



Report to the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: **9th September 2014**

Report of: **Steve Lees, Head of Planning Policy and Transport
Test Valley Borough Council**

Subject: **PUSH Green Infrastructure (GI) Implementation Framework:
Progress Report May 2014**

SUMMARY

PUSH's approach to GI in terms of the scope of its approved Strategy and the scale and nature of the projects set out in the approved Implementation Framework is ambitious. In terms of delivering projects the Framework has sought to build on existing plans and proposals and avoid unnecessary dilution of resources.

Good progress has been made on a number of projects but it is recognised that some have not moved forward as originally envisaged. It is considered that overall the initiative has been successful for a number of reasons;

- The initiative has raised the profile of a number of schemes which it is hoped will enhance their prospects for securing funding e.g. the proposed lottery bids.
- It has promoted joint working between key partners e.g. Eastleigh and Test Valley in respect of the Forest Park, Gosport and the Environment Agency on the Alver Valley project.
- It has supported joint working across PUSH on a key infrastructure issue, e.g. the agreement of a small number of key strategic projects.
- It has provided an agreed strategic framework for considering bids for PUSH funding.

In the context of the review of the spatial strategy GI should be considered as an integral part of the future planning of south Hampshire. It would be appropriate to review the GI Strategy and the Framework documents as part of the wider review. It is proposed that such a review is carried out.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the PUSH Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTES the report.

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this paper is to advise on the current position regarding the projects identified in the Green Infrastructure Implementation Framework approved in October 2012.
2. The Framework was prepared following the preparation and approval of the Green Infrastructure Strategy in 2010. The Strategy sets out a number of objectives to promote the development of GI in south Hampshire. It also identified a number of projects (46) which could come forward.
3. The purpose of the GI Implementation Framework was to identify projects of strategic importance to enable PUSH and the partner authorities to focus resources on a smaller number of schemes. The work was carried out by a small group of officers from PUSH local authorities and the Environment Agency. Thirteen projects were agreed and, as set out below, significant progress has been made.

THE PROJECTS

The Strategic Countryside Recreation Network

4. This project comprises identifying strategic countryside access routes linking areas of population with Hampshire's Countryside. Proposals include;
 - The extension and upgrade of the Meon Valley Trail:

Hampshire County Council is the lead organisation. £75k of LSTF funding has been identified for the scheme match funded by £337k Linking Communities funding, and an officer was employed in December 2013 to deliver this and other projects.
 - Upgrade a section of the Hayling Billy:

£15k of LSTF funding, £4k from Shipwrights Way, £9k from HCC and a successful bid for a further £22k from the Veolia Environmental Trust. Partnership between HCC and Havant Borough Council, with local support. Work is underway and will be substantially completed by May 2014.
 - Botley to Bishops Waltham Multi-User Trail:

A project led by the local parishes and with HCC involvement, £35k LSTF funding, £40k S106 funding has already been secured.

Woodfuel Renewable Energy Project

5. This project has not been progressed as a GI project.

Local Sustainable Food Production

6. This project has not been progressed as a GI project

Horsea Island Country Park

7. The aim of the project is to create a country park on the former landfill site at Horsea Island adjacent to Portsmouth Harbour. The lead organisation is Portsmouth City Council. Work is progressing well and Veolia, who are restoring the site after its previous use as a landfill, and the Environment Agency, are working on a detailed aftercare plan for the site which includes the planting of the grasslands, woodlands and the laying out of footpaths and cycleway. The City Council is aiming to open the country park in the summer of 2016.

Alver Valley Country Park

8. The aim of the project is to create a country park for the whole community with a range of recreation opportunities whilst recognising the importance of the Alver Valley's heritage and natural environment. The lead organisation is Gosport Borough Council. The Alver Valley Country Park Strategy was approved by the Council in consultation with Natural England, Environment Agency and Hampshire County Council in April 2014. The Borough Council and the Environment Agency are currently working in partnership to create an extensive reedbed to help naturally improve the water quality of the River Alver.

South West Hampshire Forest Park

9. The project aims to improve public access to over 400 hectares of woodland in southern Test Valley which borders Southampton and Eastleigh. The lead organisation is Test Valley Borough Council. Discussions are underway with a number of landowners to deliver greater public access. A draft implementation framework prepared by the Borough Council has recently been subject to public consultation. Test Valley Borough Council and Eastleigh Borough Council are working together to bring forward one of the major areas of woodland, *Home Wood*, as part of the proposed development south of Chestnut Avenue in Eastleigh. Within the largest area within the Forest Park, *Lords Wood*, Test Valley Borough Council has secured public access to a substantial area of woodland with the landowner.

Manor Farm Country Park

10. The project aims to improve the capability of the site to accommodate increased visitor numbers. The lead organisation is Hampshire County Council. £60,000 has been spent on improving circulation along the main access track. This has significantly improved vehicle flow and safety. The patio outside the café has been paved increasing the seating capacity and improving the appearance for customers. The car park has been improved through re-landscaping to provide better parking provision for coaches, disabled bays and pedestrian walk ways. The earth bank next to the café has been stabilised, fenced and replanted.

11. The farm has experienced increased visitors this year with over 80,000 now coming through the farm. This year the milking parlour has been refurbished with a relayed period floor and new viewing gallery allowing more spectators including the less able to access this activity more easily.

Royal Victoria Country Park

12. This project focusses on restoring the heritage assets and improving the interpretation of the heritage of the site. The lead organisation is Hampshire County Council. A Heritage Lottery Fund application was submitted at the end of August 2013. The application has been successful at the first round of its Heritage Lottery bid. The Park has received a £102,000 development grant to assist with getting the bid through the second round. The principle aims of the bid will focus on engaging people with the story of the hospital and the people associated with it, conserving the built fabric and improving access to the Chapel building, allowing it to be open more and used by the community. The second round bid will hopefully be submitted by the end of 2014 with capital works anticipated to start if successful in September 2015.

Southsea Seafront

13. This project aims to further improve the most visited section of the Solent coast. The lead organisation is Portsmouth City Council. The City Council adopted the Seafront Masterplan¹ in April 2013 after extensive consultation with stakeholders. This sets out an ambitious vision to improve the various assets and the public realm at the seafront.
14. Planning permission for the first project to be implemented (the ARTches project) has now been granted. This project aims to sympathetically convert the currently vacant Hot Walls arches in Old Portsmouth into artist studio spaces, so as to breathe new life into these historic structures. The project would create new jobs and opportunities to visually enhance the area, as well as supporting emerging creative industries. Artists who take up one of the new studios will enjoy a unique opportunity to show-case their work to the public and will also benefit from the potential for exhibitions in the recently refurbished Round Tower. A brasserie restaurant would also be provided as part of the project with a terrace which would look out over the Solent. The project has already secured some funding from PUSH but the majority would come from the Coastal Communities Fund.

Forest of Bere Woodlands

15. The project aims to deliver improved links between the woodlands within the Forest and improved management of key sites. The lead organisation is the Forestry Commission. West Walk has been identified as a central greenspace hub for the Forest of Bere and significant investment has taken place. In 2013 450metres of surfaced multi-use path has been installed. A report to inform long term development and maintenance issues is underway. The County Council is planning to review the current Countryside Access Plan.

¹ See <http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/living/25964.html>

Havant Thicket

16. The project is to provide an accessible green space in the heart of the urban area of Havant. The lead organisation is Havant Borough Council. The delivery of the project is dependent on the implementation of the reservoir proposal of Portsmouth Water Company which is not envisaged to come forward before 2030.
17. PUSH has consistently supported the Borough Council's efforts to see the project come forward. However Portsmouth Water's emerging Water Resource Management Plan (2015 to 2040) does not include Havant Thicket as it is not required for water supply purposes.

Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project

18. The project aims to provide the evidence necessary to inform the extent of the impact of new development and the mitigation measures to address that impact. At the March 2014 meeting of the PUSH Joint Committee, an interim framework was agreed. Discussions are continuing to consider how to take the strategy forward. A Project Initiation Officer is now in post coordinating the work of the PUSH authorities, Chichester District Council and key partners including; Natural England, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Chichester Harbour Conservancy and the RSPB.

Marine and Coastal Access Initiative

19. The project aims to deliver a coastal recreation route that meets the requirements of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Natural England is the lead organisation. It is taking a phased approach to the delivery of the route around the English coastline. The Solent coastal path is not in Natural England's current programme. The Solent coastal path would follow in phase 2, for which the programme is still to be finalised.

RECOMMENDATION

20. It is RECOMMENDED that the PUSH Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTES the report.

Background Papers:

Joint Committee 2nd October 2012 - Item 10: PUSH Green Infrastructure Implementation Framework

Reference Papers:

None

Enquiries:

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