

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Environment and Infrastructure Committee

20 January 2020

PERTH LADE GREEN CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020-25

Report by Head of Environment & Consumer Services (Report No. 20/09)

This report seeks approval for the Perth Lade Green Corridor Management Plan 2020 - 25 (LMP). Perth Lade is an important, but under-utilised and under promoted historic, biodiverse 7km long watercourse, 'green corridor' and path link running from the city centre to Almondbank. The strapline for the plan 'Love our Lade' reflects the vision for the Lade and plan to address this, and celebrate its importance to the city as a whole, as well as the businesses and residents closest to it.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

Lade Condition

- 1.1 The Perth Lade green corridor is an important 'green lung' within the City, which benefits people and wildlife and is of significant historical interest to the City. Its accessible, largely off road, paths provide a safe and attractive route to encourage both recreation and active travel. The Lade runs from the River Almond, at the historic Low's Work Weir, Almondbank to the River Tay at Perth Bridge. It passes through residential areas, including some areas with socio-economic challenges, as well as business areas and rural land zoned for development. It is anticipated that the expansion of west Perth will likely increase use of the Lade path.
- 1.2 The Lade path is suitable for most user groups and is wide enough in most areas for casual and family cyclists as well as dog walkers of all ages. It is not suitable for larger numbers of commuting cyclists who are accommodated within the Dunkeld Road Cycle Corridor. This will be further improved as part of the Perth Cycle Network Masterplan (Committee Report 19/81 refers) with funding from the Council and Sustrans (Community Links PLUS).
- 1.3 As owner, the Council is responsible for the management and maintenance of the Lade green corridor. The Council's Community Greenspace (CG) team manages the path, fringing trees and vegetation, and makes localised repairs and improvements where resources allow. The Council's Operations team undertake litter collection and vegetation maintenance. Operations retrieve items dumped in the watercourse, if within reach from the banks when emptying bins. In addition, voluntary groups, supported by CG, assist on a regular basis. The Council's Safer Communities team work to address reports of anti-social behaviour along the Lade by removing graffiti, repairing damage and engaging with path users to encourage responsible use. Community Wardens estimate they spend 30 hours per month patrolling the lade to deter anti-social behaviour and provide reassurance to the public, particularly during

the winter. Funding has been secured to install additional CCTV to monitor and address illegal behaviour in some areas.

- 1.4 The currently available resources are generally for routine maintenance and repairs and do not address the gradual decline in public assets over time due to weathering, wear and tear and vandalism. The Lade (and its adjacent parks and green spaces) is now in need of refurbishment and further development to realise its potential to provide the City and Perthshire with an attractive and accessible quality green network, which can be more efficiently maintained.
- 1.5 This Management Plan uses some of the information and incorporates key recommendations of the previous Pre-Consultation Draft 2011-2031 version which was not completed at the time. That version was developed before recent budget challenges became apparent and therefore had to be withdrawn and reconsidered.

Vision

- 1.6 The LMP sets out issues affecting the Lade and how it, along with its adjoining parks and greenspaces, can be significantly improved. The LMP's vision 'Love our Lade' is as follows:

The Lade corridor and its wider green network is an attractive, accessible and loved recreational resource used by people of all ages, abilities and interests. It is well used as a safe route linking adjacent communities with urban and greenspace facilities.

- 1.7 Its delivery objectives are:

- (i) Perth Lade is an attractive place for people and wildlife.
- (ii) Perth Lade is a safe place to explore and play.

Community Survey

- 1.8 To ensure that the developing LMP incorporates the views of those using the Lade, a survey was carried out in May and June 2018, which attracted 372 participants. The LMP summarises the survey's main findings, which correspond with officers' observations, and makes recommendations to address them. These appear in the action plan, which addresses the following main issues:
 - Vegetation management and biodiversity
 - (75% of users think that the Lade is good for wildlife, 53% think vegetation management is poor)
 - Littering and fly tipping
 - (84% said there is too much litter on the paths, 72% think there is too much litter in the water)
 - Dog fouling
 - (71% notice and object to dog-fouling)

- Vandalism, graffiti and street art
 - (70% think vandalism is a problem)
- Public safety related to antisocial behaviour
 - (57% have concerns about anti-social behaviour)
- Path, bridge and parkland improvements
 - (69% are relatively happy with the paths and bridges but see the White Bridge, bridge over the railway, (near Fairfield) as a significant obstacle).

LMP Delivery

- 1.9 The LMP advocates the establishment of a Lade Management Group to oversee delivery. The Group would ensure the participation of key community, Council and partner representatives. Expressions of interest have already been received from Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT) and Fairfield Housing Cooperative. It is intended that delivery will be managed by the Council's Service Manager for Community Greenspace.
- 1.10 Delivery of the LMP action plan is expected to cost approximately £903,000 (excluding an aspirational White Bridge redesign contribution) over a five year period. External funding will be sought and it is anticipated that in the region of £603,000 can be secured. It is intended that £225,000 of the existing approved Community Greenspace capital budget would be used. In addition, £75,000 from the annual revenue budget allocation will be allocated over a 5 year to contribute to LMP delivery. As a result, it is not anticipated that any further resource allocations would be required from the Council to deliver the action plan.
- 1.11 The Council developed and submitted a bid to the Scottish Government's Green Infrastructure Fund (GIF) for £1.2m in January 2019. The GIF, administered by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), provides only 40% funding and requires evidence of complementary funding to the full project cost. Due to the complexity of the application requirements, several meetings with SNH took place to guide the process. In June 2019, the Council was notified that our bid had been unsuccessful, partly due to a large number of competing applications.
- 1.12 However, several other major opportunities have been identified which could assist delivery of the LMP, these are:
- Network Rail (NR) is currently working with the Council's Planning Service to redesign the old marshalling yard as an overnight train servicing facility. NR have stated their intention to replace their boundary fence, which would improve the appearance of the path. Required compensatory planting would benefit greenspace areas and officers are in discussions with NR regarding how to maximise the anticipated amenity and biodiversity benefit.

- In addition, NR and Council officers have discussed changes to the boundary to allow for a new, re-routed multi-use path section. This would replace the worst section of path and improve the Dunkeld Road link path. This will be dependent on NR going ahead with this project and the Council adopting the land on the Lade side of the fence (currently NR land) to improve the public amenity.
- In the longer term, the White Bridge over the railway, which is a significant obstacle to cyclists, prams and the disabled, will be replaced to accommodate electrification. Partnership working with NR in future will aim to ensure that the replacement bridge is both accessible and attractive.
- Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT) moved into the Lower City Mills in July 2019, facilitated by a 30 year lease agreed with the Council. PKHT are supportive of the Lade Management Plan and are willing to participate in the Lade Management Group. They plan to create virtual interpretation of the history around the City Mills and Lade, which will be likely to encourage further exploration of the Lade.
- Sustrans' Council based officer is working to identify and improve safe active travel routes to Tulloch Primary School, which is likely to include sections of the Lade path. Joint working with Sustrans should help secure funding for path improvements.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The Lade Management Plan sets out how the Lade and its adjoining parks and greenspaces can be significantly improved on a sustainable basis to be an attractive and more accessible green network. If substantial external funding can be secured, as anticipated, the LMP's vision can be realised and become part of the emerging 'Perth and Kinross Offer'. Community engagement during the detailed design of the proposals will encourage community pride and help reduce anti-social behaviour, resulting in more effective and efficient long term maintenance.
- 2.2 It is, therefore, proposed that
- (i) the Lade Management Plan, as set out at Appendix 1, is adopted along with the establishment of a Lade Management Group to ensure participation of interested and knowledgeable community and partner representatives.
 - (ii) future partnership working is sought with NR to secure public access and amenity improvements to provide a more accessible replacement for the White Bridge in the long term.
 - (iii) future partnership working is sought with PKHT to maximise the opportunities to create good virtual interpretation of the Lade as a way of increasing interest and use of the Lade green corridor.

- (iv) approximately £903,000 of investment is required to deliver the actions contained within the Lade Management Plan, which will be funded from external grant funding bids, matched with existing Council resources.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Lade green corridor provides an accessible and biodiverse route between Almondank and the city centre connecting communities and facilities. It is used by many for recreation and active travel.
- 3.2 Delivery of the Lade Management Plan, and the establishment of a Lade Management Group to oversee its delivery, will ensure that the Lade green corridor is substantially improved (subject to securing the necessary external funding). This will make it more accessible and attractive for those using it and encourage more people to get involved in looking after it, contributing to sustainable efficient maintenance and the overall 'Perth Offer'.
- 3.3 It is recommended that the Environment and Infrastructure Committee:
- (i) approves the contents of the report, including the proposals outlined in paragraph 2.2
 - (ii) approves the Lade Management Plan as set out within Appendix 1.

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	
Community Plan	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	Yes
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes
Strategic Environmental Assessment	Yes
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	Yes
Legal and Governance	Yes
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan

1.1 The LMP relates to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan in terms of contributing to the following priorities:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- (iii) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
- (iv) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

Corporate Plan

1.2 The LMP relates to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities by contributing to the delivery of:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- (iii) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
- (iv) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

2. Resource Implications

Financial

Capital

- 2.1 External funding requiring matching from Council budget will be secured with existing allocated budget.

Revenue

- 2.2 Any required revenue spend will be met from existing Council revenue budgets (Community Greenspace planned maintenance).

Workforce

- 2.3 The LMP will be delivered by existing staff within Community Greenspace.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.4 Through agreement with NR the Council may adopt some land currently in NR ownership to allow public path and amenity improvements. This will replace a section of path which is currently very narrow restricted by Lade and NR fence. This is dependant on NR delivering their project.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.
- 3.2 The LMP was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) and were assessed as relevant and the following positive outcomes are expected following implementation.
- 3.3 All new, or improved, public amenity facilities will be inclusive and accessible to all. A community survey has informed the LMP and further community consultation will be undertaken during and after LMP delivery.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.4 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

- 3.5 Screening has determined that there is unlikely to be significant environmental effects and is therefore exempt and the Consultation Authorities have been notified. The reason(s) for concluding that the PPS is unlikely to have significant environmental effects is that the Lade green corridor and its adjoining parks exist, improvements will enhance rather than fundamentally alter the existing resource.

Sustainability

- 3.6 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 the Council also has a duty relating to climate change and, in exercising its functions must act:

- in the way best calculated to delivery of the Act's emissions reduction targets;
- in the way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaptation programmes; and
- in a way that it considers most sustainable

- 3.7 The LMP aims to increase the quality and use of the Lade green corridor which is off road and for non-motorised use. It provides a direct, short route between Perth centre and residential and green space areas adjacent to it so can reduce car use for short trips. This helps to reduce congestion and contribute to improving air quality.

Legal and Governance

- 3.8 The proposed transfer of land from NR to PKC will require a legal agreement. The Head of Legal and Governance has been consulted on the policy presented within this report.

Risk

- 3.9 There is a significant risk that the condition and use of the Lade corridor will decline without an investment in refurbishing the worn out and obsolete assets. This would lead to an increase in pressures on routine maintenance, anti-social behaviour and public dissatisfaction. The opportunity to improve health, low carbon travel and enhance biodiversity and contribute to the Perth Offer would be lost.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 The Head of Legal and Governance, the Head of Finance, Head of Planning and colleagues in Safer Communities and Direct Services Operations have been consulted during the preparation of the LMP presented within this report.

Local elected members will be consulted prior to establishment of the proposed Lade Management Group.

External

- 4.2 A lade questionnaire was distributed in May and June 2018 to ensure the LMP was informed by those using the Lade path. Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT), Network Rail (NR) and the Fairfield Housing Cooperative received a draft of the Lade Management Plan (LMP) and expressed their support for it.

5. Communication

- 5.1 The LMP proposes establishing a Lade Management Group to ensure that key community, partner and council representatives are involved in its implementation. Delivery by Community Greenspace will engage with local communities to ensure their priorities are incorporated.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 The Perth Lade Management Plan 2011-2031 (pre consultation draft) was referred to during the preparation of this draft LMP and its key recommendations have been incorporated. This previous document is available from Community Greenspace for reference.

3. APPENDICES

- 3.1 Appendix 1 – The Perth Lade Green Corridor Management Plan 2020 - 2025.