

FALKIRK COUNCIL

**Subject: SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT:
RIVER CARRON CONNECTIONS**
Meeting: EXECUTIVE
Date: 17 MARCH 2015
Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) has contacted a number of public and third sector organisations, including Falkirk Council, seeking potential partners in a 5-year European Regional Development Fund project led by SNH entitled: SNH Green Infrastructure Project.
- 1.2 This report provides a summary of a proposal associated with the River Carron corridor that could form part of the wider SNH Green Infrastructure Project programme, and seeks approval in principle to:
 - a) liaise with SNH and partners to develop and submit a proposal, and;
 - b) seek match funding, including applications to a number of external funding bodies, to support the project proposal.

2. THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The SNH Green Infrastructure Fund is targeted at urban areas - settlements of over 10,000 people - and aims to create multi-functional green networks with a significant impact to improve quality of life, health and physical activity, economic growth and investment, and opportunities for community engagement particularly for those in the most deprived neighbourhoods. As this fund is European, standard EU eligibility criteria will apply, and the Scottish Government and SNH are currently clarifying additional eligibility criteria for this round of funding.
- 2.2 In consultation with potential partners and the portfolio holders for Environment and Culture, Leisure and Tourism, the following proposal has emerged as having suitable components and potential match funding, while meeting the aims of Falkirk Council, partner organisations, SNH and the European Regional Development Fund.
- 2.3 The River Carron corridor is a major green infrastructure asset in the Falkirk Council area which runs close to many local communities and nearby attractions. Much work has already been supported by the Council through its involvement with the Communities Along the Carron Association, which up to now has focused up stream around the Denny area. A recent flood alleviation scheme has also been completed at Dunipace. To continue with this work it is proposed that an initial proposal be put to SNH seeking a significant financial contribution through the Green Infrastructure Project programme to further enhance and develop the River Carron corridor as a local green infrastructure resource.

- 2.4 Officers have carried out initial project development in consultation with SNH and a range of partners including: Scottish Canals, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Communities Along the Carron Association, Sustrans and Falkirk Community Trust.
- 2.5 Projects have been packaged on the advice of SNH into a single proposal for the Falkirk Council area entitled *River Carron Connections*. This proposal focuses mainly on the lower River Carron area and the neighbouring Helix north site.
- 2.6 Four key greenspace themes have emerged from discussions with SNH and partners including:
- Access and biodiversity enhancements along the river;
 - Arts, interpretation and heritage of the river and local area;
 - Natural water and flood management opportunities along the river; and
 - Helix Park enhancements in the Helix north site along the river.
- 2.7 A list of potential projects in these four themes can be seen in the Appendix. It is stressed however that the proposal is at the formative stage and may yet be subject to further change on the advice of partners.

3. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

- 3.1 SNH's Green Infrastructure Project may provide up to 40% towards total costs. The current overall project total of a *River Carron Connections* proposal could be c£2.2m. The 60% match funding would require to be met by a combination of Falkirk Council, its partners and other external funding bodies.
- 3.2 At this stage 'in principle' commitment only is sought as funding from the Council and partners can only be conditional in the present financial climate. However, the funding opportunity presented by the Green Infrastructure Project is considered worthwhile pursuing, albeit that proposals will have to be tailored to match the financial circumstances prevailing at the relevant time.
- 3.3 At this point it is assumed that any Falkirk Council contribution would have to be met from existing budgets. Although still to be confirmed in discussions with SNH, officer time spent on the project could be costed as part of any contribution.
- 3.4 The deadline for any bid proposal is anticipated to be in April. SNH expects to announce its decisions on bids across Scotland in June 2015.

4. IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Policy - the proposal accords with Falkirk Council's Local Plan (2010), Proposed Local Development Plan, Falkirk Greenspace: a Strategy for our Green Network (2013), Open Space Strategy, Local Transport Strategy (2014) and Core Paths Plan (2010).
- 4.2 Legal Implications - there may be land issues arising from projects which will require resolution before implementation. If successful, joint working agreements with delivery partners would be needed.

- 4.3 Financial Implications – Falkirk Council contributions will be from existing budgets. Recharging of staff costs to project management would be investigated and pursued as part of the proposal.
- 4.4 Personnel Implications – it is envisaged that project management and delivery would be undertaken by partner organisations and Falkirk Council officers as appropriate.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 It is recommended that the Executive:

- a) approves the River Carron Connections proposal in principle for submission to SNH's Green Infrastructure Project; and
- b) authorises the Director of Development Services to co-operate with partner agencies and complete the submission.

.....

Director of Development Services

Date: 11 February, 2015

Contact Officer: Mandy Brown - Planning Officer (Environment) ext: 4716

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

River Carron Connections – potential projects

Access and Biodiversity Enhancements

- Russell Park, Stenhousemuir
- Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve
- Proposed new River Carron bridge near Carronshore
- Rope Walk, Grangemouth Old Town
- Grangemouth Old Town Pipe Bridge

Arts, Interpretation and Heritage

- River Carron Trail
- Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve

Natural Water & Flood Management

- Flood Protection Scheme - wetland
- Abbots Road Burn

Helix Park Enhancements

- Wetland
- Biodiversity Enhancements
- Orientation and Interpretation
- Environmental Play