

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET MEETING**

**12 June 2012**

Report of the Strategic Director – Environmental Services

**MATLOCK – BUXTON CYCLE TRAIL (HIGHWAYS AND  
TRANSPORT)**

(1) **Purpose of the Report** To update Cabinet on discussion with partners over the delivery of a network of trails linking Matlock and Buxton, and to seek approval to the priorities for investment.

(2) **Information and Analysis** At its meeting of 11 October 2011, Cabinet considered a report into how best to take forward projects which had not been supported following bids to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). One of these was the 'Pedal Peak District' concept. This had already received Government support through the Peak District National Park Authority, resulting in the re-opening of tunnels along the Monsal Trail associated with a package of social marketing work. This has been a great success and a stimulus to local businesses. Derbyshire Dales District Council, the Peak District National Park Authority and High Peak Borough Council have all been keen to establish the role which the County Council wishes to play in the delivery of the project. Cabinet, in order to respond to this, authorised the Strategic Director - Environmental Services to enter into discussion with other interested parties over the setting-up of a coordination group for the Pedal Peak District project and to advise Cabinet of progress in due course.

A meeting was held, during April 2012, of senior officer representatives of the County Council, Peak District National Park Authority, Derbyshire Dales District Council and High Peak Borough Council, forming what could be regarded as a 'project board' for the network of trails. The meeting confirmed a shared aspiration to deliver an improved cycling network and established a clear understanding of the priorities for intervention, discussed further below.

The network, which makes use of several established routes (the Monsal, Tissington and High Peak Trails) has recently been termed the 'White Peak Loop' and is shown in Figure 1. A number of sections of this network require intervention before it is fully available for use. Considering these in a

clockwise direction from the nominal northern access point of Buxton Railway Station:

- a route is required from Buxton to the current terminus of the upgraded Monsal Trail at Blackwell Mill. This would involve using existing roads and off-road sections linking to Blackwell Mill from where the Monsal Trail then provides a high-standard route to Bakewell;
- between Bakewell and Matlock, a route would need to run through or around the Haddon Estate and then south of Rowsley, possibly alongside the part-operational and part-planned Peak Rail line to Matlock. This would not be suitable for all users, the problem being its use by horses alongside a live railway, and this is not the route being pursued by the County Council through its Greenways Strategy. However, there is no reason in principle why the two should not be provided in parallel;
- south of Matlock, an off-road link to Cromford could be difficult to secure in the short term. Here the loop would join the High Peak Trail which connects to the Tissington Trail from which a suitable route into Buxton needs to be established.

The project board is of the view that whilst the completion of the 'loop' is a sensible objective, the priority for intervention should be the eastern side, linking Buxton and Matlock via Bakewell, and the immediate action should be focussed upon the northern section. There are some sensitive environmental issues to be taken into account. The board therefore agreed that it would be helpful if assistance could be given to the local planning authorities through the provision of an independent review of route options in this area. This is currently being organised by the County Council's Consulting and Contracting service. The board would, in due course, also welcome a review of options between Bakewell and Matlock. This will need to take into account issues including concerns expressed by Rowsley Parish Council about impacts within the village. In the short term, a summer survey of bat activity in the former rail tunnels through the Haddon Estate would be helpful for the later consideration of options in this area. Separately, a limited technical assessment of the relationship between Peak Rail and a cycling route south of Rowsley would be beneficial to Derbyshire Dales District Council. It is intended that the County Council offers to provide both of these through its existing consultancy arrangements.

The only section of trail within the 'loop' with secured funding for construction is the Greenway route between Matlock and Oker, approved through the Environmental Services Department Service Plan 2011-12 Refresh, at an estimated cost of £100,000. It would be difficult, at the present time, to provide Cabinet with a definitive guide to the likely costs of completing the White Peak Loop or the Matlock to Buxton section of this. The support provided by

Government for Pedal Peak District amounted to £2.2 million, covering the substantial costs of re-opening tunnels along the Monsal trail, preparatory work on other sections and a programme of social marketing to encourage cycling. The cost of completing remaining sections of the trail will depend upon the routes selected, possibly including further tunnel sections and also crossings over watercourses and highways. It would be prudent to assume that at least a further £2 million would be required. Any County Council Capital expenditure would need to be approved through Service Plan refreshes or through in-year programme amendments approved by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport. For any scheme on this scale, the recommendation to Cabinet will need to be accompanied by an assessment of its value for money.

It is possible that some elements of project delivery could be assisted by Peak Cycle Links, a charity set up to assist with the delivery and marketing of cycling trails in the area. As part of its work, it has secured leases on some potential sections of trail. It is possible that the County Council could help to facilitate an on-going role for Peak Cycle Links where appropriate and it is therefore recommended that the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport be authorised to consider specific proposals where this support may be offered for work which falls within the agreed project plan. The Cabinet Member, in doing so, will have to take into account the need to ensure that any routes supported through public funding but leased and maintained by others (such as Peak Cycle Links) will remain available for public use and in good repair.

It is anticipated that Cabinet, in due course, will receive proposals for capital funding contributions for trails linking Matlock and Buxton as part of Environmental Services Department Service Plan refreshes.

**(3) Financial Considerations** The work currently being undertaken on route options is being met from existing Integrated Transport revenue budgets, which would also be the source of any further work on options or supporting surveys.

**(4) Equality and Diversity Considerations** An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken at the outset of the Local Transport Plan preparation process, and elements of the proposed network of trails will assist in providing access to essential services.

**(5) Property Considerations** There are no property considerations associated with this report.

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, human resources, environmental, health and transport considerations.

(6) **Key Decision** No.

(7) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(8) **Background Papers** Report to Cabinet on Sustainable Transport Projects, 11 October 2011 (Minute No. 290/11 refers). Officer contact details – Jim Seymour, extension 38557

(9) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That Cabinet:

9.1 Notes the progress made to date on the coordination of activity to deliver a network of trails suitable for cycling, linking Matlock and Buxton.

9.2 Authorises the Cabinet Member - Highways and Transport to consider specific proposals for ways in which the County Council might help to facilitate the delivery of trails, with priority given to the eastern portion of the proposed network.

**Ian Stephenson**  
**Strategic Director – Environmental Services**

Figure 1 – Indicative White Peak Cycle Loop

