

Notes of The Teign Estuary Trail Campaign Group meeting on Monday 16 October at 7pm, Teignmouth Town Council, Bitton House, Teignmouth

See attached list of attendees

Apologies:

Cllr George Gribble, Cllr John Clatworthy, Norman Maudsley, Richard Younger-Ross, Roger Brewer, Rona Boyne, Cllr Rosalind Prowse, Rupert Crosbee, Cllr Stuart Barker, Cllr Stuart Hughes, Tracy Scranage

Chair: Cllr Paul Burgess, Mayor of Teignmouth Town Council

Note taker: Judith Sharples, Teign Estuary Trail Campaign Group

1. Welcome and introduction

Cllr Paul Burgess welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. He reported that the Teign Estuary Trail campaign group came into existence following a meeting at Bitton House on 28 October 2013 at which over 120 people attended. Although progress has been made in the last four years, he expressed the view that it was time to re-ignite the campaign with the support of all those present who want the trail to become a reality.

Cllr Burgess reported that this was a closed meeting and that the matters discussed should remain confidential.

2. Update on progress

Roger North from Devon County Council explained that the Teign Estuary Trail was part of a strategic plan which would eventually connect the Exe Estuary Trail to Kingsteignton and Newton Abbot and then on to Moretonhampstead via Bovey Tracey and Lustleigh.

The majority of the section from Dawlish to Teignmouth is ready to be delivered if funding (around £1.6m) can be identified. It was noted that last December's bid for funding from the Coastal Communities Fund was not successful.

The section from Teignmouth to Bishopsteignton is the most complex and costly to deliver. It will require expensive structures both over the railway and in the river from Shaldon Bridge to the boatyard. Building in a flood zone will mean that various criteria will have to be met including escape routes in the event of a flood.

Negotiations with the landowner aimed at identifying an acceptable route between Bishopsteignton and Passage House Hotel are continuing.

The section from the Passage House Hotel to Kingsteignton should be deliverable within existing budgets and it is hoped that work can be started shortly on this section.

It is estimated at this stage that the total cost of a trail from Dawlish to Kingsteignton will be in the region of £15m.

3. Funding position

Andrew Ardley from Devon County Council reported on the current funding situation. The Exe estuary trail cost in the region of £20m but the majority of funding was money that the county council was able to borrow. The council can no longer afford to fund schemes through borrowing in this way.

There has also been a significant reduction in the direct non-competitive government funding the council gets each year through the Local Transport Plan– from around £10m to £3.6m.

The Invest in Devon funding the council got from the sale of Exeter airport was used to part fund the trail linking Newton Abbot and Kingsteignton, with Sustrans also securing external funding towards the cost. This was expensive as it included a new bridge.

Government Growth related funding (which is the majority) is normally linked to new housing developments so this is unlikely to be an option for the Teign Estuary Trail.

The Community Infrastructure Levy raised by Teignbridge District Council may be one potential source of funding and several hundred thousand has been set aside for the trail already over the next few years.

There might also be opportunities to access funding from the Coastal Communities Fund in future bidding rounds or if there is any slippage of schemes that are currently funded.

Sometimes the government identifies new sources of funding for cycling or walking schemes. An example of this was the Government funding to improve access to national parks on foot or by bike which was used to fund the Granite and Gears projects.

Andrew reported that, as there is no obvious pot of funding at present, we will need to be innovative and look at a wide variety of ways of getting funding e.g. through crowdfunding or town and parish councils increasing council tax. Whilst alternative funding streams may not cover the full cost, they can provide match funding which is often a requirement when accessing government funding.

Another financial consideration is the cost of maintaining the trail once built. Spending money on this will mean there is less money for potholes and other road maintenance expenditure.

On a more positive note, the county council has set aside funding to enable work to continue on planning the route, acquiring land and seeking planning permission. This will enable the plans to be progressed to the stage where they are “shovel ready” which will then put us in a stronger position to secure external funding.

Attendees discussed a number of points as follows:

- It was queried whether the trail would be within 10 miles of the Exeter Waste to Energy Plant which would enable us to access landfill tax credits – this was not thought to be an option;

- Cllr Hellier-Laing referred to the Raynsford Review and the possibility that this might lead to a social obligation on landowners who get permission to develop agricultural land to contribute 5 to 10% of the proceeds to a community fund which could potentially be used to fund trails like this and other schemes for the benefit of the community;
- It was queried why funding was being used to fund a new cycle path in Exeter when there was an existing safe route for cyclists when the Teign estuary trail was a much bigger priority – Andrew's response was that it was sometimes easier to obtain funding for commuter routes that would be used by large numbers of people;
- It was suggested that more work should be done to gather evidence of the economic benefits of the Teign estuary trail, including using evidence of the economic impact of the Exe trail although it was acknowledged that the impact is hard to assess when there are indirect benefits e.g. increased trade for cafes.
- Andrew said a tool could be used to assess the health benefits – both in terms of increased physical activity and reduced pollution and congestion and a reduction in road traffic accidents.
- It was queried whether section 106 funding could be used – but this is only likely to be an option if there is a new housing development on the route
- It was suggested that any available funding should be spent now as costs are likely to escalate if the funding is set aside to be spent at a later date.

4. Objectives for 2018/19

Cllr Burgess sought views on whether the campaign group should set some concrete objectives e.g. a deadline for when the whole route should be shovel ready.

Kate Brown expressed support for this approach.

Other people expressed the view that setting arbitrary deadlines was not helpful and the county council should not be held to account for things that were outside of its direct control.

The consequences of not meeting deadlines was questioned.

It was noted that at a meeting some years ago the county council had said the whole scheme would be completed by 2011.

It was suggested that the campaign group could set alternative objectives around identifying sources of funding or gathering evidence of the need for, and impact of, the trail.

Other points made included the following:

- It was important that the campaign group did not distract officers and stop them getting on with the job;
- We could try to secure crowdfunding for a part of the scheme that could be delivered at low cost e.g. John Nash Drive in Dawlish.

- The priority should be the Teign trail, not Dawlish to Teignmouth
- An estuary trail should be close to the estuary
- Bishopsteignton Parish Council is campaigning for the A381 to be made safer including use of speed cameras
- Sponsorship from businesses should be sought because there will be business benefits for them e.g. Best Western Hotels stands to gain from the section to the Passage House Hotel
- Concerns regarding gradients may reduce as use of electric bikes increases – the plans for an e-bike station in Dawlish were noted.

It was agreed that the campaign group would meet to discuss and agree its objectives, taking account of the comments made.

5. Two year plan

Cllr Burgess set out plans for a series of events and activities that would be a way of keeping the public informed and enthused about the plans for the trail. This could include a relaunch of the campaign in January linked to the Active 10 campaign. It was suggested that this would be a good way of gathering further evidence to demonstrate the need for the trail and how it would be used.

6. Conclusions

Cllr Burgess thanked everyone for their input and support for the campaign. No further meeting was arranged. Instead the campaign group will meet on its own to develop its plans taking account of all the views expressed and offers of support.

The meeting finished at 8.15pm.