

## Report to Cabinet

**9 February 2022**

<b>Subject:</b>	Sandwell Urban Bike Park project
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member for Tourism and Culture Cllr. Danny Millard
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Borough Economy Alice Davey
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes  The Council will incur expenditure in excess of £250,000  and  The project will be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	(Interim) Service Manager – Parks, Sandwell Valley & Events. Matthew Huggins <a href="mailto:Matthew.Huggins@sandwell.gov.uk">Matthew.Huggins@sandwell.gov.uk</a> Senior Lead Officer – Sport and leisure. Rob Marlow <a href="mailto:robert_marlow@sandwell.gov.uk">robert_marlow@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given to create a series of cycle trails within Sandwell Valley, West Bromwich, close to the Swan Pool area and on neighbouring land within Birmingham (The former Hill Top Golf Course).
- 1.2 That the Director of Borough Economy, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, be authorised to:
  - Prepare the necessary Tendering documentation



- Procure, in accordance with the public procurement rules, the Council's procurement and financial regulations a contractor(s) to develop, on behalf of the Council, the proposed scheme; to award a contract and to enter into or execute under seal any financial agreement(s) as may be deemed necessary in relation to the scheme.
- Accept Grant funding from both Sport England (£400,000) and Birmingham City Council (£100,000) on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Borough Economy in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer.
- Commit match funding of £100,000 towards the project.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The creation of new cycle trails will help to increase visitor numbers to Sandwell Valley and make it a popular destination for cyclists within the region. The facility will be a 'Legacy' from the 2022 Commonwealth Games and encourage people to visit the area.
- 2.2 Cycling for sport and recreation can provide many health benefits and help individuals to meet their recommended levels of physical activity. In addition, cycling can help reduce social isolation and encourage community cohesion.
- 2.3 The recommendations above will allow the project to be delivered in line with the project plan which has been submitted to, and agreed, by both Sport England and Birmingham City Council.
- 2.4 By authorising the Director of Borough Economy to oversee the implementation of recommendations will remove the need for further reports and use of Cabinet time.

## 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p><b>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</b></p> <p>The new cycle trails will offer enhanced facilities for families, children and young people to access physical health and wellbeing opportunities together.</p>
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	Trails will be designed to offer opportunities for cyclists with different abilities so that they can progress steadily as they grow, learn, gain experience and become more confident.
	<p><b>People Live Well and Age Well</b></p> <p>The new cycle trails will provide an opportunity for people to exercise, keep fit and have fun within an open space. It is also believed that the trails will encourage more people to take up cycling and explore other cycle routes across the Borough of Sandwell.</p>
	<p><b>Strong Resilient Communities</b></p> <p>Cycling is widely acknowledged as being a social activity and it is hoped to see more 'informal groups' develop along with increased memberships of cycling clubs.</p>
	<p><b>A Strong and Inclusive Economy</b></p> <p>The project will deliver a cycling legacy for Sandwell, Birmingham and the Black Country supporting wider tourism-based growth and will further establish Sandwell Valley as a 'gateway' visitor destination.</p> <p>It is hoped that further developments will occur in the future including road cycling, triathlon events, outdoor water sports etc. This is likely to bring extra investment into the Borough.</p>
	<p><b>A Connected and Accessible Sandwell</b></p> <p>Sandwell Valley already has Cycle Network route 5 within it. By encouraging cycling, it is realistically expected that Sandwell Residents will become more aware of cycle routes across the Borough and hopefully use these for commuting / active travel purposes.</p>



## 4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 This project has been developed over a lengthy period and involved a number of agencies including Sport England, British Cycling, Birmingham City Council and specialist track designers. The scope of the project has altered on several occasions due to the level of funding that could be made available.

4.2 A significant level of background research and consultation was completed during the initial development of the project, this is captured within the report compiled by Jon Sheaff & Associates. This is attached as Appendix A

4.3 A total funding package of £600,000 has recently been agreed. This is made up of:

£400,000 from Sport England  
£100,000 from Birmingham City Council  
£100,000 from Sandwell Council

It should be noted that the total funding package will also need to cover professional fees and charges.

4.4 As the main funder and to secure their investment, Sport England has insisted on a fast delivery of the project. A detailed project plan has been prepared and submitted. This is attached as Appendix B.

4.5 In order to keep within project timelines, the initial appointment of both Landscape and Ecological consultants have been made.

4.6 The new cycle trails will be built within areas of Sandwell Valley classed as Nature Reserves, therefore ecological considerations and biodiversity are given careful consideration at each stage of the project. Appropriate mitigations against any ecological and biodiversity impacts will be made as required.

4.7 Due to the recent changes in project scope, Sandwell Council's Strategic Investment Unit has requested a new project appraisal to be carried out. This process is currently underway and is anticipated to be completed in mid-February. Grant funding will not be accepted until a satisfactory appraisal has been completed by Strategic Finance.



- 4.8 There will be no charges made to public use of the cycling trails and they will be open access. In the event of extremely inclement weather or damage to the trails then they will be closed for use. Appropriate decision making processes on these closures will be put in place.
- 4.9 Future management responsibility of the trails will rest with Sandwell Valley, this will include ongoing safety inspections, repairs and maintenance.

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 No alternative options have been considered for this project, however as the scheme will be delivered on a 'design and build' basis, the final designs can be altered to fit with on-site factors such as environmental / ecological matters.

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	<p>There will need to be a financial 'Match Funding' contribution of £100,000 from Sandwell Council. The cost centre this will come from is currently under discussion but may be found through potential underspends that have been identified.</p> <p>There are no staffing implications other than site safety inspections which will be conducted by Sandwell Valley staff.</p> <p>Ongoing maintenance and repairs of the tracks will be funded via a budget held within Sandwell Valley. This is expected to be 1.5% of the capital costs per year. Assuming a capital build cost of £510,000, this will be £7,650 per annum. It is also recommended that an annual sinking fund of £7,650 for longer term maintenance is included within budgets. Plans are currently being developed to fund this ongoing maintenance through the addition of a walkers coffee bar hut at Swan Pool.</p>
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<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	There will be a need for legal support in entering grant funding agreements with both Sport England and Birmingham Council. Particularly around potential restrictions on title. Initial discussions have been held with Legal Services who will support this process moving forward.
<b>Risk:</b>	There is a risk that members of the public may become injured whilst using the cycle tracks and this matter will be addressed with Risk Management. However, it should be noted that there are already cycle tracks in and around Sandwell Valley including the 'Miners Trail' which does not currently present issues.
<b>Equality:</b>	The cycle trails will be open access and can be enjoyed by everyone regardless of ethnicity, gender or any protected characteristic.  An initial stage Equality Impact Assessment will be completed.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The project will have a significant positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents. By creating new cycle trails, residents will be able to enjoy the benefits of outdoor sport / physical activity for free. It is likely that many residents will continue to enjoy the sport at a competitive level whilst others may introduce recreational cycling as a means of active transport.
<b>Social Value</b>	The project will be 'labelled' as a Legacy project from the 2022 Commonwealth games and help to celebrate Sandwell's involvement. This will help to engender a sense of pride in Sandwell.  The project will help to encourage people to cycle, train and compete together (particularly along the slalom track) and provide opportunities to meet with new people.



	The project will help to put Sandwell 'On the Map' as a place that values sport and physical activity. It will hopefully demonstrate that Sandwell is a place that 'gets things done' and supports large scale inward investment. There are many other potential areas within Sandwell Valley and across the Borough that will benefit from future inward investment with associated benefits to suppliers within the hospitality industry such as hotels, café's and restaurants
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## 7. Appendices

Appendix A - Report compiled by Jon Sheaff & Associates.

Appendix B – Detailed project plan submitted and approved by Sport England.

## 8. Background Papers

None

