

South Somerset Bike Park Proposal

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Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to consult members on the concept of developing a Bike Park in Yeovil, which would provide a destination facility offering a range of cycling facilities and activities, serving the whole of South Somerset.

To update members of the work carried out so far and to seek members support for the continuation of consultation and feasibility work for this concept.

Public Interest

Creating quality leisure facilities and activities for South Somerset is considered important to the communities' health and wellbeing.

Recommendation:

The committee note and comment on the report and give support (without prejudice) to officers to continue consultation and feasibility work for this concept.

Background

In recent years the idea for a cycle themed park has been informally discussed amongst officers and members as a potentially suitable way to improve the leisure opportunities on the East side of Yeovil, primarily on the former landfill site at Birchfield Park, opposite the new Wyndham Park housing development.

On 12th August 2015 officers organised a successful Bike Festival Day at Birchfield Park (East) to promote cycling and provide a holiday activity for the general public. During the event the public were consulted on the concept of a Bike Park for the area and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Based on the success of this event and the consultation feedback received, it was agreed to install a modular Pump Track at Birchfield Park and this was officially opened on 30th September 2015. For members benefit a 'Pump Track' is a closed circuit that can be ridden by using an up and down 'pumping' motion to propel the bicycle forward instead of pedalling. The narrow track and tight corners make for an exciting ride, which you can ride as fast or as slow as your ability allows.

Feedback on the new Pump Track has been extremely positive and it has proven to be a very well used and valued facility in the area.

Report

The success of the Pump Track has reinforced officers view that this site could be developed further to create a destination Bike Park for a wide range of cycling activities and integrate into the wider cycling infrastructure being developed in the town.

In summary the Bike Park would aim to improve:

- Leisure Opportunities for all
- Active Lifestyles
- Green Transport

According to British Cycling who oversees all forms of cycling in Britain, cycling is growing! There are many different types of cycling ranging from BMX, mountain bike, cyclo-cross, road, track, cycle speedway, commuter, leisure, adventure and many specialisms within these types.

Given the constraints of the land at Birchfield Park, facilities for some of the disciplines, such as road riding, would not be possible. However, with careful and creative design there could be opportunities to create facilities that would benefit a wide spectrum of cyclists.

In addition to the new Pump Track, the Bike Park could host a Skills Area, Jump Park offering small and large jumps to allow for progression and utilise gradients at the site to provide Off Road Downhill/Cross Country Trails.

The Bike Park could also provide an entry point to Traffic Free Routes being developed through Yeovil Country Park. In addition to improving transport links they also provide leisure opportunities for families, groups or individual cyclists or walkers, linking to Yeovil Country Park. This would potentially increase the footfall to the new Ninesprings Cafe and access to Ninesprings Play Area, amongst others.

Member's attention must be drawn to the constraints at Birchfield Park, given it was previously a landfill site and consequently requires ongoing specialist management. This previous land use and specialist management requirement means that any proposals could be limited or deemed unviable if they conflict with those constraints.

Should members wish to support this proposal, officers recommend the next stages would be to carry out further consultation with the public at this year's Bike Festival, continue to develop feasibility work looking at how the site could be best used for various types of cycling activities, to develop draft proposals for members to consider and finally explore potential funding opportunities. It is anticipated this consultation and high level feasibility work would be completed over the next 12 months.

The project would cut across the work of multiple internal and external stakeholders, so officers would aim to establish a steering group to help co-ordinate and guide the project in the early stages.

This report therefore seeks member's support for a project that has the potential to inspire a new generation to take up cycling and transform the old landfill site at Birchfield Park into an exciting destination for leisure and recreation.

Corporate Priority Implications

Developing increased cycling opportunities with support the following priorities set out in The Council Plan 2016-21.

- Help people to live well by enabling quality cultural, leisure, play, sport & healthy lifestyle facilities & activities.
- Work with partners to tackle health issues such as diabetes and hypertension

Carbin Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

Encouraging people to cycle can reduce transport greenhouse gas emissions

Equality & Diversity Implications

Should the Bike Park concept move forward a equality impact assessment would be completed.

Financial Implications

No financial implications at this time

Background Papers

None