

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RIVER WYE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

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What is the Commission being asked to do?

- i) To consider the recommendations of the River Wye Task and Finish Group;
- ii) To decide on whether to endorse, amend or reject the River Wye Task and Finish Group recommendations for referral onto the Cabinet Meeting of 12 November 2018; and
- iii) To note that the River Wye Task and Finish Group has now completed its work.

Background and Issues

- 1.1 The River Wye Task and Finish Group was set up by the Improvement and Review Commission on 21 June 2017 and the following Terms of Reference were subsequently agreed at the meeting on 11 September 2017:
 - To conduct a review of the proposal that the River Wye between Westbourne Street and the Archway roundabout should be re-made and opened up as an amenity within the town.

The Group Membership was as follows:

Chairman: Councillor Hugh McCarthy

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Mrs Lesley Clarke

Membership:

Councillor A Hill

Councillor R Farmer

Councillor M Hussain

Councillor R Raja

Councillor M Clarke

Councillor C Whitehead

Councillor P Turner

Councillor A Baughan

The following investigations were carried out by the Group:

Monday 17 July 2017

- Scoping Meeting

Monday 11 September 2017

- Discussion to confirm the terms of reference and consideration of the work programme. Also a review of the feasibility and design work carried out to date and a recap of how the river is considered in policy.

Thursday 12 October 2017

- Discussion with Charles Brocklehurst, Major Projects and Estates Executive, WDC and external visitor Neil Marples, MWH Global, about feasibility, costs and a high level discussion about economics of remaking the river.

Friday 1 December 2017

- Site visit to Sheffield to consider the regeneration of the river and other green infrastructure improvements in the city centre.

Monday 4 December 2017

- Discussion with Dan Fenn, DRF Ltd and Ian McGowan, Head of Highways Infrastructure Projects, BCC. Members also received feedback on the site visit to Sheffield.

Tuesday 30 January 2018

- Presentation from Dan Fenn and Ian McGowan on estimated project costs and visit from Mike Overall, Chairman of Revive the Wye; Chris Woodman, High Wycombe Society; and Allen Beechey, the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project Officer, who explained the special nature of chalk streams and the Wye in particular. A presentation was also given by Philip Simpkin on some of the health benefits which would be associated with remaking the river.

30 July 2018

- Presentation of the Economic Assessment of remaking the river wye by David Baxter and associated discussions Report of - Eunomia.

6 August 2018

- Presentation given by Philip Simpkin on the results of investigations into funding sources, and of the recent condition survey of the culvert.

Finalising the recommendations and reasons for recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

Conclusions

The Group having taken evidence from external sources and WDC officers and identified that the remaking of the river is a feasible, desirable and well supported project which would not only have great environmental, social, health and wellbeing, place making benefits but that it would also have positive economic benefits with direct financial benefits to the Council in the long term.

The costs of the work to reopen the river would be a relatively small proportion of the total cost of phase 7 of the Town Centre Masterplan and in the longer term remaking the river would overcome any future need to replace the culvert.

The works to remake the river would be most economically and efficiently undertaken if carried out at the same time as highway works in phase 7 (Oxford Road) of the High Wycombe Town Centre Master Plan (HWTCMP) and therefore it is recommended that the Council fund the necessary detailed work to bring the project to a point where it can be delivered and then that the council fund its delivery through CIL and the capital programme.

Next Steps

To be referred to the Improvement & Review Commission on Wednesday 12th September 2018 for onward referral, with endorsement, amendment or rejection, to Cabinet on Monday 12th November 2018.