

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Royal William Yard Coast Path Link
Committee: Cabinet
Date: 13 November 2012
Cabinet Member: Councillor Vincent
CMT Member: Anthony Payne (Director for Place)
Author: Kathryn Deeney, Green Infrastructure Team Leader
Contact: Tel: 01752 304351
email: kathryn.deeney@plymouth.gov.uk
Ref: KD/RWY
Key Decision: No
Part: I

Purpose of the report:

Plymouth City Council has been offered a grant of £237,000 by Natural England to facilitate the delivery of a project to re-route the South West Coast Path (SWCP) through Devil's Point Park to connect this area to the nationally important Grade I Listed Royal William Yard (RWY). Delivering the important link between RWY and the Park will involve constructing a stairway into the Yard that will enable the SWCP to be connected all the way around the peninsula on which the Park and the RWY are situated. Providing this complete route around the peninsula will deliver a long held aspiration to connect these two popular features, enable communities to be directly linked to the attractions within RWY and enable greater use of the Park.

Constructing the staircase and re-routing the SWCP around the headland will enable better use of the outstanding natural and historical assets of both the Park and the Yard and promote the economic and cultural vitality of the area. It will also provide a stunning new visitor attraction for the SWCP that will enhance the visitor experience within this part of Plymouth. The multiple benefits that would result from the delivery of the project are the reason that Natural England have offered to fund the works as part of their role to improve and promote a network of National Trails. The excellent working relationship developed with Natural England as part of the Plymouth Green Infrastructure Project has helped to secure the funding for Plymouth rather than it being spent in other areas of the country.

The funding would be provided by Natural England as a grant payable on delivery of the project and the access link must be in place by the end of this financial year. This places a very challenging time scale on the delivery of the works.

To enable the project to be completed within the specified time scales it is proposed that we utilise Urban Splash as a contractor to deliver the works. Urban Splash has already secured planning permission and listed building consent for the coast path link and has produced design work for the project. As the developers of the RWY and having previously developed the proposals for the access link, Urban Splash are in a unique position to support delivery of the works. They are also very supportive of the proposal as it would open up a new route into the Yard and enable them to support the local community's aspirations for the area.

As the full amount of funding needed to deliver the project is being provided by external sources the Council will not have to contribute financial to the project. The role the Council will play is to facilitate delivery of the project and manage the grant funding. Plymouth City Council would retain ownership of the new asset (the stairway and new section of coast path) but these features would be added to the existing lease the Council has with Urban Splash so they would be responsible for maintenance.

The delivery of this new access link would provide economic, social and environmental benefits and would deliver a long held aspiration of the local community. In the current situation the Council is the only organisation that can facilitate delivery of this exciting project.

Corporate Plan 2012-2015:

This project directly supports the City Vision by enhancing the waterfront and enabling residents and visitors to have greater opportunities to access the exceptional natural and historic assets the area offers.

Delivery of the coast path link supports Plymouth City Council's Corporate Plan. The delivery of high quality access routes that link key natural and built attractions and provide sustainable transport opportunities supports the delivery of the growth agenda and the development of sustainable communities.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land

The total cost of delivering the new coast path link is £250k. The Council will not be required to support the project financially but will be required to manage the grant that will be provided by Natural England and ensure compliance with the grant conditions. The risk of not being able to claim the grant, due to non delivery of the project within the time scales detailed in the grant conditions, will be passed to Urban Splash, as the delivery agent, within the contractual agreements.

Natural England has offered to contribute £237k towards the project with the remaining funding provided by the SWCP Association (£10k) and the Friends of Devils Point Park (£3K).

The Council will also need to commit Officer time to support the coordination of the works and the management of the grant. The Green Infrastructure and Waterfront Teams based within Planning Services and Project Delivery Team within Transport and Infrastructure will provide this resource.

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion:

Delivery and maintenance of high quality access routes that link natural and historic assets will help to create sustainable communities and enhance people's quality of life. Delivery of this access link has been an aspiration of the local community for a long time.

Unfortunately due to the topography and site constraints it is not possible to create an access link that is accessible for all. It will however open up this area and enable more people to experience the attractions that both the Yard and Park offer.

Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

1. Amend the Capital Programme to include the Royal William Yard Coast Path Link Project.

Reason: To enable the delivery of the project Plymouth City Council must administer the grant and the project therefore needs to be added to the Capital Programme.

2. Agree to accept a grant from Natural England to the value of £237,000 to enable delivery of the Coast Path link.

Reason: Plymouth City Council is the only organisation to whom Natural England will provide the grant funding to enable this project to be delivered.

3. Agree to the inclusion of the new staircase and section of SWCP onto the Council's asset register and instruct officers to add this asset to the existing lease agreement between Plymouth City Council and Urban Splash.

Reason: The grant will deliver a new asset on Plymouth City Council land and therefore needs to be added to the asset register. However, to ensure the Council does not incur an increased maintenance liability as a result of the project it is proposed that the asset is added to the existing lease the Council has with Urban Splash for the RWY area.

4. Agree the procurement strategy for delivering the project and provide delegated authority to enable the signing of the contracts.

Reason: It is proposed that Urban Splash is utilised as a contractor for the works as a single source supplier due to their unique position to enable the project to be delivered in the time scales required. The detailed contracts are being drawn up and delegated authority is sought for the Assistant Director of Development to sign these contracts when they are complete in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for the Environment.

Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:

If the Council does not agree to accept the grant from Natural England and facilitate the delivery of the coast path link to RWY this project will not happen. Natural England has made it clear that it will only provide the grant funding to Plymouth City Council. There is a long held aspiration to deliver the coast path link but there is currently no alternative delivery mechanism available other than that detailed in this report. Any delay in making a decision on this matter will also result in the project being undeliverable due to the very tight delivery time scales imposed by Natural England.

Background papers

None

Sign off:

Fin	PlaceF PC121 3 009	Leg	JAR/1 5980	HR		Corp Prop		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member											
Have you consulted the Cabinet Member(s) named on the report? Yes											

I Background

- 1.1 Royal William Yard and Devil's Point Park form two halves of a narrow peninsula extending out into Plymouth Sound, however there is a high defensive wall around the Yard and no current link between these two areas. As a result, rather than being able to walk around the peninsula, there are two dead end spur paths off the South West Coast Path (SWCP) route and an impassable barrier between two attractions that should complement, support and promote each other.
- 1.2 Both Royal William Yard and Devil's Point Park are fantastic assets and providing a connection between them would unlock their potential to enhance the peninsula's offer to City residents and visitors as well as supporting local businesses. The Royal William Yard is an outstanding historical asset. Designated as Grade I Listed feature, the former victualling depot for the Royal Navy, designed by the architect John Rennie, is a key part of Britain's naval heritage. It is an outstanding feature that does not currently form part of the SWCP. Providing a coastal link to the site has been a long held aspiration, but the opportunity to do this has only recently been achievable as result of the redevelopment of the yard, which now includes cafés, bars, restaurants, a museum, art galleries, offices and flats. A significant proportion of this redevelopment was funded by SWRDA in recognition of the economic impact the development would have for Plymouth. It is therefore easy to conclude that delivering better access to the site with links to other City initiatives like the Waterfront Walk Way would also support economic growth.
- 1.3 Devil's Point Park has superb natural and historical assets overlooking the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Plymouth Sound. Part of the Park is a geological SSSI (Western King), the staircase and proposed path are outside of the SSSI boundary. The site adjoins the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries European Marine site which is one of the best dive sites in the UK. The site also provides one of the best vantage points for watching departing and arriving naval ships. The new access route will remove a physical barrier to accessing the area and will encourage more people to enjoy the views, natural heritage and links to the sea this waterfront green space provides. Delivering the SWCP link forms a key element in the wider vision for Devil's Point Park.

2 Funding the New Access Route

- 2.1 Natural England has offered a grant to Plymouth City Council of £237k to facilitate the delivery of the new Coast Path link. This is part of a series of works Natural England are leading to enhance National Trails across the Country. The project to link the SWCP around Devil's Point Park and through into Royal William Yard has been raised as a high priority because it will not only provide an excellent addition to the trail network, it will also provide significant benefits for local communities and the economic vitality of the area. The main condition on the funding is that it must be spent by the end of the financial year.
- 2.2 The complete cost of the project is £250k. The remaining £13k to deliver the project is being provided by the SWCP Association (£10k) and the Friends of Devil's Point Park (£3K).

3 Delivering the New Access Link

- 3.1 To enable a new access link between the Royal William Yard and Devil's Point Park, there would need to be a new section of path linking the existing SWCP to a new gateway. A new gateway will be made in the existing defensive wall around RWY and a new staircase will be installed down the wall into the Yard.

- 3.2 Urban Splash has already secured planning permission (application number 10/02094/FUL) and listed building consent (application number 10/02095/LBC) for the access link. There are planning conditions on both these permissions that still need to be discharged which relate to the design detail of the staircase i.e. finish, colour, handrail, completion of an archaeological investigation and details of the new footpath on Devil's Point Park. The work required to discharge these conditions will form part of the 5 month project to deliver the Coast Path link.
- 3.3 To deliver the new access link by the end of the financial year the following delivery programme will be followed:
- **November & December** – Detailed design work for the stairway, access through the wall and the footpath. The archaeological survey will also be completed. This work will enable the planning conditions to be discharged.
 - **December** – Order placed for the new staircase.
 - **January to March** – Delivery works including; installation of the staircase, creation of the access link in the wall and the construction of the new section of footpath.

4 Procurement Process

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Council utilises Urban Splash as a contractor for these works. They are in a unique position to deliver the project within the very tight time scales as they hold the lease for the land, they have already secured planning permission and listed building consent for the works and have some design work already complete. They have also previously tendered for the works for the Coast Path link and can therefore very quickly progress to delivery. Due to this specific situation the Council could procure Urban Splash as a single source supplier which would enable the project to progress quickly to ensure deadlines are met.

5 Long Term Maintenance

- 5.1 To ensure that the new coast path link remains an asset for the area in the long term it is important to secure high quality maintenance of the feature. To ensure this happens without increasing the maintenance liability for the Council, it is recommended that the staircase is added to the Council's asset register (as we own the freehold on the land), but that the asset is then added to the existing lease between Plymouth City Council and Urban Splash. This will ensure that Urban Splash maintain the coast path link to a high quality in the future.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The grant funding offered by Natural England provides a unique opportunity to deliver the Coast Path link between Royal William Yard and Devil's Point Park. This has been a long held aspiration and would provide benefits for the local community, the businesses within the Yard, would enhance visitor experience and improve an important City asset. Plymouth City Council has a key role to play in facilitating the successful delivery of the coast path link and will ensure that the dual attractions of the Park and Yard will in the future support and promote each other to improve the offer of the whole area.