

Stop Line Way - Progress Report

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Purpose of the Report

Councillors are asked to consider the awarding from Area West Reserves; the sum of £12,000, towards a Refreshed Sustrans Feasibility Study focussing on re-routeing a section of the Stop Line Way Route 33 long distance, coast-to-coast, multi-use walking and cycling route south-east of Chard.

Public Interest

The Stop Line Way project has applied to the Area West for financial assistance with the costs of a Refreshed Sustrans Feasibility Study. The Locality Officer is submitting this report to enable the Area West Committee to make an informed decision.

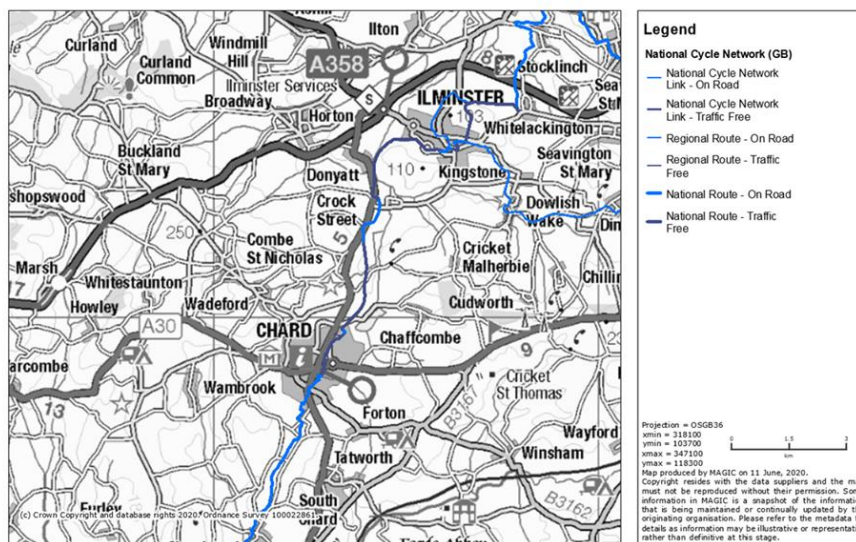
Recommendations

1. It is recommended that Councillors award £12,000, the monies to be allocated from Area West Reserves.

Background

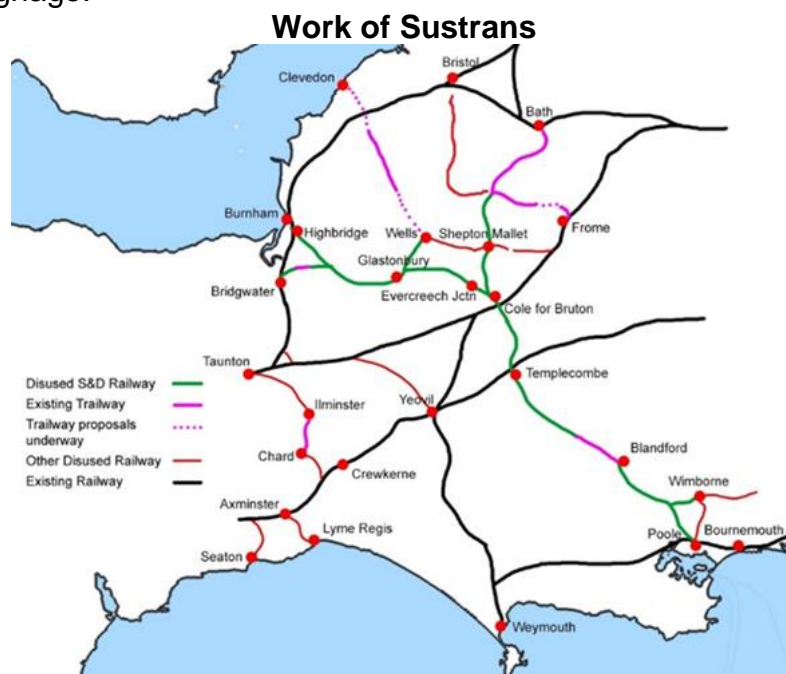
SSDC has ambitions to re-route a section of the Stop Line Way (SLW) Sustrans Route 33 long distance, coast-to-coast, multi-use walking and cycling trail south-east of Chard.

MAGiC SLW National Cycle Network Route 33



Long distance multi-use trails are a collective name for often themed trails that pass through the countryside, villages, towns and sometimes cities. They follow a multitude of routes and often follow old railway lines. They are used by cyclists, pedestrians, horse riders, runners, wheel chair users and other all ability access vehicles. Sections are also used as 'Green Commuter Routes' and 'Safe Routes to Schools'.

SDDC has attempted a number of times over the last 15 years to make improvements to a new off-road section of the SLW without success. The section of the SLW that runs through South Somerset largely follows the track of the old Great Western Railway from Ilminster to the south of Chard. As the SLW continues southwards past Chard to the parish of Tatworth it follows a rather complicated and vague route on paths and roads through industrial estates and residential areas, which is not very easy to follow due to poor signage.



It is the ambition of SDDC to improve the SLW route while working with funding agencies, developers and other land owners by enabling the SLW to continue along the old railway line of the former Great Western Railway route and other designated routes where possible towards Devon. The SLW project has ambitions to include all ability access improvements and a conservation management plan for the section that runs through South Somerset to create a diverse wildlife corridor that links the landscape, improves the existing conservation value and increases the valuable local biodiversity.

The Locality Officer has recently carried out research into identify the barriers to the implementation of long distance multi-use trails such as the SLW. This has included face to face and phone interviews with Councillors and staff from Local Authorities and associated organisations across the UK that have successful involvement in long

distance multi-use trails. To capture useful information and knowledge an online survey was developed using 'Citizen Space'. Over 525 surveys were sent to all Local Authorities in the UK. 55 Local Authorities with specific involvement with long distance multi-use trails responded.

The key barriers identified to the further development of the SLW are land ownership, capital funding, maintenance funding, Infrastructure, legal status, land availability and lengthy legal processes.

In order to overcome these barriers, it is recommended that:

- Land is secured through ownership or long term tenure and a suitable legal route is established
- Internal and external capital funding is secured
- An annual maintenance budget is agreed and secured
- A partnership steering group is established of Local Authorities and relevant agencies such as e.g. Sustrans, Cycling UK and Transport Focus
- The support of local landowners is established
- Local community support is established
- Political support is established and implementation of the SLW long distance multi-use trail is agreed in policy by the existing District Council and the new incoming Somerset Council.
- A conservation management plan is developed

There is a huge momentum behind getting people out into the fresh air and wider countryside. Government is targeting new funding to improve cycling opportunities in towns and out into the countryside.

A refreshed feasibility study will help to facilitate decision making and development of new local government policies, help to secure local government funding and help key into new central government funding opportunities.

The Project

To carry out a thorough Refreshed Feasibility Study to develop the off-road route of the SLW to the south and east of Chard towards Tatworth and to link with the route on into Devon. This feasibility study will build on the body of work undertaken by Sustrans, SSDC and County Council in earlier years.

Sustrans is the charity that makes it easier for people to walk and cycle. Building multi-user paths to connect communities throughout the UK has been one of their core offers for many years.

Proposal:

Sustrans will provide the following key deliverables within the feasibility study. Each deliverable will be a section of the completed report.



1. Introduction

1.1) Purpose

This initial section sets out the case for why this route is an important walking and cycling link and why it should be developed further.

2. Background and Context

3. Strategic Case

i.e. why this route is important to local connectivity

3.1) Existing Network

Articulation of local problems and opportunities, for example what barriers are there to cycling on this route at present and what opportunities does the potential future development bring

3.2) Existing Travel Corridors

3.3) Quiet Lane Status

4. Route Options Appraisal

Sustrans will provide a formal appraisal of the route options under consideration. This will be done using the 'Levels of Service Tool' provided in Appendix A of LTN 1/20 (Cycling infrastructure Design Guide)

These options will be shown on appropriate large scale maps and with photographs to describe the proposed alignments. The options will be described under the following headings:

4.1) Overview of routes

Describing the key characteristics of the route and key locations it serves

4.2) Topography & Elevation Profiles

4.3) Landscape & Land Use

Key context or background information

4.4) Existing Public Rights of Way

4.5) Existing conditions

e.g. surfacing, width, signage, traffic flows

4.6) Opportunities and constraints

identifying positives and negatives of each route option

This analysis will be completed via a combination of site visits, conversations with local stakeholders, and using online mapping sources

5. Ecological Desktop Review

The report will contain a preliminary analysis by Sustran's in house Ecology Team. This will consist of an initial desktop assessment of all route options appraised. It is not proposed to go as far as a formal Preliminary Ecological Assessment. The outcome of the analysis will give an early indication as to what the likely ecological considerations will be, and for that information to inform any decision about a preferred route option.

6. Surface Materials

7. Land and Permissions

7.1) Creation of a new cycle route

7.2) Land Ownership & Stakeholders

A list of registered landowners affected by each of the options will be provided. (subject to data guidelines).

8. Preferred route alignment



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This section will present the preferred route alignment, as a result of the information gathered in the previous sections. It will deal with key sections such as access to and egress from the Highway, road crossings, sudden changes in elevation and other significant challenges on the route.

9. Level of Service Appraisal

9.1) Summary Matrix

10. Summary and Next Steps

The final section of the feasibility study will summarise the information presented and conclusion reached. It will clearly outline the next steps required to realise the route, e.g. land negotiation, engagement with key stakeholders such as local highway authority, develop engineering feasibility and cost estimates.

Project costs

| Project costs | Cost £ |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Sustrans - Feasibility Study | 12,000 |
| | |
| Total | 12,000 |

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is recommended that £12,000 is awarded from Area West Reserves.

Financial Implications

There is £40,220 in the Area West Reserves budget, if £12,000 is agreed, a balance of £28,220 will remain.

Council Plan Implications

Council Plan themes and areas of focus for 2021/22

Health and Communities - To build healthy, self-reliant, active communities we will:

- Help people to live well by enabling quality cultural, leisure, play, sport & healthy lifestyle facilities & activities

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

None to report at this stage

Equality and Diversity Implications

The feasibility study aims to provide for people across all age and interest groups in the local community.



South Somerset District Council

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>An Equality Impact Relevance Check Form has been completed in respect of the Proposal?</i> | Yes |
| <i>The Impact Relevance Check indicated that a full EIA was required?</i> | No |
| <i>An EIA was not required. Please see the attach Impact Relevance Check Form as an Appendix to this report.</i> | |
| Additional Comments | |
| <i>'The Stop Line Way - Refreshed Feasibility Study' is an SSDC project, which aims to provide for all abilities and will follow SSDC's equality policy and guidelines.</i> | |

Background Papers

- Area West Committee – Stop Line Way July 2020