

Report of: Environment Scrutiny Committee

To: Executive Board

Date: 18th December 2006

Item No:

Title of Report : Environment Scrutiny Committee Recommendations on Riverbank Maintenance



Summary and Recommendations



Purpose of report: To report the recommendations of Environment Scrutiny Committee following their discussions on riverbank maintenance.



Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Jean Fooks

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment Scrutiny Committee



Area(s) affected: All

Report Approved by: Councillor Sid Phelps, Environment Scrutiny Committee, Sarah Fogden, Finance and Asset Management, Emma Griffiths, Legal Services.



Policy Framework:



Recommendation(s): The Executive Board is asked to respond to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations:

1. If it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations outlined
2. If it agrees when will the recommendations be implemented and who will take the lead
3. If it disagrees why
4. If more information is required from other officers when that will be considered

1. Environment Scrutiny Committee Minutes

67. RIVERBANK MAINTENANCE

Andrew Davies gave a verbal update. Work had been carried out on the towpath during the summer, largely funded by the County Council with contributions by the City Council. Some money was to be included in the capital programme over the next two years to be spent on riverbank maintenance. An unsuccessful bid for lottery funding had been made by SUSTRANS. Ongoing maintenance work was reliant on further piecemeal financial contributions.

Members said that they welcomed the towpath improvement between Donnington Bridge and Folly Bridge.

The Committee recommended to the Executive Board that:

The stretch of towpath between Folly Bridge and Binsey is prioritised for repair given the poor state that it's in and taking into account the excellent work that has been done on the stretch between Donnington Bridge and Folly Bridge.

2. Background

2.1 The Environment Scrutiny Committee has previously conducted a review into riverbank maintenance, focussed on the Thames between Iffley Lock and Godstow Lock. Since that review was finished, work has been carried out on the towpath and riverbank between Donnington Bridge and Folly Bridge.

2.2 Whilst the section of towpath and riverbank between Iffley Lock and Folly Bridge has been improved, the section north of Folly Bridge hasn't had the same level of investment (it should be noted that the whole of the towpath and riverbank in Oxford requires significant investment, but that the money hasn't been available to carry out wholesale improvement). The Environment Scrutiny Committee would like the Executive Board to consider using funds in the capital programme set aside for riverbank maintenance, to improve sections north of Folly Bridge.

3. Recommendation

3.1 The Environment Scrutiny Committee recommends that the stretch of towpath between Folly Bridge and Binsey is prioritised for repair given the poor state that it's in and taking into account the excellent work that has been done on the stretch between Donnington Bridge and Folly Bridge.

4. Comments from the Strategic Director (Sharon Cosgrove)

- 4.1 The County Council has completed all their planned riverbank repair works between Folly Bridge and Donnington Bridge. The County had originally budgeted to do further work in the financial year 07/08, however this expenditure was brought forward to 06/07 to enable the works to continue using the same contractor south of Long Bridges. The total cost of the work was around £300k of which the City contributed £27k.
- 4.2 The County has not budgeted for further works, however the City have provisionally budgeted £50k for the two years 07/08 & 08/09 for riverbank repair works. This money may be sufficient to reopen the towpath north of Gasworks Bridge, which has been closed for a number of months. Alternatively the towpath on Fiddlers Island is in poor condition and could be repaired before it fails, although these works are likely to cost considerably more than the current budget allocation.

5. Comments from the Portfolio Holder (Councillor Jean Fooks)

- 5.1 The Portfolio Holder notes the comments from ESC and suggests that a report might be requested in 2007/08 setting out the estimated costs of the two towpath sections mentioned in 4.2, so that a decision can be reached on where the available funds are best spent. She suggests that the Central South and West Area Committee be asked to consider the report first.

6. Comments from Legal Services

- 6.1 Any expenditure on work to the riverbank and/or the towpath must be considered in the light of the statutory framework concerning highways and after consideration of whether the City Council is responsible for their maintenance. If the City Council is responsible there must be an assessment of the application of section 42 of the Highways Act 1980 and whether or not any funding may be available from the Oxfordshire County Council before the scheme can be approved. Previous works to the towpath have been funded by the County Council which involved a temporary termination of the section 42 arrangement to allow the County Council to carry out the first phase repair works to the banks from Folly Bridge to the University Boat House. The City Council agreed to the County Council carrying out the works and temporarily terminating the section 42 arrangement for the duration of the work.

Name and Contact Details of Report Author:

Andrew Davies, Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of the Environment Scrutiny Committee