010</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>CONNECT 2 GREENWAY – SCHEME UPDATE</b>
<b>REPORT BY:</b>	<b>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES</b>

**CLASSIFICATION:** Open

### **Wards Affected**

Central, Hollington, St Martins and Hinton & Tupsley

### **Purpose**

To provide an update to the Committee regarding Connect 2 Greenway scheme prior to submission of planning application for the scheme.

### **Recommendation**

**THAT: the Committee note the contents of this report.**

### **Key Points Summary**

- Following representations from Local Residents in the vicinity of the Preferred Route (New Bridge), additional investigations into possible routes utilising Outfall Works Road, the Welsh Water bridge and Network Rail underpass are being undertaken. This work will inform a decision on whether to submit the planning application for the current preferred route or whether to alter the preferred route and follow the original Welsh Water route.
- This review will be sufficiently detailed to inform the decision on whether to progress with the new bridge planning application or to revert to the Welsh Water bridge route.
- Both options can still be delivered by Spring 2013 which is the requirement of the Sustrans funding for this project.
- The scheme budget remains at £2.6M.

### **Alternative Options**

- 1 No alternative options.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 2 Report provides update for committee as requested.

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
Mairead Lane, Construction Manager on (01432) 260944

## Introduction and Background

- 3 The Connect 2 project aims to establish a 5km non-motorised user commuting and leisure route between Hereford City Centre, Rotherwas and Holme Lacy. The objectives of the route are to:
- Reduce traffic by providing sustainable transport links between Rotherwas and the City;
  - Bring the northeast of the City (Tupsley and Hampton Park) into the catchment area of the industrial estate by cutting out six commuting miles a day;
  - Open up the existing network of footpaths and provide further leisure walking opportunities in the Rotherwas Chapel and Sink Green areas which are only really accessible by car at present;
  - Provide a safe cycling and walking alternative to the busy Holme Lacy Road/ Straight Mile between the City and Holme Lacy, the Agricultural College and the quiet country lanes beyond;
  - Offer an attractive leisure cycle facility for Holme Lacy House Hotel to the City;
  - Provide a direct link between the City and the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); and, open up the potential for two market town cycle links via Holme Lacy.

### 4 Route Option Appraisal and Selection

In 2007 Herefordshire Council completed a feasibility report which assessed route options for the Connect2 scheme. This included a review of the constraints and scheme costs for two options involving new bridges and a third option to utilise the existing Welsh Water Bridge.

The option to use the Welsh Water bridge was selected at the time on the grounds of cost and formed the original approved route. This route featured in the submission for Big Lotto funding although a new bridge was recognised as being along a more favourable desire line and funding was secured for Connect 2 schemes nationwide.

The council established a project team to progress the scheme and carry out detailed design of the route to enable a planning application to be submitted. Negotiations with affected landowners also commenced.

As a result of these detailed works / investigations issues were identified with the original preferred route and a review of alternative options undertaken.

Two further route options were then considered – one utilised an existing towpath adjacent to the River Wye and the second was a route utilising a new bridge over the river. This review concluded that a route utilising a new bridge should be recommended for adoption as a new preferred route. A report to the Cabinet Member was therefore prepared and considered. A cabinet member decision was taken on 17 March 2010 authorising the adoption of the new preferred route and for the scheme to be progressed.

### 5 Current Preferred Route

The current preferred route would involve construction of a new bridge over the River Wye (close to Quay Close / Hampton Park Road). This has resulted in some local opposition to the choice of this route.

Immediately following the cabinet member decision in March 2010, the project team began communications with affected residents to establish their concerns and discuss possible mitigation measures. This local group requested that other options be considered (including the possibility of fixing a bridge for the Connect 2 scheme to the existing Eign Road railway bridge). These options are being fully investigated.

A meeting was held with the local residents on 14<sup>th</sup> September to discuss the scheme and outline these technical investigations.

At this meeting it was agreed that additional discussions with asset owners Network Rail and Welsh Water would be undertaken at a higher level to enable effective decision making to explore the potential to deliver the original Welsh Water route at a lower risk and cost to the Council. This will enable the risks associated with each route to be comprehensively established and reduced if possible. Following these high level discussions it is hoped that secure rights over the bridge and under the underpass can be agreed to enable the original route to be delivered. The following paragraphs outline the work being undertaken to fully secure this agreement:

## 6 Route Option Review

Following representations from Local Residents in the vicinity of the Preferred Route (New Bridge), additional investigations into the route utilising Outfall Works Road, the Welsh Water bridge and Network Rail underpass are being considered in more detail. This work will inform a decision on whether to submit the planning application for the current preferred route or whether to alter the preferred route and follow the original Welsh Water route.

The constraints on completion will still be met (open by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013) and the scheme budget remains at £2.6M.

This additional review will consider the condition of the Network Rail underpass to assess the structural condition of the underpass and produce a costed maintenance schedule. This will inform any decision to assume responsibility for the structure to secure more permanent rights under it through further negotiations with Network Rail. They will also consider the likely failures which could occur in the structure and consider options and costs for remedial works

The review will also undertake a desk study and visual inspection of the Welsh Water Bridge to inform a costed maintenance schedule and propose and cost any obvious remedial works. This will be done in an effort to secure more permanent rights over this structure for the scheme through further negotiations with Welsh Water.

This will enable a decision to be taken on whether to progress with the new bridge planning application or to revert to the Welsh Water bridge route. Both options can still be delivered by Spring 2013 which is the requirement of the Sustrans funding for this project

## 7 Conclusion

The scheme remains within the Councils capital programme for delivery. Consultation continues to be undertaken on the various route options. Public consultation events have taken place in advance of the submission of a planning application for the scheme to engage with residents of and visitors to Hereford about the project. Each event has generated a great deal of interest and discussion. To date 91% of respondents has provided positive feedback for the Project and it does not appear that this support is dependent on the proposed route for the scheme. The further work being undertaken will inform the decision about which route is progressed further into planning.

## Community Impact

8 The provision of the Connect 2 scheme will promote increased use as a commuter route to the Industrial estate reducing traffic travelling through the town centre and on the congested A49. This commuter use and increased leisure use will promote health and wellbeing within the community and contribute to a modal shift from car use. The route for this scheme which will be submitted for planning will be informed by the additional route review work currently being undertaken.

9 The current preferred route will involve the construction of a new bridge which has prompted

some local opposition to this route. The additional route review work described within this report is being undertaken in an effort to mitigate the impact of the delivery of this scheme on adjacent residents.

## **Financial Implications**

- 10 The project is included within the Council's current capital programme for delivery by Spring 2013. The current estimated cost is circa £2.6 million. The funding package for the scheme comprises:
- 54% - Herefordshire Council Capital programme
  - 13% - Sustrans (national sustainable transport charity) lottery funding
  - 33% - Government Growth Point funding for infrastructure development in Hereford

## **Legal Implications**

- 11 The additional review work being undertaken will outline environmental and health and safety impacts of each route considered. This will inform the decision on which route is to be promoted further.

## **Risk Management**

- 12 The report prepared on conclusion of this review will contain detailed risk assessment and mitigation measures associated with each route. This will inform the decision as to which route is to be promoted further.
- 13 The current preferred route was selected to mitigate the risk of closure of the route by Network Rail and Welsh Water. Further works are underway to secure more permanent rights and to identify if these risks can be mitigated leading to a lower risk (and possibly lower cost) route for the greenway.

## **Consultees**

- Connect2 Steering Group
- Welsh Water
- Environment Agency
- Network Rail
- Central Networks
- Affected Landowners
- Affected residents
- Affected Parish Councils & County Councillors
- Respective Herefordshire Council departments via the Major Projects Board and internal project team.

## **Appendices**

- 14 None

## **Background Papers**

- None identified.