
HURWORTH TO NEASHAM FOOTPATH

Responsible Cabinet Member(s) - Councillor Nick Wallis Highways & Transport Portfolio

Responsible Director(s) - John Buxton, Director of Development & Environment

Purpose of Report

1. To seek the approval of Cabinet to the construction of a new footpath between Hurworth and Neasham.

Information and Analysis

2. For a number of years requests have been made by Hurworth and Neasham Parish Councils and a number of residents for the introduction of a footpath link between the villages of Hurworth and Neasham which would allow residents and visitors to walk more safely between the two places. This is especially important for Neasham residents wishing to access by foot services and schools in Hurworth. This road is also used by a number of visitors and occupiers of the Newbus Caravan Park.
3. In 2003 Castlebeck Care received planning permission for a residential home for autistic adults at Newbus Grange and under the Section 106 Agreement have lodged the sum of £25,000 with the Council as a contribution to the cost of design, construction and finishing of this footpath.
4. Discussions have taken place with Sustrans, the national sustainable transport charity that is at the forefront of promoting schemes to encourage people to walk and cycle, who are examining cycle tourism projects in the north east and specifically in the Tees Valley. One of the projects being examined relates to walking and cycling routes in and around Hurworth with emphasis on links to the schools and circular leisure/tourism routes. This initial work has identified the need to improve the pedestrian and cycle link between the villages and adds support to the request by the Parish Councils for such a scheme. Sustrans are satisfied that such an improvement would meet the criteria for the cycling tourism funding.
5. Consideration has been given to the requirements of horse riders following requests from horse riders. It is considered that setting back of the hedges to provide the footpath will improve visibility making the road safer for all users, including horse riders. Specific facilities are not provided on the rural roads across the Borough for horse riders and it is not intended to do so on this particular stretch of rural road.

6. The proposed scheme will provide a link between the existing footpaths at Newbus Cottage and Neasham Road in the vicinity of Old Penny Cottage. It comprises a nominal 1.8m wide grassed verge next to the carriageway plus a 2.5m wide hard paved surface with a grassed margin between the footpath and the field boundary. As mentioned above there are cyclists that use this length of road and it is proposed that the paved surface be designated as a shared use footpath/cycleway. This is a cost effective approach which is used widely across the country and will encourage more people to make the journey on foot or by cycle and make it safer for those who already do. It is also in line with objectives set out in the Local Transport Plan.
7. The proposed scheme requires the acquisition of 3150m² [0.77 acres] of agricultural land. If the scheme is approved it is anticipated that it could be carried out in early Autumn with completion to coincide with the opening of Newbus Grange.
8. The scheme does not require planning approval.

Outcome of Consultation

9. The proposal has the support of both Neasham and Hurworth Parish Councils and Sustrans.

Financial Implications

10. The estimated cost of the scheme is £115,000. This includes £25,000 which is being provided by Castlebeck Care. Sustrans will know very shortly how much funding they are able to contribute to the project but it is anticipated that it will at least provide the £15,000 needed to widen the footpath to accommodate shared use. £75,000 has been earmarked from existing highway capital and revenue budgets including a £5000 contribution from the Section 74 Income obtained as part of the overstay charges for unnecessarily prolonged occupation of the highways by public utilities which can be used for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services to, from and within their area. There is also an ongoing revenue cost of approximately £800 per annum for the cutting of the grassed verge which will be met from the highway budgets.

Legal Implications

11. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

12. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

13. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Decision Deadline

14. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Recommendations

15. It is recommended that:-

- (a) The proposal to construct a footpath between Hurworth and Neasham as set out in the report be approved.
- (b) The Director of Development & Environment be authorised to negotiate with the land owner and, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Resources Portfolio, agree terms.
- (c) The Borough Solicitor be authorised to document and complete the necessary documentation.
- (d) The Council construction funding package of £75,000 allocated from existing Capital and Revenue budgets and a £5000 contribution from Section 74 Income be approved.
- (e) Cabinet approve the release of the £25,000 contribution from Castlebeck Care.
- (f) The annual cost of approximately £800 for cutting the new grassed verge be met from the highway verge maintenance budget.

Reasons

16. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) To discharge a condition of the Planning Approval for Newbus Grange and to provide an improved pedestrian and cycle link between the two villages for use by residents and visitors that will encourage more people to walk and cycle and make it safer for those who already do.
- (b) To acquire the land required for the scheme.
- (c) To expedite the implementation of the scheme.
- (d) To provide an appropriate funding package to implement the scheme.
- (e) To provide funding to maintain the verge to an appropriate standard.

John Buxton
Director of Development & Environment

Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

John Ray/2746
CC