

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 6 August 2020

Roseburn to Union Canal Active Travel Route and Greenspace Improvement

Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	6 - Corstorphine/Murrayfield 7 - Sighthill/Gorgie 11 - City Centre
Council Commitments	16 , 17 , 18 , 19 , 43

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- 1.1.1 notes the work undertaken to date to develop proposals that will deliver both an important new active travel route and significant improvements to the quality and accessibility of local greenspaces, including Dalry Community Park;
 - 1.1.2 notes the anticipated programme for the delivery of the project; and
 - 1.1.3 approves the undertaking of further work, including a package of enabling works comprising of site clearance, ground investigation and excavations to locate existing underground services. These works are necessary to complete the design of the proposals and to procure delivery.

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Roseburn to Union Canal Active Travel Route and Greenspace Improvement

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report summarises the work undertaken to date on the Roseburn to Union Canal Active Travel Route and Greenspace Improvement project. The aim of this multi-million pound scheme is to transform the quality of walking and cycling connections and provide a new green corridor with attractive, accessible amenity space. The project will significantly improve connectivity across the city and will improve the quality and accessibility of local greenspaces, including Dalry Community Park.
- 2.2 The report explains that the project will deliver a significant net increase in the number of trees along the route and will transform two currently inaccessible, unmanaged and largely unused areas of vegetation into high quality, more diverse, managed woodland however some trees will also be removed along the route. The reasons for doing so are explained in the report. Both the landscaping and ecological issues will be carefully managed to ensure that the net impact overall is a positive one.
- 2.3 The report also provides an update on the key activities in delivery of the project and seeks approval to undertake the further work, including a package of enabling works comprising of site clearance, ground investigation works and excavations to locate existing underground services, necessary to complete the design of the proposals and to procure their delivery.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Roseburn to Union Canal project is a multi-million pound scheme that will provide a high quality green corridor and improved public open space and is identified for delivery within the Council's [Active Travel Action Plan 2016](#).
- 3.2 The project will also contribute to a number of Council and city priorities including:
 - 3.2.1 the city's net zero carbon target by 2030 through improvements to walking and cycling;

- 3.2.2 the ambition for Edinburgh to be a “[Million Tree City](#)” by 2030 through the planting of 4,790 new trees within the three sections of the project area;
 - 3.2.3 the adopted [Edinburgh Local Development Plan](#) 2016 by extending and enhancing Dalry Community Park to meet existing deficiencies in provision;
 - 3.2.4 the emerging City Plan 2030 [main issues](#) targets for Edinburgh to be: a sustainable city which supports everyone’s physical and mental wellbeing; and a city where you do not need to own a car to move around;
 - 3.2.5 Edinburgh’s [open space strategy](#); and
 - 3.2.6 the Council’s [Biodiversity Action Plan 2019-21](#) by opening up and improving disused areas of green open space to the general public.
- 3.3 In addition, the project will contribute to the Scottish Government national indicator of progress by improving access to local greenspace which is used to measure delivery of the National Outcomes of a healthier, safer and stronger, wealthier and fairer, smarter and greener Scotland.

4. Main Report

Project Summary

- 4.1 The project will:
- 4.1.1 transform the quality of walking and cycling connections from the North Edinburgh Path Network (NEPN) and QuietRoutes 8 and 9 (West Edinburgh) to the Union Canal and onwards to the Meadows and Southside, as well as southwest Edinburgh and National Cycle Network route 75 (NCN75);
 - 4.1.2 significantly improve connectivity across the city, by completing an important missing link in the walking and cycling network, linking the existing Roseburn Path near Russell Road to Fountainbridge, via new off-road paths passing through areas of greenspace, and providing an off-road cycle path adjacent to the West Approach Road, terminating at Morrison Crescent. A plan of the route is included as Appendix 1;
 - 4.1.3 provide better access to greenspace and deliver improvements to Dalry Community Park by creating a new green corridor in the west of the city, with improved public open space for the local community, alongside those using the active travel route as part of a longer journey. New or improved accesses will be provided at several key locations which will enable pedestrians and cyclists of all ages, as well as people with mobility issues, to enjoy the areas of greenspace and experience the mental and physical benefits that this will bring about;

- 4.1.4 create a series of well-defined spaces by transforming three, already distinct, sections of the project route. These three sections have been informally named by the design team as Sauchiebank Gardens, Duff Street Woodland and Dalry Community Park. The Sauchiebank and Duff Street sections, which are currently characterised by scattered woodland habitat, are to be enhanced and connected to Dalry Community Park; and
- 4.1.5 involve the removal of existing trees, and some other changes to the local environment along the route. Both the landscaping and ecological issues will be managed to ensure that the net impact overall is a positive one and the project will result in a significant net increase in the number of trees along the route, as well as a higher quality, more diverse and better managed woodland.

Progress to date

- 4.2 Work began on development of preliminary proposals in 2015, with an extensive public and key stakeholder consultation undertaken over a seven week period between November 2015 and January 2016. This allowed people to view the proposals and provide comment and feedback. The consultation process included the distribution of leaflets to local residents and businesses and drop-in sessions at local venues.
- 4.3 Key themes emerging from the consultation were:
 - 4.3.1 strong support for the proposals was expressed by the vast majority of respondents;
 - 4.3.2 the importance of retaining the green space feel and biodiversity, whilst balancing with safety through adequate lighting and passive security was recognised;
 - 4.3.3 concern over a lack of continuity in cycle infrastructure and indirect links between the proposed path and the surrounding street network;
 - 4.3.4 the importance of the proposals creating a child friendly environment; and
 - 4.3.5 preference for either a wider path to prevent conflict between pedestrians and cyclists, or demarcated areas to separate uses and avoid conflict.
- 4.4 In response to this feedback, the project team made various changes to the proposals, including:
 - 4.4.1 developing a tree protection strategy and a replanting strategy for new trees and vegetation between the proposed path and adjacent properties to recognise that there would be a loss of trees on the route;
 - 4.4.2 designing landscape proposals to increase the biodiversity of the route through planting native trees and shrubs and creating areas of wildflower meadow;
 - 4.4.3 improving access points, including an additional access at Duff Street;

- 4.4.4 undertaking a 'Spaceshaper consultation' with Primary 6 school children from Dalry Primary School. This concluded that the park is a valued community asset which needs to be improved but there were fears that it will be subjected to vandalism again in the future. The children expressed a desire for places to sit and for exciting play equipment to be incorporated. As a result of the consultation, further consideration was given to security measures, the use of robust materials and the design of the park to ensure its longevity and success, with on-going maintenance planned. The new design for the park took account of varied age groups, whether to segregate cyclists and pedestrians, improved lighting and sightlines through the park and opportunities for active team play, seating and nature interpretation; and
- 4.4.5 increasing the path width to 4.0m to provide additional space for both pedestrians and cyclists.

4.5 A second, more limited local consultation was undertaken in June 2019 to assist with further refining the proposals.

4.6 Design work on the proposals is now well advanced and the project team are working closely with colleagues in other services, particularly in relation to landscaping and ecological issues. However, in order to complete the designs, a package of enabling works, comprising of site clearance, ground investigation and excavations to locate existing underground services is required and Committee are asked to approve this being progressed.

4.7 As Planning Consent will be required for the project, work is underway to prepare for the Planning Application to be submitted in August 2020.

4.8 The key areas of activity are summarised in paragraphs 4.9 – 4.29.

Green Corridor and Public Open Space

4.9 An integrated design strategy is being developed to maximise opportunities to re-energise the existing outdoor amenity space that exists along the route.

4.10 This recognises that several sections of the route, including the areas of open space adjacent to Russell Road/Sauchiebank and the West Approach Road/Duff Street Lane are currently inaccessible to the public and unusable in terms of amenity space. Both of these sections are characterised by considerable amounts of rubbish and other deleterious materials and do not benefit from any formal maintenance regime.

4.11 The proposals therefore will enable a wide range of users to access a new green corridor that will provide high quality outdoor amenity space where it does not currently exist. This will enable local people to benefit from access to nature, exercise and attractive and welcoming green open space.

Dalry Community Park

- 4.12 The existing park is an uninspiring space that is underused and is characterised by vandalism and neglect. However, as a result of this project's proposals the park will be revitalised and re-imagined and will benefit from the following improvements:
- 4.12.1 the existing play park will be fully revitalised, with a new layout and equipment for use by a mix of ages;
 - 4.12.2 the existing sports pitch will be resurfaced and new perimeter fencing will be installed;
 - 4.12.3 the park will have full lighting, seating and wayfinding information for maximised day and evening use;
 - 4.12.4 the existing open landscape will be reimagined, with new shared-use paths integrated within a planted multi-functional park space; and
 - 4.12.5 improved access points will be provided from Dalry Road, Lidl car park and the Telfer Subway.
- 4.13 The improvements will create a welcoming and inspiring focal point for social interaction by a wide variety of user groups. The aim is to create a space that is vibrant and where people feel safe.
- 4.14 Along with the opening of the other two sections of open space, these improvements will have demonstrable benefits to the local community; through enhanced access to play and exercise in a pleasant green space and therefore improved mental and physical wellbeing.

Active Travel Route

- 4.15 The creation of a new shared-use pedestrian and cycle path, including new bridge crossings over the Mid-Calder railway line and Dalry Road has been designed to:
- 4.15.1 deliver a high-quality walking and cycling route built to current off-road design standards and best practice guidance; and
 - 4.15.2 improve connectivity across the city, by completing an important missing link in the active travel network to connect the NEPN to Fountainbridge. An onwards connection to the Union Canal will then be provided via a separate active travel project for Dundee Street and Fountainbridge, which is currently also under development.

Impact on existing trees

- 4.16 The planned enabling works and subsequent project delivery will result in the loss of existing trees in all three sections, initially to allow for the enabling works and subsequently for delivery.
- 4.17 A long-term strategy for creating and managing a healthy and diverse tree population, greater in number than that which currently exists has been developed.

- 4.18 Since the closure of the Caledonian railway line in the 1960s nature has encroached and the existing trees in this area are typical of the natural succession of redundant railway infrastructure. The oldest trees are of a similar age, approximately 40 to 50 years old.
- 4.19 There are 1,286 trees that have been recorded in the boundary of the proposed scheme. Up to 862 of these trees could be required to be removed as part of the scheme, leaving 424 trees. It should be noted that the independent tree survey of the area (conducted in line with British Standard 5837:2012) has identified that 504 (58%) of these trees are rated as category C or category U with a remaining lifespan of up to 20 years. Only five of the 862 trees were identified as being category A (high quality with an estimated lifespan of at least 40 years).
- 4.20 Efforts are ongoing to investigate possible measures to minimise the impacts on existing trees, especially where these are large or of high quality and to minimise tree loss where this is solely required to gain access to site investigation or construction areas.
- 4.21 As part of the scheme it is proposed to plant 4,795 replacement trees within the three landscaped spaces which will improve the diversity and quality of trees within the project area. The majority of trees that will be planted will be native woodland species. These will be a mix of Semi-mature (SM), Extra Heavy Standard (EHS) and whips/transplants. The SM and EHS trees will be planted at varying centres but they will be set out to their mature spacing, with no expected felling, while the whips and transplants will be thinned over the next 25 years in order to establish a healthy woodland. Following best practice guidance, it is expected that selectively felling the trees during establishment at years five, 10/15 and 25 will result in an approximately 50% reduction in the number of trees. Therefore, at year 25 the number of trees within the three landscape areas will be the 2,422 whips and transplants, in addition to the 185 SM and EHS trees. Combined with the original trees to be retained, this would result in 2,607 trees; over double the number that are currently present.
- 4.22 Trees and woodlands are a vital part of Edinburgh's landscape. The [Trees in the City Action Plan](#) outlines the Council's general principles as follows:
- 4.22.1 improving biodiversity;
 - 4.22.2 storing CO2 from the atmosphere;
 - 4.22.3 providing shelter in Winter and shade on hot days;
 - 4.22.4 health benefits – including removing harmful particulates from the air;
 - 4.22.5 relieving localised flooding; and
 - 4.22.6 a range of other benefits.
- 4.23 The landscape architect for the project has summarised the impacts of the proposed changes to landscaping, trees and other planting as follows in paragraphs 4.24 to 4.27.

- 4.24 The existing grouping of trees on the site is typical of redundant railway and infrastructure landscape from the 1960s. They are predominantly self-seeded Willow, Alder and Birch, which are of the same stature, health, and age. Individually the trees are insignificant and contribute little to the landscape value. As a grouping they do provide a degree of biodiversity and ecological habitat but this is reduced by the limited variety of species and age diversity. Many of the trees are also in poor condition and require immediate work to make them safe, especially as the project proposes to make these areas accessible to the public.
- 4.25 Those trees that are of better quality lie to the edges of the site and will have existed while the railway was operational, they are more mature. Proportionally more of these mature trees are retained as they do not sit upon or adjacent to the proposed route of the new path. Visually they create a back drop to long city views and a screening/privacy to tenement housing from immediate views, and the project proposals respect this with the intent to maintain these qualities.
- 4.26 The proposed woodland and tree planting will establish a diverse native and balanced woodland, encouraging greater access for amenity and education. Dalry Primary School for example has expressed a desire to use the Duff Street Woodland section for forest schools. Through careful management the trees will establish and create a diverse habitat with an increase in species diversity, mixing evergreen with deciduous, they will develop to reinforce the wildlife corridor which exists northwards. This project is a long-term management project to establish a healthy woodland and habitat over generations, moving on from the unsustainable condition of the existing homogeneous industrial corridor.
- 4.27 As well as the peripheral benefits of education to local schools the improved access to trees and green spaces will be beneficial to health and wellbeing, the area will be safer, and attractive at all times of day and year, with improved lighting and clear sight lines. The woodland and tree planting proposed will combine with the areas of native wildflower meadows to increase the biodiversity of the area. Using best practice guidance, the project can demonstrate through species diversity, structure and increased areas that it provides a biodiversity net gain.

Further Work Towards Project Delivery

- 4.28 The Council has procured Balfour Beatty, through the SCAPE Civil Engineering Framework Agreement, to take the project through the Pre-Constuction phase. As part of this process, the contractor has produced a feasibility report, which indicates a projected construction cost of £4.8 million.
- 4.29 To progress the project to the delivery stage it is now necessary to undertake a package of enabling works, comprising of site clearance, ground investigation works and excavations to locate existing underground services. The information arising from this exploratory work will allow the design to be completed and the projected construction cost to be refined by the contractor into a proposed contract cost.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The Planning Application is scheduled to be submitted in August 2020. This will carry a 16-week determination period and will be referred to the Development Management Sub-Committee in due course
- 5.2 Subject to the approval of this report the enabling works are programmed to commence in September 2020. A protected species/habitat survey will be carried out no less than 48 hours prior to any heavy plant being brought onto the site. This will determine, primarily, whether there are any bats or nesting birds evident in the trees impacted upon by the works. Should this survey determine that works can proceed then tree clearance works will take place between late September and early November to prepare the site for construction works. Ground investigation works will also be undertaken in mid to late October.
- 5.3 The tree planting mix will be revisited to review the potential to include fruit trees as part of planting mix at appropriate locations along the route and to determine the landscape maintenance regime that will be required going forward.
- 5.4 The project team and the contractor will explore ways to reduce tree removal wherever possible. Heavy plant is required to be taken onto the site to undertake the site investigation works however, if possible, access routes will be chosen to minimise impacts on trees.
- 5.5 Further design work is also required to minimise the potential impact on trees of the proposed off-road cycle path adjacent to the West Approach Road, between the Telfer Subway and Morrison Crescent. The roadside verge in this area contains an avenue of circa 35 semi mature lime trees that provide visual, particulate and noise screening between the road and adjacent residential properties. They also contribute significantly to the nature of the corridor and to longer distance views of this part of the city.
- 5.6 Options to allow the path to be delivered with the minimum possible impact on these trees will therefore be fully investigated. To allow sufficient time for this work to take place, it may be necessary to deliver the project in a phased manner, with this section proceeding as a later phase to the remainder of the route.
- 5.7 Subject to the acceptability of the contractor's proposed contract cost and the granting of Planning Consent, approval will be sought from the appropriate Committee to appoint the framework contractor as the Principal Contractor for the project. It is expected that this approval would be sought in early 2021 and that delivery of the project would commence in late spring or early summer 2021 and take around a year to complete.

6. Financial Impact

- 6.1 The overall project cost estimate is approximately £9.5m, made up of around £0.860m for project management and design development and £8.64m for construction costs. A 20% allowance for contingency and risk has been included within this construction budget, to reflect costs which cannot currently be accurately quantified; such as those relating to the implementation and design of a lighting scheme, ground investigation works, land purchase, underground utility diversionary or protection works and the impact of Covid-19 on the supply chain.
- 6.2 The project benefits from a multi-year funding agreement from Sustrans Scotland, who will fund 100% of design costs and 50% of construction costs through the Places for Everyone funding programme. The overall impact on Council budgets is expected to be approximately £4.320m, including contingency and risk, and this will be met from funding approved for the delivery of the Council's Active Travel Investment Programme.
- 6.3 This report sets out Council funded capital expenditure of £4.320m. The loans charges associated with this over a 30-year period would be a principal amount of £4.320m and interest of £3.670m, resulting in a total cost of £7.990m based on an assumed loans fund interest rate of 4.386%. This represents an annual cost of £0.266m to be met from the corporate loans charge budget. Borrowing will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 An extensive public and key stakeholder consultation was undertaken over a seven week period between November 2015 and January 2016 and a summary of the key issues arising from this is included in the Main Report. A second, more limited local consultation was undertaken in June 2019. Further details are available in background papers for this report.
- 7.2 An Integrated Impact Assessment for the project is currently being developed.
- 7.3 The proposals have received widespread public support over two separate consultation exercises. The first public consultation was held over a seven-week period in 2015-16 and established that 96.5% of respondents agreed that there is a need to invest in walking and cycling in the Roseburn to Union Canal area and that 95% were in support of the proposals.
- 7.4 The follow up engagement exercise undertaken in 2019 again demonstrated widespread support for the project.

- 7.5 In order to keep key stakeholders informed of progress to date and key milestones in the upcoming programme, online briefing sessions were held with members of Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust on 13 July 2020 and Gorgie Dalry Community Council on 17 July 2020. Both organisations expressed their support for the project and offered useful feedback and further suggestions for improvements to the scheme which are being considered. The project team have also committed to continuing discussions with them, and a Community Council discussion is scheduled for the evening of the 7 September 2020.

8. Background Reading/External References

8.1 [Play Area Action Plan 2011 – 2016](#)

8.2 Planning and Access Statement

8.3 2016 Consultation Report

8.4 Arboricultural Survey

Items 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4 are available by contacting the Council's Active Travel Team (ActiveTravel@edinburgh.gov.uk)

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Plan of the route.

