

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

20 November 2012

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 VALLEY OF VISIONS

Summary

This report updates Members on progress with the Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) 'Valley of Visions' project.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Valley of Visions project is a £2.4m partially Heritage Lottery Funded Landscape Partnership Scheme which has operated in the Medway Valley since November 2007. It was initially due to run until November 2010, however early extensions were granted due to issues with legal agreements with key partners and recipients of work. As a result the Heritage Lottery Fund adjusted the end date to March 2012. The Council provided £75,000 of funding.

1.2 Update

1.2.1 As reported to members of the Advisory Board in May, the Valley of Visions project was due to come to an end in 2012. However in the final year of operation several projects achieved their outcomes with significantly less expenditure than anticipated. This was due to either alternative delivery methods being found; delivery by other partners resulting in no cost to Valley of Visions; or partners simply completing projects at a significant saving. As a result HLF has approved a further extension to the project until March 2013 in order to make use of this remaining funding to deliver projects that support the ongoing legacy of the scheme and to ensure that the outcomes of the work is sustained beyond the end of the grant funded period. The focus of these projects until March 2013 will be:

- Chalk Grassland Connectivity – Ensuring long-term management of restored areas of chalk grassland is secured and restoring additional areas (particularly around Birling) to enlarge the existing connected resource.
- Securing the Landscape – Adapting to changing use by 4x4's, maintaining PCSO presence on the ground and reacting to displacement activity.
- Riverside Shared Use Access – Delivering sections as identified in the 'Along the Water's Edge' document.

- Exploring the Past to Plan for the Future – Further delivery of a school-based community planning project, led by a consultant who formerly worked for Planning Aid.
- Medway Mosaics – Utilising data from Valley of Visions recent LiDAR (laser based aerial survey), developing a community archaeology project to ‘ground-truth’ the information.
- Landscape Heritage Hedgerow Project – Undertake further hedgerow restoration and creation projects as identified in Valley of Visions recent Landscape Heritage Hedgerow Survey
- White Pit (Medway) – Habitat management, access improvement and community development in former quarry.
- Enhanced Farm Environment Plan Service – Expansion of the Advisory Service targeting areas identified in consultation with Natural England.
- Small Projects – Additional small projects that arise in the final year.
- Medway Gap Celebration - Special Places – End of scheme celebration event.

1.2.2 This extension does not include any additional funding and from April 2013, alternative funding streams would need to be sought in order for the Valley of Visions project to continue. The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Valley of Visions teams are currently looking into such funding opportunities including INTERREG. Any additional funds would help them to maintain a presence, albeit reduced, in the valley from April 2013 and focus on three key projects areas. These are:

- Securing the Landscape – continuation of an established project aimed at reducing/preventing illegal access particularly from motorised vehicles and anti social behaviour within the Medway Valley. This project has been highly successful so far and a dedicated PCSO is now in place (funded by and housed at the Valley of Visions offices in Holborough).
- Along the Water’s Edge – the aim is to develop multiuser access paths along the East and West banks of the river, connecting Rochester to Maidstone, and potentially linking into the Medway Valley Walk to the south. Fully costed feasibility studies have been produced by Sustrans and Adams & Sutherland consultants for the stretches from Rochester to Aylesford and Allington Lock to Aylesford respectively. Some sections of the route have already been implemented through Valley of Visions work or other means but further work is needed to take this forward.
- Community liaison – continuing to work with local landowners and stakeholders to ensure the profile of the projects is maintained.

1.3 Site Visit

1.3.1 The Valley of Visions Manager, Rick Bayne, has offered to run a tour at the end of the project in Spring 2013 to demonstrate some of its key achievements if Members would be interested. The event is likely to be run one afternoon during the week on a date yet to be confirmed.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 The Council has provided £75,000 of funding, prior to the current financial year, to the Valley of Visions project during its operation, but no further financial contributions are currently being sought.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 None.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

Background papers:

contact: Jenny Knowles

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	This is an informative report updating Members on an on-going project.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	This is an informative report updating Members on an on-going project.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		N/A

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.