

Notes of actions and decisions

LCRP Full Partnership Meeting

Date Tuesday 11 August 2020

Venue Virtually via MS Teams

Attendees

Chair	Audrey Smith OBE AS (unable to participate so handed the Chair to Robin Yates RY)
Partner members	Robin Yates RY (LCT), Cllr Chris Hogg CHg (CCC), Cllr Nick Cotton NC (CCC), Cllr Dyan Jones DJ (SLDC), Ruth Leahy RL (SLDC), Sir Robert Atkins RA (IWA National), Nick Smith NS (CRT), Carrie House CH (CRT), Cllr Ian Blackman IB (Kendal TC), Mark McTigue MMc (Lancaster CC)
LCRP Project Management	Richard Frank RF (MBP/LCRP), Susannah Bleakley SB (MBP/LCRP)
Apologies	Wendy Humphreys WH (IWA L&C) – attempted login but didn't work, David Gibson DG (CCC), Peter Jones PJ (LCT), Daniel Greenhalgh DH (CRT), Doug Rathbone DR (SLDC),

1. Introductions & Apologies

RY took up the Chair due to AS experiencing technical difficulties with audio.

2. Previous meeting & actions

Previous minutes were approved as a fair and accurate record of the last meeting, with no actions requiring an update.

3. Financial overview

RF presented AS's financial overview paper.

Partners contributions – Letters are ready to go out asking for partner contributions and project management costs. These cover the period April 2020 to March 2021 but have been on hold during the pandemic. It was agreed these should be sent now.

ACTION: **RF/RL** to redraft letter to include request for contributions toward Towpath Trail feasibility study/report (see item 8) and send to all partners.

4. Branding

RF/CH presented the branding guidelines produced by Cactus Creative following competitive tendering. These were well received and a number of ways they could be used were discussed, including:

- A campaign that engages local businesses and attractions along the route to promote access to and from their business from the Towpath Trail for walkers and cyclists. This could use social media and print.
- A dedicated branded Towpath Trail page on the LCRP website.
- NLHF project news and materials using the branding.

Further ideas welcomed by RF/CH who will be having discussion with Cactus Creative and getting quotations. Examples will be shared.

5. Kendal to Natland

RL provided an update on this section. The SLDC grant remains allocated to this area, although a number of outstanding matters remain which have delayed work starting. This is under review and the proposal at 'Item 8' on the Agenda goes some way toward addressing this. There has been no further communication with landowners since just before lockdown, but if 'Item 8' is approved engagement will take place with every landowner along the Towpath Trail from Kendal to Lancaster.

The Burton Road drainage issue is finally moving forward. Separate costs for drainage and improvements are required and negotiations are ongoing. After a site meeting between CCC and SLDC, CCC have estimated costs for drainage repair and will provide these along with a quotation for the towpath improvements to SLDC.

6. Sport England

NS reported that in DG's absence he has been liaising with Chris from his team. CCC can deliver this programme but are seeking revised costs from a new contractor as there is a supplier issue. A grant extension until end of December has been approved by Sport England so the work should be completed in time (*all are reminded that publicity about this grant is embargoed by SE until works are completed*).

7. NLHF Project

CH provided a written report. MMc thanked CH for her involvement judging a model aqueduct project at his son's primary school, CH was very impressed by their knowledge of canal engineering and is looking forward to restarting school engagement if allowed when schools return.

Project extension – CH's contract and project was due to finish at the end of December 2020 but CRT are proposing an extension of employment contract for a further 9 months until September/October 2021. If possible, this is fantastic news as it will allow time to deliver outcomes, particularly community engagement which is easier during the summer months. CRT are hopeful this can be agreed with NLHF and internally soon.

Stainton Aqueduct works are near completion with contractors on site finishing the footpath works and it will be fully open shortly.

8. Chair position

This was to be AS's final meeting and RY has agreed to take on the role of Interim Chair until the end of the year/next two Executive meetings.

A number of examples of successful recruitment to regional Trustee positions were cited and it appears these unusual times have provided a high standard of applicants during recruitment. This could in part be due to people reassessing what is important to them and giving more priority to their local communities and giving of their time and skills to help others. It was recognised that these attitudes may change over time and that the role of a Chair is significantly different, requiring specific skills and experience along with a substantial commitment.

It was agreed that a small working group should be convened to plan a way forward and that professional advice may be required and our Terms of Reference revisited.

ACTION: **RY/RF/RL** to meet and move forward, reporting back to Exec with a recruitment plan.

9. A Suggested Way forward

RL/RF talked through the content of the paper that had been circulated proposing a feasibility study that would cover the entire Towpath Trail. This would provide an independent professional assessment with fully costed recommendations for the improvements required to provide a high quality walking and cycling experience for multiusers. This will provide an opportunity to engage with all landowners and to develop a plan that is realistically achievable based on their aspirations.

This will provide us with a coherent objective for the whole route that will help us to attract new funding and prioritise where existing funding should be invested. It will strengthen our cross boundary relationships between local authority areas and landowners and help us communicate our vision for the Lancaster Canal Towpath Trail in its entirety, demonstrating the links to the wider walking and cycling network.

An assessment and proposals for structures, such as disused bridges, will also be required to provide the full picture and to help landowners. Advice/support from LCT should be sought on this.

This proposal generated discussion about how this fits with other local and national policy and funding stream priorities which are increasingly putting focus on cultural, heritage, health and wellbeing, biodiversity and active transport investment for the future. Similar studies have been used to successfully secure large grant funding and South Lakeland Local Committee have recently funded a report by Sustrans for improvements required for cycling between Kendal and Milnthorpe with this in mind.

It was agreed that the proposal should be approved and taken forward.

In the first instance, partners will be asked for a contribution toward this, additional to the contribution for project management in the letter due to go out. If the funds are forthcoming a provider selection process will begin immediately with work to start ASAP and an interim progress report made available for the Winter Exec meeting.

ACTION: **RL/RF** to progress and report on developments to partners.

10. AOB / Members Reports

- **IWA national appoint new interim CEO** – RA informed the meeting that IWA have appointed Sarah O’Grady as their interim CEO on a 6 month contract to replace Neil Edwards who is stepping down after holding the role for over 20 years.
- **Kendal Vision** – RL shared a document produced by this private sector led group which identifies the Canal Head Basin in Kendal as an area they would like to attract major investment, with plans that include rewatering the basin and making the canal a major feature within the town again. This is familiar territory for many partners who were involved in previous proposals for the canal’s rewatering, but this new interest was viewed positively by all. SLDC as landowner are being involved and LCRP would like to be kept up to date of any developments.

ACTION: **RF/RL** to share the document and to arrange an invite for someone from Kendal Vision to attend a future meeting.

11. Special Item – Audrey Smith’s Retirement from Chair of LCRP

All partners want to express their sincere thanks to Audrey, who having only agreed to be ‘Interim’ Chair has worked tirelessly to support LCRP’s aims for the last 4 years! Everyone wishes Audrey the very best of health and happiness in the future and huge thanks for everything she has steered us to achieve.

12. Dates of future meetings

Tuesday 10 November 2020, 2.30pm – 4.30pm

Tuesday 9 February 2021, 2.30pm – 4.30pm

Unless circumstances change meetings will be via MS Teams.