

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** Conservation Advisory Group.  
Conservation, Sustainability &  
Community Planning Portfolio Holder.

**AUTHOR/S:** Conservation Manager

8<sup>th</sup> June 2005

### GOG MAGOG COUNTRYSIDE PROJECT – IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSED GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY.

#### Purpose

1. To outline a countryside access project which is being developed under the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy for the sub-region and seek members support for the proposed funding bid under the second round of the Growth Area Delivery Grant (GADG II).

***A presentation will be made on this item by the Chief Executive of the Cambridge Preservation Society.***

#### Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	Provision of enhanced biodiversity and green space is a key council objective, support to deliver increased such space is included as a performance indicator (SP901).
Village Life	The proposed project will make a substantial contribution to the enhancement of the natural environment and setting of the villages on the southern fringe of the city, as well as creating a strategic greenspace of regional significance.
Sustainability	The provision of enhanced countryside access and biodiversity will help mitigate the development of the region and contribute to meeting sustainability targets.
Partnership	The project is an example of a major partnership initiative which will address key council targets.

#### Background

3. *Project Aim.*  
The overall aim is to create a publicly accessible greenspace of over 600 ha on the southern edge of Cambridge. This would form an area of accessible countryside for the southern and eastern half of Cambridge, including the proposed city extensions. It would also be accessible to the rest of Cambridge City and adjacent villages within South Cambridgeshire District (including Great Shelford, Stapleford, Babraham & Fulbourn).
4. The overall project will link and safeguard : 5 Sites of Special Scientific Interest; 3 County Wildlife Sites; and 3 protected road verges, all vitally important for their chalk grassland habitats & species. The main open access area would be within 2 miles of the major southern urban extension to Cambridge and would be directly linked by new access routes.

5. The project would integrate Wandlebury Country Park, the Magog Trust land, and the other high quality conservation sites, to provide a large greenspace resource close to the major eastern and southern expansion of Cambridge and other housing in the vicinity. At present just over 200 ha is managed by the project partners, and the medium to long-term aim would be to acquire over 400 ha of additional land.
6. *The overall project objectives :*
  - (a) The provision of enhanced and sustainable public access linkages (*pedestrian, bridle & cycle routes*) to and around the project area and surrounding Green Belt countryside from Cambridge, the new settlements and the nearby villages.
  - (b) The creation of a high quality strategic greenspace, catering for a significantly increased population.
  - (c) The enhancement of the landscape setting of Cambridge, creating a liveable, accessible, greener and safer Green Belt area as a gateway to both the city and the surrounding villages and countryside.
  - (d) The creation of a significant area of Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat (chalk grassland, beech woodland)
  - (e) Increasing people's understanding of the local environment through interpretation, education and increased skills.
  - (f) Socio-economic gain including the provision of refreshment stops to visitors within the project area, new jobs to manage the new features, and education and other related job opportunities.

7. *Project Phases*

The proposed project can be divided onto discrete phases, with Phase 1 of the overall project deliverable in the 2-year timescale of GADG II funding (2006-08). This first phase would focus on :

- a. Provision of new linear access routes (pedestrian, bridle and cycle routes) and additional greenspace with new open access to and around the project area. The aim is for the creation of broad access corridors/buffer landscapes to provide pleasant routes and to spread visitor pressures on landscape and create routes of value to wildlife. Path infrastructure will be provided, including sensitive and appropriate boundary treatments.
  - b. Habitat creation – significant areas of chalk and other grasslands, woodland, hedges.
  - c. Acquisition and land use change of land within the project area, including initiation of the process of creating high quality habitats.
  - d. Enhanced interpretation facilities for visitors to the project area. Volunteer and teaching events will relate to chalk grassland and related habitats' management and forest school educational principles, based on wide expertise held by the project partners.
8. Further land acquisition and development of greenspaces, habitat creation and the provision of increased access (e.g. improved bus connections, road crossings) and

other more formal visitor facilities (exact requirements depending on the results of wider public consultation) would be delivered over a 10 year period.

## Considerations

9. *Sustainable Communities Plan*

The project supports the development of publicly accessible greenspaces around developing communities, fundamental to the ODPM's Sustainable Communities Plan, which is the driving force behind the growth of the Cambridge Sub-region. Para 4.12 of the plan notes that, "providing high quality park and public spaces" is "crucial to building sustainable communities and ensuring that places are attractive areas in which to live and work". This is basis for the projects being developed under the proposed Green Infrastructure Strategy, which includes the Gog Magog Countryside project.

10. This strategic importance is further emphasised by Cambridgeshire Horizons (the LDV for the sub-region) which has as it's vision, "to drive forward sustainable growth in the sub-region in accordance with the approved development and infrastructure plans... to.... provide places for people to live in an environmentally-friendly way". The provision of green infrastructure is recognised as a key component and this project aims to support this vision.

11. *Principal project partners.*

The project is being developed by the Cambridge Preservation Society (CPS) and The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire & Peterborough (WT). They will develop the GADG II funding bid, as well as provide project management including : managing tenders for contracts; raising funds; creation of habitats; the management of greenspaces for people and wildlife; involving volunteers and local communities.

12. *SCDC role in the partnership.*

Members are requested to indicate their provisional support for the project to complete the developing partnership which includes the following organisations :

- English Nature – likely to support the project, ecological expertise.
- Cambridge City Council - indicated provisional support & may contribute project funding.
- Cambridgeshire County Council - indicated provisional support, may contribute project funding; assistance with access improvements; match funding for cycleway.
- Cambridgeshire Horizons – indicated support for the project; facilitation of strategic greenspace provision through strategy development and a sub-regional approach to s106 planning agreements to fund future land acquisition and management.

13. *Outputs*

The project is a unique chance to integrate radial and circular routes accessible to the public in the urban fringe area to the south of the City, currently with overall poor access. The outputs for the 2006 to 2008 phase of the project are projected as :

- (i) Provision of newly accessible recreational land to the public (approx 42 ha)
- (ii) Enhanced access links (approximately 4.5Km public access- partly combined), including a new cycleway (c1.5km), bridleway (c2km); footpath (c4.5km – new Public Right of Ways) between the project area and Cambridge City (including the new urban extensions).

- (iii) Acquisition of land (c46ha) and land use change on overall approx. 75 hectares of land (including where land acquisition is not achievable).
- (iv) Habitat creation (chalk grassland c25ha, woodland c2ha, hedgerows c2km, c40 no. road/path-side specimen trees).
- (v) Enhanced interpretation facilities and information for visitors to the project area including directional signage and provision of an active volunteer programme.

### Options

14. The Conservation Advisory Group are requested to consider the above and the presentation and either :
- (a) Recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio formally confirms the authority's support for the development of the project, to enable the funding bid under GADG II to be completed as part of the development of the *Green Infrastructure Strategy*.
  - (b) In the event that GADG II funding is awarded for the project, recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio considers appropriate funding, subject to resource availability, for the subsequent development of the project.
- Or*
- (c) Decline to recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio confirm support for the development of the project.

### Financial Implications

15. None specific as a result of this report. However, members will be asked to consider potential future funding allocations, in the light of the result of the bid to GADG II. The expected Total Project Cost is £1.574 million, of which £1.374 million is being sought from ODPM via GADG II. The following tables outlines these figures, which exclude the value of the land contributed by the project partners.

<i>Partner</i>	2006/07	2007/08	Totals in £	Indicative Costings	2006 to 2008 in £
ODPM	530,000	824,000	1,374,000	Habitat Creation	132,834
Cambridge Preservation Society	30,000	30,000	60,000	Habitat Mgm	30,000
Wildlife Trust	10,000	10,000	20,000	Paths & PRoW	512,340
<i>Others</i> (Local Authorities, Environmental Stewardship HLS, WGS, WREN, Sponsorship from local people and businesses)	35,000	85,000	120,000	Land Acquisition – recreational & habitat	698,963
<b>Totals</b>	<b>605,000</b>	<b>949,000</b>	<b>1,574,000</b>	<b>Land Acquisition – access links</b>	<b>61,863</b>
For details please refer to drawing : GOGS-12B attached				Interpretation	18,000
				Project Mgm (Project Manager and part-time Volunteer Manager and Ranger)	120,000
Key: ~ approximately					<b>1,574,000</b>

### **Legal Implications**

16. None specific.

### **Staffing Implications**

17. None specific.

### **Risk Management Implications**

18. None specific as the project will be managed by the Cambridge Preservation Society.

### **Consultations**

19. None specific to date. A wide consultation exercise will be undertaken as the project develops.

### **Conclusions/Summary**

20. The proposed GoG Magog GADG II project offers the potential to make a major contribution to the enhancement of countryside access and biodiversity of the district, as well as creating a significant link in the network of open space which will form the sub-region's green infrastructure. The support of the authority, as a part of the project partnership will be essential in order to lever Government funding support and enable the project to be realised.

### **Recommendations**

21. That the Conservation Advisory Group are requested to consider the above and :
- (a) Recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio formally confirms the authority's support for the development of the project, to enable the funding bid under GADG II to be completed as part of the development of the *Green Infrastructure Strategy*.
  - (b) In the event that GADG II funding is awarded for the project, recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio considers appropriate funding, subject to resource availability, for the subsequent development of the project.

Appendix 1 : Gog Magog Countryside – Context & Proposals Dwg. GOGS – 12B Rev.B

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: GADG II – Expression of interest – May 2005. Cambridge Preservation Society.

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