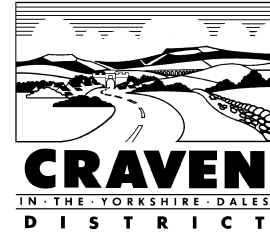


Policy Committee – (28th July 2015)



INFRASTRUCTURE RESERVE: LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL CORRIDOR

Report of the Director of Services

Ward(s) affected: Aire Valley with Lothersdale, Gargrave and Malhamdale, Skipton Wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Members on progress with regard to improvement of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal corridor and agree how some of the funds identified in the Council's New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve should be used to support future delivery.

2. Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Note progress in producing the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Access Development Plan and success in securing financial investment to enable delivery.
- 2.2 Allocate a sum of up to £300,000 from the Council's New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve to support future funding applications submitted by the Council and partner organisations to improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal towpath corridor between Gargrave, Skipton and the Aire Valley.
- 2.3 Allocate a sum of up to £100,000 from the Council's New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve to support measures that are designed enhance heritage and visitor interpretation in the Leeds & Liverpool Canal corridor.
- 2.4 Subject to the approval of recommendation 2.2 and 2.3, give delegated authority to the Director of Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Lead Member for Enterprising Craven and the Strategic Manager (Financial Services) to agree how the monies are assigned.
- 2.5 Allocate a sum of £10,000 from the Council's New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve to undertake feasibility and initial design options for the replacement of Gallows Bridge, Skipton.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 As at Minute POL.384/11-12 it was resolved that the Council establish an Infrastructure Reserve to allocate some of the funds it receives from Government through the New Homes Bonus.
- 3.2 The purpose of the Infrastructure Reserve is “to identify and invest in projects that will improve the quality of the District’s infrastructure for the economic needs of the people of Craven whilst sustaining its unique heritage, beauty and character.” In addition, at Minute POL.384/11-12 it was agreed that 65% of the New Homes Bonus received by this Council will be allocated to the Infrastructure Reserve.
- 3.3 Through the Infrastructure Reserve, at Minute POL.408/11-12, four delivery themes were established to focus available funding. Members will be aware one of the four themes established is the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Corridor designed “to capitalise on the value of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal as a strategic waterway and sustainable transport corridor by providing opportunities for Craven’s businesses and residents to benefit from the potential it provides.” Within the Infrastructure Reserve 28% of the funds received has been allocated to this theme.
- 3.4 As the first stage in developing activity for the Canal Corridor, Policy Committee at Minute POL.488/12-13 approved a contribution of £10,000 to produce an Access Development Plan that defines a coherent strategy for the improvement of sustainable access in the Leeds & Liverpool Canal corridor.
- 3.5 Through a partnership led by the District Council, Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity was appointed to produce the Plan with a first draft issued in late 2013. The Plan highlights a strategic corridor linking the current termination of the National Cycle Network in Bradford District to the border with the Pendle District and access points to the National Park at Skipton and Gargrave.
- 3.6 In their conclusion Sustrans recommend the stretch of towpath in the south of the District between Skipton and Silsden as a priority for delivery with the potential to extend this activity to Gargrave. This recommendation is based on the opportunity to increase the level of utility walking and cycling by residents and visitors. As a result the Council has been working in partnership with the National Park Authority, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Canal & River Trust and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to develop proposals for this section.
- 3.7 Appendix A presents an extract from the Access Development Plan outlining the proposed delivery approach for improvement of the Canal towpath and linkages into neighbouring communities.

4.0 **Recent Activity**

- 4.1 Following completion of the draft Access Development Plan there has been good progress in securing investment to deliver the proposed works. This includes securing over £1m of investment in the plan area from the Department of Transport

and good links made between the Council, Canal & River Trust and neighbouring authorities.

Cycle Ambition Fund (National Parks)

- 4.2 As at minute POL.514/13-14 the Council and Canal & River Trust submitted a bid to the Cycle Ambition Fund (National Parks) to upgrade the quality of the towpath between Skipton and Gargrave. Unfortunately the bid was not approved with the Department for Transport (DfT) citing the lack of a coherent Plan for future delivery as the reason for refusal. This issue has now been addressed by the Council funding and leading on the development of the Access Development Plan.
- 4.3 In January 2015 the DfT issued a second call for projects. With a short timescale for applications the Council and Canal & River Trust submitted an application covering the stretch of towpath from Gallows Bridge, Skipton south to the Bradley Swing Bridge. Based on the funding criteria of encouraging utility cycling in and around National Parks this was seen as the most suitable stretch of towpath due its proximity to Snaygill Industrial Estate, the Horse Close estate and Skipton town centre.
- 4.4 In February 2015 the DfT announced that the bid had been successful and £450,000 allocated to deliver the scheme. A further £15,000 plus in kind project management support was provided by the Canal & River Trust. Although there has been no direct financial investment by the District Council to the delivery of this scheme the Council has committed officer time in facilitating the submission of the bid, production of the business case and seeking support from partner organisations.
- 4.5 Project planning is currently underway by the Canal & River Trust with delivery expected to commence in autumn 2015. The scheme will be constructed using 'Centrak'; self-binding gravel surface that is sympathetic to the canal environment. An example of the surfacing is shown in the image at Appendix B.

Cycle City Ambition 2

- 4.6 In January 2015 a bid that included investment on the Canal towpath was submitted by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The programme, City Connect 2 builds on previous activity in West Yorkshire and includes investment to deliver towpath improvements centred on Silsden. At this stage the extent of the works and whether they will impact directly on the Craven District is unknown but the works will contribute to the delivery of the cross-border Access Development Plan.
- 4.7 To encourage delivery that benefits Craven a written request has been made to the Combined Authority to ensure they consider extending the scheme as far as possible from Silsden into Craven. As with the Cycle Ambition Fund (National Parks) the Council has not directly invested in this work but has supported partners including City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority in the development of the bid.

- 4.8 The Combined Authority is currently developing their plans for delivery of the £22.1m programme which is due for completion by March 2018.
5. Benefits of Improvement to the Leeds & Liverpool Canal
- 5.1 Since its construction the Canal and associated towpath has undergone much change. Originally built to enable the transportation of goods by barge the role of the towpath as a recreational and utility corridor has increased in prominence along with associated impact on health, environmental and transport issues.
- 5.2 Health – through research by the Canal & River Trust to support the Skipton to Bradley funding bid cardiovascular disease and premature female mortality was highlighted as above average in two areas of the South Skipton Ward. Advice from North Yorkshire Public Health also note increased levels of walking and cycling can contribute to reducing the risk coronary heart disease and type 2 diabetes. In addition increased activity directly relates to the number of people using open spaces in Craven providing opportunities for greater social interaction and mental wellbeing. Both successful schemes above have committed to working with complementary initiatives e.g. South Skipton Project and North Yorkshire Public Health to achieve this. It is expected this will continue through future initiatives.
- 5.3 Transport – adjacent to the Canal the main alternative for cycling and walking is a series of busy A-roads including the A65, A629 and A6131. With Average Annual Daily Flows (2014) of 23,131 recorded using the A629 near Skipton an improved towpath will provide a viable, traffic free alternative. In addition a high quality route through the south of the District will increase opportunities to make cycling and walking the default choice for short journeys contributing to the Government’s ‘door to door’ strategy to encourage greater integration of sustainable transport options.
- 5.4 Environmental – as a linear corridor an improved towpath provides greater opportunities for access to nature and the wider countryside, including connections with the National Park. Within their assessment of transport schemes the Department for Transport refer to ‘journey ambience’ as a measure of improvement. Increasing opportunities for users to access the Canal as an alternative to the highway will contribute to making pedestrian and cycle commuting a more enjoyable experience.
- 5.5 Recognising that towpath access works may affect the character and environment of the Canal the Canal & River Trust has produced a Towpath Design Guide to understand and mitigate the impact proposed works may have on other users and the environment. This guide will be considered in all schemes developed in Craven.
6. Contribution to Future Access Improvements
- 6.1 Considering the towpath in a wider context the investment noted above contributes to the development of 47km traffic free route along the Canal from the centre of Leeds, through Bradford to the Craven District and the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

- 6.2 Regionally this route is substantially complete with investment taking place over a number of phases. Locally, the 6.6km stretch of towpath between Bradley, across the border with Bradford to Silsden is an unimproved gap in the infrastructure with a poor quality and often off camber, muddy towpath.
- 6.3 Through the Council's continued work with partners this gap has been recognised as a priority and one that would complete a traffic free greenway between Skipton and South Craven avoiding a busy stretch of the A629. As such the scheme is being progressed in partnership with Bradford Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority as pipeline activity that could be considered for future DfT investment.
- 6.4 As a navigation authority the Canal & River Trust's primary purpose is to maintain a navigable waterway. Investment in infrastructure such as towpath improvement is a secondary function and one that requires external investment to enable delivery. Where improvement has been made in neighbouring areas this has usually been through the Local Authority acting as a catalyst to facilitate delivery.
- 6.5 As Members will be aware many funding programme require match funding from third party organisations. During the next 12 to 18 months it is likely that funding programmes similar to those that have seen recent successes for the District will be issued requesting project proposals. This may include further programmes from the Department for Transport or calls through the European Structural and Investment Funds.
- 6.6 To encourage and facilitate delivery within the Craven District having local match funding in place has the potential to significantly strengthen a bid submission. With regard to the New Homes Bonus funding bids submitted in partnership with organisations such as the Combined Authority or Canal & River Trust can be supported by the Council with a contribution in principle but often this does not give the flexibility or reassurance to benefit from short notice funding opportunities.
- 6.7 It is therefore recommended that a contribution of up to £300,000 is allocated from the Council's New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve to act as match funding in support of future funding applications from partner organisations to improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal towpath corridor between Gargrave, Skipton and the Aire Valley.
- 6.8 At this stage it is not possible to detail the scope of these works in terms of the size of grant and the applicant organisation but it is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Director of Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Lead Member for Enterprising Craven and Strategic Manger (Financial Services) to agree the investment of the Council's contribution within the geographic boundaries noted above to give best value in delivery of the aim of the Infrastructure Reserve.

Leeds & Liverpool Canal Business Engagement and Heritage Interpretation

- 6.9 Both the Infrastructure Reserve Programme Management Document and the Skipton Town Hall Business Plan refer to the opportunity for the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Corridor to provide greater learning and heritage interpretation for residents and visitors.
- 6.10 The Skipton Town Hall Business Plan outlines a vision for a building that will facilitate the creation of a 'hub' bringing together Skipton tourist information centre, Craven Museum and partners across the District to provide information, education and entertainment regarding the history and heritage of the area.
- 6.11 Radiating from the Town Hall across the District, the hub will connect with a series of spokes that will add value by encouraging people to visit heritage features, including the Canal with the aim of increasing visitor understanding, length of stay and ultimately visitor spend.
- 6.12 With investment in access improvements and 2016 marking the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal the provision of heritage interpretation as a Town Hall 'spoke' will add value to the Canal environment and the user experience.
- 6.13 There are numerous approaches for the delivery of heritage interpretation but could include historical development of the Canal, understanding of the reasons behind the chosen route alignment, the construction process and interpretation of key features or locations along the Canal such as the Springs Branch, the East Marton double arched bridge, and Gargrave locks.
- 6.14 It is anticipated that this activity will be delivered in partnership with the Canal & River Trust to benefit from their previous experience of delivering similar programmes. Local organisations across the District will also be invited to ensure appropriate, accurate content and ownership of the material.
- 6.15 Adjacent to the Canal through the District are businesses that directly benefit from boaters, fishermen, walkers and cyclists as part of their offer. As a key feature in the District's visitor economy capitalising on the Canal is vital and offers greater opportunities for diversification, collaboration, networking and improved facilities.
- 6.16 Through investment from the Richard Desmond Foundation the Canal & River Trust has secured funding for the development of the first coast to coast canoe route in England; crossing the Pennines from Liverpool to Goole. Although providing opportunities for tourism development the project will initially focus on health and wellbeing issues related to young people, community wellbeing and environmental restoration.
- 6.17 In support of this activity and as part of the Rural Development Programme for England the Yorkshire Dales LEADER programme, the Council is working with partners to develop a co-operation project that will encourage business diversification and collaboration. Based on the Canal corridor this activity will

support the canoe trail but will focus on the socio-economic activity, providing business opportunities, engagement and diversification via the creation of a canoe tourism business network.

- 6.18 Locally there is the opportunity for the Council to enhance this provision through the delivery of business support opportunities including workshops, awareness raising activities and promotional material. Ultimately the outcome of this activity will be to encourage the creation of jobs and growth in order to facilitate economic sustainability and ultimately the canal's long term conservation.
- 6.19 To enable delivery of heritage interpretation and business support it is therefore recommended that a contribution of up to £100,000 is allocated from the New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve.
- 6.20 In addition it is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Director of Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Lead Member for Enterprising Craven and Strategic Manger (Financial Services) to agree on the detail of how this investment is allocated.

7. Related Activity

Gallows Bridge

- 7.1 Adjacent to Skipton Bus Station Gallows Bridge is a busy Canal crossing providing the most direct route between Skipton Bus and Railway Station. The bridge, owned by the Canal & River Trust has been the location of a number of accidents in recent years resulting in some improvements being made to the structure. Following a general update meeting the Canal & River Trust regard the structure as being in a reasonable condition and currently have no plans to consider any further improvement or replacement.
- 7.2 Although in a reasonable condition the bridge has stepped access on both sides limiting accessibility for those wanting to access the town centre from the Council's car park. In addition, the utilitarian structure lacks aesthetic design and does not contribute greatly to the quality of the Skipton Conservation Area.
- 7.3 Furthermore, Gallows Bridge, combined with Black Walk provides the most direct route between the Bus and Rail Station. The alternative route via Swadford Street, Belmont Bridge and Broughton Road adds to the distance for users wishing to transfer between modes of transport. More locally those with limited mobility wishing to access the town centre from Cavendish Street car park are required to take a longer, indirect route. The opportunity to remove this obstacle would help alleviate these constraints when moving around the town centre.
- 7.4 Although the Canal & River Trust have no plans for improvement or replacement of Gallows Bridge the Council has the ability to be proactive in commissioning initial design ideas and feasibility work for the future replacement of the structure. This development work would then place the bridge in a good position to benefit from future funding opportunities.

- 7.5 The Canal & River Trust have noted that they would be, in principle, happy to support further work by the Council to investigate potential alternatives to the current bridge structure.
- 7.6 In support of this opportunity it is recommended that a sum of £10,000 is allocated from the New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve to consider the future options for the structure, including design ideas, costs, and future responsibilities.
- 7.7 Consideration of Gallows Bridge would also contribute to work proposed by Northern Rail using £108,000 secured from the Department for Transport and the s.106 contribution for the Skipton West Ward to upgrade the quality of the Black Walk.
- 7.8 Leading on this development work would not commit the Council to delivering further activity or increase the Councils responsibility for Gallows Bridge.

Future Updates

- 7.9 If Members were minded to approve the recommendations in this report it is suggested that a six monthly update on progress is given to Members through the Member Information Bulletin.

8. Implications –

Financial and Value for Money (vfm) Implications –

Canal Corridor Funding Status

- 8.1 Table 1. below details the current approved and potential investment in the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Corridor.

Table 1. Canal Corridor Current and Potential Commitments

No	Activity	Funding Source	Funding Recipient	Funding Value	Status
1	Production of Access Development Plan	Craven District Council Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Bradford Council	Craven District Council	£14,000	Access Development Plan Complete
2	Skipton to Bradley Improvement	Department for Transport, Canal & River Trust	Canal & River Trust	£465,000	Funding approved – construction to start Autumn 2015
3	Cycle City Ambition 2 (CityConnect2 - area surrounding Silsden)	Department for Transport	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	£500,000	Funding for CCAG2 programme approved
4	Ongoing delivery	Craven District	TBC	up to	Being considered

	of the Access Development Plan	Council Various (unknown)		£300,000 plus match funding	as part of this report
5	Heritage interpretation on the Canal network	Craven District Council	TBC	up to £100,000	Being considered as part of this report
6	Improvement to Black Walk	Department for Transport Craven District Council	Northern Rail	£120,000	Funding approved – feasibility being discussed with Network Rail and Sustrans
7	Investigation of Gallows Bridge	Craven District Council	Craven District Council	£10,000	Being considered as part of this report
TOTAL				£1,509,000	

8.2 In addition to the investment detailed above the Council has invested officer time in developing the Access Development Plan and the funding bids used to secure capital investment through partner organisations.

New Homes Bonus Contribution

8.3 As at Minute POL.384/11-12 it was resolved that 65% of the New Homes Bonus received by this Council will be allocated to the Infrastructure Reserve.

8.4 As the level of investment available to commit through the Infrastructure Reserve is directly related to income received from Government it was agreed that decisions will only be presented to Members once sufficient funding has been confirmed.

8.5 The current balance of the New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve is £841,511. Table 2 below shows the current uncommitted balance allocated to the reserve and potential financial commitments presented at this committee.

Table 2. New Homes Bonus Funding Availability

	Current uncommitted balance	Total potential commitments at this Committee	Balance after potential commitments
Infrastructure Reserve	£841,511	£510,000	£331,511

8.6 If Members were minded to approve the recommendations of this report and all the additional commitments presented to this Committee the remaining balance of the Infrastructure Reserve will be £331,511.

8.7 With regard to the Leeds & Liverpool Canal Corridor theme Table 3 below outlines the total contributions, commitments and the available balance over the initial six years of the Infrastructure Reserve (2011/12 to 2016/17).

Table 3. Leeds & Liverpool Canal Theme Funding

Item	Amount
In principle allocation (based on 15/16 data)	£609,598
Potential commitment in this report	£410,000
Balance (based on 15/16 data)	£199,598

Legal Implications -

- 8.8 Upon finalisation of a financial contribution to a scheme the Council will enter into written agreements with the most appropriate delivery organisations.
- 8.9 The agreement will detail the terms and conditions under which the Council's financial contribution is made with specific reference to the maximum contribution available from the Council, that this financial contribution will not be increased for and that the Council will not accept responsibility for any on-going maintenance on infrastructure not located on its assets

Contribution to Corporate Priorities

- 8.10 The activity to be delivered through this activity directly delivers the Council Plan 2015 – 2018 through the Enterprising Craven priority.
- 8.11 Specifically the activity will play an important role in improving infrastructure in the District by regenerating and revitalising the stretch of Leeds & Liverpool canal corridor within Craven.

Risk Management

- 8.12 There are no significant risks as a result of approving the recommendations in this report.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 8.13 Equality issues arising from the implementation of each action contained in the report will be further considered as required at implementation stage.

9. Consultations with Others –

Canal & River Trust, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Sustrans

10. Access to Information : Background Documents –

Draft Leeds & Liverpool Canal Access Development Plan

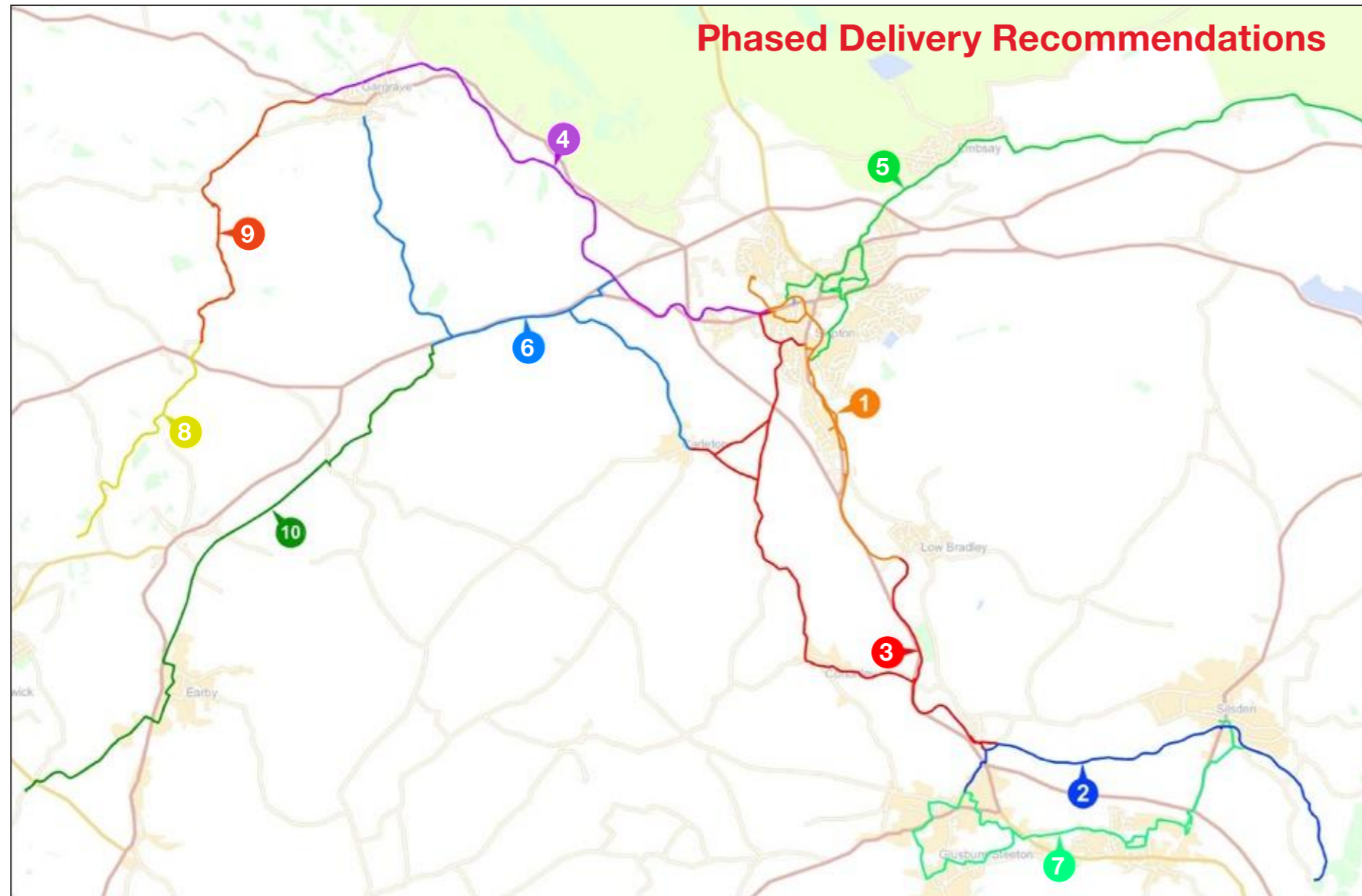
11. **Author of the Report** - Andrew Laycock; Project Delivery Officer; telephone 01756 706220; e-mail: alaycock@cravenc.gov.uk

Note : Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.

12. **Appendices** –

Appendix A – Access Development Plan Extract – Phasing Plan
Appendix B – Indicative Towpath Surfacing.

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Phase	Scheme description	Cost Estimate
1	Skipton to Bradley Towpath upgrade linking Skipton, Snaygill, Low Bradley and Aireville Park	£ 727,000
2	Kildwick to Silsden and beyond Towpath upgrade to link Silsden, Kildwick and Cross Hills to NCN69	£ 869,000
3	Bradley to Kildwick Towpath upgrade and linking Kildwick, Cononley, Carleton to Sipton and NCN69	£ 664,000
4	Gargrave to Skipton Towpath upgrade linking Skipton and Gargrave to NCN68 and WOTR	£ 1,623,000
5	Skipton to Embsay Linking Skipton and Embsay with Bolton Abbey	£ 217,000
6	Broughton Hall Linking Carleton and Gargrave via A59 shared-use footway	£ 431,000
7	Airedale Hospital Linking Glusburn, Sutton-in--Craven and Steeton to NCN69	£ 376,000
8	Border to East Marton Towpath upgrade to improve NCN68 alignment between B'wick and Gargrave	£ 467,000
9	East Marton to Gargrave Towpath and Bridlepath upgrade to improve NCN68 alignment between B'wick and Gargrave	£ 411,000
10	Earby to Broughton Linking Earby with Gargrave and Skipton using the disused railway	£ 515,000
	TOTAL	£ 6,300,000

14. Phased Delivery Recommendations

At this stage it is difficult to come up with a realistic programme of works as there is no confirmed source of funding. This document has been produced to enable discussion, revision and adoption of the proposals. Once this has been done, elements of the project can be put forward for the sources of funding identified in the previous section. It is therefore sensible to break the whole project into phases for ease of delivery. Each phase should be able to stand alone, be useful in its own right and achieve high quality standards so that it creates the catalyst required to develop the next phase.

By way of illustration, the project could be broken down in to the phases shown opposite.

The cost estimates have been derived from the detailed cost estimate sheets provided in this document. They are approximations only at the time of writing of this report and each element will need to be verified by the scheme delivery body.

The phasing map illustrates the scheme broken into the phases described in the table. It is important to imagine the scheme as each phase

develops. There are several suggestions within this document of interim routes which should be considered. For example, if phase 1 and 2 have been delivered successfully, then it would be advantageous to advise users to travel with care along Main Street and Crag Lane to join the two completed phases. This interim route can remain until the development of phase 5.

15. Conclusion

This report sets out the proposals in some detail for creating a high quality network centred around the upgraded towpath of the Leeds Liverpool Canal. The towpath in itself would undoubtedly become a popular route. This is an exciting opportunity to create sustainable transport infrastructure that will benefit utility, leisure and tourist journeys.

Implementation of the schemes as proposed in this access development plan will provide the infrastructure to enable a significant change in travel behaviour in the Craven, Bradford and Pendle areas.

Policy Committee (28th July 2015)

INFRASTRUCTURE RESERVE: LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL

Appendix B: Indicative Towpath Surfacing

