The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing in Wales (ENRaW)
Green Trails.

Local Access Forum Meeting – March 2021

1. Green Trails Feasibility Study

1.1 The Vale of Glamorgan Council were previously acting as lead partner in a regional collaboration for the development of a plan to establish improved bridleway links through the counties of Bridgend, Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, RCT and Merthyr.

1.2 The initial feasibility report was delayed due to covid-19 impacts, that prevented the volunteer survey aspect from being completed. The regional partners were, however, keen to see the work through and committed to retaining the project officer. As a result the report has now been completed in draft and supported a further expression of interest for the delivery of the program.

2. Green Trails Delivery

2.1 The expression of interest for the next stage of the project has been successful and a full application therefore submitted. The expression of interest stage represented the competitive element of the process and we therefore now anticipate an offer of the full amount to enable the delivery to continue.

2.2 The value of the grant is £1,046,400 until June 2023

3. Project Overview

3.1 The Green Trails project aims to pilot delivery of a coherent network of green corridors within the South Wales Central region for the purposes of improving bridleway access and habitat connectivity. The project also explores financial and practical measures to secure the long-term sustainability of that network.

3.2 The objectives of the project are:

1. To provide safe access opportunities for horse and bike users

2. To establish sustainable management systems that enhance ecological resilience

3. To animate communities and establish connective structures at a regional level.

4. To undertake feasibility for development of a gateway facility that will contribute to long term sustainability.

3.3   The proposed project activities follow production of a Green Trails Network Plan funded under an earlier round of ENRAW small scale funding.

3.4   The proposed project activities are:

- Delivery of a long distance horse and mountain bike trail linking hubs of bridleway access across the South Wales Central region (Bridgend, Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, RCT, Merthyr) as developed in the Green Trails Network Plan (includes route, works and costs).
- Enhancement of biodiversity in and around the trail. This includes mapping adjacent habitats and establishing connections to the core route; collection and assessment of baseline ecological data; Prescribing detailed management practices by location; and producing practical guidance for volunteer partners.
- Animating and supporting local, user and nature conservation groups towards delivering and sustaining the trail.
- Scoping and feasibility for development of a profit making gateway facility (bike-park) that will contribute to financially sustaining the regional trail in the long term.

3.5   Delivery of the trail will involve creation of legal rights and ground works. It will be focussed around maintaining momentum amongst emergent user communities by involving them in the process and demonstrating achievements.

3.6   Four staff working regionally and hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council will be employed in addition to a part time monitoring officer who will assist with grant administration. The four principle staff have the following roles:

1. Trail Officer
   - Oversee and project manage delivery of regional trail
   - Negotiate and administer legal orders and agreements for the creation of bridleway rights
   - Coordinate bids based on funding sources identified within Green Trails Network Plan.
2. Senior Field Officer
   - Arrange contracted works on regional trail according to Green Trails Network Plan and community priorities
   - Facilitate community engagement and develop structures that connect existing groups
   - Commission consultancy activities for scoping of gateway facility, relating it to sustained support of regional trail
3. Field Officer
   - Support establishment and training of volunteer groups
   - Undertake practical works
   - Lead volunteer groups
4. Biodiversity Officer
   - Map the connectivity of the core route with adjacent habitats based on SEWBREC data to identify biodiversity hotspots, best routes to target and good connections

- Co-ordinate survey of core route to give an accurate ecological baseline and produce:
  - Detailed management prescriptions for sections (prioritised by high/medium/low biodiversity interest/sensitivity)
  - ID specific connectivity areas for specific enhancement projects
- Identify best practice for improving biodiversity along the network and produce a toolkit for use in management of the trail
- Produce a code of conduct aimed at users and explore novel ways to communicate the information (e.g. through public art at key access points)
- Contribute to training of volunteer groups, particularly in relation to survey and management techniques

3.7 The partner organisations for the project are Vale CC, Bridgend CC, RCT CC, Merthyr CC, Cardiff CC, British Horse Society, Sustrans, Wales Adventure Tourism Organisation, Cycling UK and The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales.

3.8 The project will contribute to physical activity, well-being, nature conservation, tourism, and green infrastructure objectives and will deliver the following objectives, outputs and actions:

Objective	Output	Action	Start Date	Target Finish	Lead Officer
Regional Trail	Creation of bridleway rights	Refer to Green Trails Network Plan for identification of short term priority routes to be created	Apr 21	May 21	TO
		Agree appropriate legal mechanism for creation of rights with affected landowner	Apr 21	Aug 22	TO
		Follow appropriate model legal order process as described within the Green Trails Network Plan	April 21	Jun 23	TO
	Improve bridleway infrastructure	Refer to Green Trails Network Plan for identification of short term priority routes to be improved	Apr 21	Aug 22	SFO
		Confirm the extent of necessary works for affected locations and appropriate mechanism for delivery	May 21	May 23	SFO
		Follow appropriate model actions as described within document Green Trail Network Plan having regard to procurement and grant requirements, instructing FO to deliver direct works.	Apr 21	Jun 23	SFO
Ecological Resilience	Map biodiversity hotspots on and around the core route	Use GIS software to compare core Green Trails route with existing ecological spatial data sets.	Apr 21	Aug 21	BO
		Produce GIS layer indicating the location, extent and associated attribute data of hotspots	Apr 21	Aug 21	BO
		Design site specific management interventions and ground works for the connection of biodiversity hot spots to the Green Trails core route	Aug 21	Mar 22	BO
	Connection of hotspots to core route	Liaise with landowners to agree appropriate works	Apr 22	Jan 23	FO

		Arrange appropriate work parties (volunteer/contractor) for implementation	May 22	Feb 23	FO
		Deliver works on the ground	May 22	Mar 23	FO
	Collect and assess baseline ecological data;	Undertake desktop study of existing data sources	Jul 21	Sep 21	BO
		Undertake surveys of the core route and specific connection proposals to gather further data where necessary	Sep 21	Mar 22	BO
	Prescribe management plans	Consider ecological data, connectivity work and anticipated management needs for users and biodiversity.	Jan 22	Apr 22	BO
		Produce habitat management plans by location and, where appropriate generic plans applicable to common ecological/landscape features.	Apr 22	Sep 22	BO
	Toolkit for general trail management	Consider detailed plans and produce user facing toolkits aimed at volunteer groups, contractors and partners	Jul 22	Dec 22	BO
	Produce code of conduct	Bring together user and habitat management considerations into code of conduct draft	Jul 22	Dec 22	BO
		Undertake consultation on draft	Jan 23	Mar 23	BO
		Publish code of conduct aimed at users of the Green Trails network and associated interest groups	Apr 23	Jun 23	TO
Community Animation	Promote stewardship scheme of route sections	Consider Green Trails Network Plan and database of contacts established within it	Oct 21	Jun 22	SFO
		Build on previous initiatives for route survey to attribute route sections to user groups	Jul 22	Jun 23	SFO
	Facilitate community and user events	Host events introducing the Green Trails project and organising third sector partner groups towards stewardship	Jan 22	Mar 23	TO
	Volunteer animation	Provide training to volunteers and user groups comprised of volunteers on toolkits produced.	Apr 22	Mar 23	FO
Gateway Site Feasibility	Feasibility study	Commission work via appropriate consultancy	Apr 21	Mar 22	SFO
	Community mapping	Undertake community mapping exercise and consultation events	Jul 21	Jun 22	TO
Monitoring and Evaluation	Annual Reporting	Review annual activities against project outputs	Jan 22	Apr 23	PROW
	Management group project evaluation	Review project outputs against objectives	Mar 23	Jun 23	PROW
	External evaluation	Commission report	Apr 23	May 23	TO
		Receive report and consider contents	May 23	Jun 23	PROW
Grant Administration	Financial monitoring	Submit claims	Apr 21	Jul 23	MO