

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of the **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACES** held at County Hall, Matlock on 18 July 2018.

P R E S E N T

Councillor S Bull (in the Chair)

Councillors K S Athwal, E Atkins, L Chilton (substitute Member) H Elliott, L Grooby, J Innes, and T Kemp.

Also in attendance were Claire Brailsford, Richard Lovell, Alan Marsden and Richard Taylor.

19/18 **MINUTES** **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 May 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20/18 **MINUTES** **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 May 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21/18 **COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES** Claire Brailsford was introduced to the Committee as the Interim Assistant Director of Environment. Richard Taylor, Head of Countryside Services introduced a report on the role and work undertaken by the Countryside Service and its recent successes, current challenges/opportunities and the future direction of the Service.

The Service comprised 104 countryside sites and 4,974 km of rights of way. 2019/20 would see a 36% reduction of the Service's budget following a review of the service in 2016 and, as a result, the Service was now organised into three customer facing work areas:

1. Destination Sites and Commercial Operations - manage destination sites (sites which attract the majority of visitors) with the focus on developing the commercial aspects of the Service in order to ensure its future sustainability;
2. Wider Countryside Operations - manage 104 countryside sites, 33 trails, 175 County Tree Preservation Orders and 12 significant areas of water and lakes and Tapton Lock; and
3. Public Rights of Way, Access and Greenways - a dedicated team that deals exclusively with the statutory duties concerning Public Rights of Way.

Amongst the successes of the Service were:

- The Green Flag Award Scheme which recognised and rewarded well managed parks and green spaces;
- From Rail to Trail Arts Project where two steel structures/pieces of art now stand within the bus transport hub at the start of the Sett Valley Trail, and depicts a railway and natural history theme;
- Friends of Aston Brick Yard (FAB) - a reclaimed site, now an area of secondary woodland and wildflower meadow on the site of a former clay pit and brick works;
- The Leawood Pump House and Middleton Top Engine House Volunteers who cared for this industrial heritage;
- The Chesterfield Canal Trust - a once filled-in, damp ditch had been transformed back into a navigable canal corridor, rich in wildlife and opportunities to boat, canoe and fish;
- Events on Countryside Sites - a mix of providers using the sites as an attraction, benefiting the County Council from increased car park and shop income on event days;
- Derbyshire Woodland Festival - the Service's flagship event offering a wide range of entertainment, brings in income and showcases Elvaston Castle;
- Industrial Heritage - from a castle, canals and reservoirs to the High Peak Trail on the former Cromford and High Peak Railway and
- Adventurous Bike Trails – at the forefront of providing opportunities for visitors to explore the countryside by bicycle.

The Service was facing many challenges, with less resources in staff and core budget. It was developing its options to generate income to offset the reduction in budget and seek new funding streams from visitors and operations. Visitor centres had revised their range in the shops, stocking more attractive gifts and stationary to cater for a modern audience. It would continue to explore new markets and audiences such as developing a holiday let portfolio which was targeted to be available during 2019 and exploring the potential of existing buildings, wooden lodges and caravan sites for touring caravans/motorhomes.

The potential to expand on the catering service was also being considered with new locations already being let throughout summer 2018. The Chesterfield Canal had suitable locations for moorings and there was the opportunity to build on accessing external income streams to manage sites for biodiversity, land management and heritage conservation.

RESOLVED to note the presentation and update on the Service.

22/18 THE DERBYSHIRE CYCLING PLAN Alan Marsden and Richard Lovell presented an overview of the Derbyshire Cycling Plan to the Committee. This plan was launched in 2016 and its ambition was to “*by 2030, Derbyshire would be the most connected and integrated county for cycling in England, recognised as a world class cycling destination for all. More people*

of all ages and abilities will be cycling regularly for leisure, active travel, commuting and sport.”

Derbyshire County Council was the key driver of the plan, being in partnership with Derbyshire Sport, Derby City Council, the District and Borough Councils, the University of Derby, British Cycling, Sustrans, the Peak District National Park and National Forest Company.

This was a 16 year plan, with the ambition to double the number of people who cycle regularly on connected routes; make behaviour changes and target participation; provide well-connected marketing and communications; and to encourage cross sector advocacy for policy change and implementation. Delivery of the Plan would be monitored by the Derbyshire Cycling Plan strategic group who would monitor progress against the Strategic Actions and progress reported on annually.

International and local events had played a significant part in the cycling culture in Derbyshire, having already welcomed the Tour de France, the Tour of Yorkshire & Derbyshire and the Women’s Tour of Britain. It had hosted Eroica Britannia and would regularly hold cyclo sportives, cyclo cross, mountain biking and hill climb events.

There would be many benefits to people of the county – people who regularly cycled would be fitter and healthier and visitors coming to try out the route would boost the tourist economy. Help was in place to teach people to ride through the DCC Scheme “County Rider” and it was agreed that awareness of other road users, which was difficult to enforce, was needed through education.

RESOLVED to note the progress made on the Derbyshire Cycling Plan.

23/18 WORK PROGRAMME 2018-19 It was considered good practice that each Scrutiny Committee develop and agree an annual work programme. The identification of relevant topics and their allocation to a specific meeting date, focuses the work of the Committee and promotes transparency and would provide an opportunity to determine which issues warrant more detailed investigation and be subject to a scrutiny review.

A proposed work programme for 2018/19 was considered. As issues emerge during the course of the year the Chairman should add them to the work programme and if required, reschedule the order in which issues were to be considered.

RESOLVED to identify and agree issues to be included in a work programme for 2018/19.