



## **Communities Scrutiny Group**

**Thursday, 21 July 2022**

### **Access Agreement - Canal and River Trust Partnership**

## **Report of the Director – Neighbourhoods**

### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1. This report is to inform Councillors about how the Council is working with the Canal and River Trust (CRT) with particular focus on the Access Agreement between RBC and the CRT for the Grantham Canal. The access agreement runs from 1 April 2003 for 21 years, expiring on 31 March 2024.
- 1.2. A representative from the CRT will provide a presentation for the Group focusing on the outcomes of the current agreement with the Council and setting out their future strategic ambitions for an agreement for when the current agreement expires in 2024.
- 1.3. The Group is asked to comment on the CRT delivery on the current access agreement and provide comment regarding any future actions which would need to be developed and agreed throughout 2022 and 2023 to guide service delivery and budget setting for 2024.

### **2. Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Communities Scrutiny Group:

- a) Receive a presentation of the work that has been undertaken by the partnership with the Canal and River Trust and scrutinise the work undertaken under the current access agreement, and
- b) make comment on any future arrangements for when the current agreement expires in 2024.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1. The CRT has achieved the outcomes set out within the access agreement (see Appendix 1) and access to the route remains open to all users.
- 3.2. Scrutiny presents an early opportunity for Councillors to make comments on any future sustainable arrangements in line with the Council's Corporate Priorities for this important asset within the Borough of Rushcliffe ensuring it continues to contribute to wellbeing and biodiversity in the Borough.

#### **4. Supporting Information**

- 4.1. CRT was formed in 2012 in the largest ever transfer of public assets to the voluntary sector. The purpose of the Trust is to protect, manage and improve the nation's canals and river navigations for the millions who enjoy them.
- 4.2. The Council has been working with the CRT (formerly British Waterways) on Grantham Canal via various projects since 1992; upgrading and improving accessibility to all users of the tow path, a route which runs from Gamston to the edge of the Borough boundary with Melton, near Hickling.
- 4.3. The CRT own the Grantham Canal and tow path. Whilst it has a statutory duty to maintain and enhance it, through partnership working with the Council, both parties have sought to improve it further for the purposes of achieving a shared objective: to provide an 18km off-road, multi-user route through the Borough for pedestrians, cyclists, and users of manual and motorised wheelchairs/scooters.
- 4.4. In 2003, a partnership agreement between the parties secured provision of the future maintenance of access along the route, with the CRT undertaking works and the Council providing a financial contribution at an agreed rate. The agreement also provided a licence to the Council to grant open access to the route for all users.
- 4.5. The partnership has enabled the significant improvement of the route to be created, maintained and open to all users since 2003. It provides Rushcliffe residents with a non-road alternative means of accessing the Borough and a route for recreational use.

#### **5. Summary of the Partnership Agreement**

Under the terms of the Partnership Agreement, the CRT will:

- a) Give Rushcliffe Borough Council licence to use the multi-user path for recreational purposes for all pedestrians, cyclists, and wheelchair/mobility scooter users
- b) Maintain the surfaced multi-user path and verge, pedestrian and cycle routes and timber pedestrian footbridge
- c) Maintain the street furniture, including bins and motorcycle barriers.

#### **6. Achievements and Outcomes of the Partnership**

A representative from the CRT will provide a presentation detailing the work they have undertaken in maintaining the accessible route along Grantham Canal.

## **7. Risks and Uncertainties**

- 7.1. The current agreement ends in March 2024 and the Council is now starting the process of reviewing the current agreement and seeking recommendations regarding any potential new agreement beyond 2024.
- 7.2. Whilst there is budget in place for the agreement, due to the current climate of increasing costs and inflation there is a risk going forward the cost of this service could increase considerably, which could cause pressure on budgets or negatively impact quality of service provided. As part of any review, a value for money analysis should be undertaken prior to extension or acceptance.

## **8. Implications**

### **8.1. Financial Implications**

- 8.1.1. The first payment to British Waterways in 2003 was for £16,704, the Agreement allows for an annual uplift in accordance with civil engineering indices. The payment in 2021/22 was £43,678.89 and is contained within existing budgets.
- 8.1.2. Separate to this access agreement external funding is being sought via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to improve tourism opportunity for this heritage asset and to address issues such as water loss.
- 8.1.3. Budget of £46,500 per annum is included as part of the MTFs (currently to 2026/27)

### **8.2. Legal Implications**

The legal agreement with CRT expires in March 2024 and a new agreement will need to be entered.

### **8.3. Equalities Implications**

Access to recreation green and blue spaces is promoted to all residents and can help to address issues relating to equality, diversity, mental and physical health, and wellbeing.

### **8.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications**

The partnership has worked to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and in particular the restriction of motorised vehicles on the tow path.

## **9. Link to Corporate Priorities**

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| Quality of Life | Access to green and blue spaces contributes to improvements in public health for example through; walking and cycling opportunities, improved nature conservation and biodiversity, |
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|                    | and by sequestration of carbon; all of which have a profound influence on quality of life.   |
| Efficient Services | On-going management of access agreements ensures that they can be updated and adapted to reflect our corporate priorities and ensure prudent financial management  |
| Sustainable Growth | The Grantham Canal is a green lung which snakes it way throughout the Borough and should be protected as the Borough develops to ensure sustainable growth. The canal is adjacent to the new proposed development at Tollerton and development in Cotgrave.  |
| The Environment    | The access agreement and budget to support delivery, are all designed to provide wellbeing services, through walking and cycling opportunities, access to green and blue space and safeguard the natural environment through improved sustainable management |

## 10. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Communities Scrutiny Group:

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- b) make comment on any future arrangements for when the current agreement expires in 2024.

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| <b>Background papers available for Inspection:</b> | Partnership Delivery Group - Grantham Canal- Canal and Rivers Trust Partnership 19 March 2019  |
| <b>List of appendices:</b>                         | Appendix 1 - Canal and River Trust- Rushcliffe Borough Council Grantham Canal Contract Agreement January 2022 Covering April 2021 - March 2022 |