

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Business Development and Growth (Introduced by the Executive Member for Economic Development and Public Service Reform)	Executive Cabinet	February 2018

## **YARROW MEADOWS. RIVER CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT.**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To provide an update and approve delivery of the Yarrow Meadows Masterplan.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. To approve the masterplan for Yarrow Meadows
3. To approve proposals for public and landowner engagement into the Yarrow Meadows Project.
4. To approve the proposed planned works and budget for delivery of the masterplan
5. To support further external funding bids to be submitted to aid masterplan delivery.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT**

6. Croston Enhancement: The River Yarrow Floodplain project is an ongoing project that seeks to deliver an aspirational 10 year vision focussing on Social, Economic and Environmental benefits. The project has developed following on from the Croston Flood Alleviation Scheme. The scheme acted as a catalyst for change and brought together stakeholders and interested parties to identify what and how other improvements in the area could be realised.
7. Yarrow Meadows: A scoping exercise was carried out in partnership with Lancashire Wildlife Trust which identified an opportunity to deliver social, economic and environmental outcomes on land owned by Chorley Council. The Environment Agency, supported by the Douglas Catchment Partnership, have identified the opportunity to deliver Water Framework Directive (WFD) measures and Natural Flood Management (NFM) measures within the site combined with social and economic benefits. In 2017, the Environment Agency and Chorley Council worked in partnership to complete a Geomorphology Assessment and Biodiversity Assessment to identify opportunities and constraints on the site. Chorley Council produced a master plan that provided a vision for the site to deliver multiple benefits for people and wildlife.
8. This project seeks to deliver natural flood management interventions on the site to slow the flow of water to communities at risk utilising the Geomorphology and Biodiversity assessments. External funding has been awarded to this project which will aid delivery of the masterplan over a three year period.

<b>Confidential report</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	<b>No</b>
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<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes	<b>No</b>
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Please bold as appropriate		
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<b>Reason</b> Please bold as appropriate	1, a change in service provision that impacts upon the service revenue budget by £100,000 or more	2, a contract worth £100,000 or more
	3, a new or unprogrammed capital scheme of £100,000 or more	4, Significant impact in environmental, social or physical terms in two or more wards

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

### (If the recommendations are accepted)

9. The project enhances the flood plain of the River Yarrow within Yarrow Valley Country Park and aids the management and improvement of Council assets for recreation and biodiversity.
10. The project builds on the good work already invested in the Croston Flood Alleviation Scheme and further strengthens flood defences for the residents of Chorley and beyond.
11. The project delivers key Social, Environmental and Economic benefits to the Borough.
12. The project delivers key benefits to health and wellbeing for residents.

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

13. There are no alternative options. This project is externally funded and is being carried out for the benefit of the Borough.

## CORPORATE PRIORITIES

14. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all	*	A strong local economy	*
Clean, safe and healthy homes and communities	*	An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	*

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

15. Chorley Council has been a key stakeholder and driver of the Douglas Catchment Partnership since 2013. The partnership is hosted by Groundwork Lancashire West and Wigan, other key partners include Environment Agency, United Utilities, Wigan Council, West Lancs District Council, Natural England, DEFRA, Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission, Keep Britain Tidy, Wild Trout Trust, CPRE. The aim of the partnership is to bring the right stakeholders together to create a focused, sustainable and collective Action Plan which will ensure that the water environment within the River Douglas Catchment is improved into the future. The Douglas Catchment Partnership Action Plan 2016 is available to view in Background Papers. It provides an overview of the partnership and showcases project delivery and successes to date.
16. A 10 year vision for the River Yarrow was produced with catchment partners and stakeholders to identify a social, economic and environmental vision for the catchment. In addition, a scoping study of the Yarrow was carried out to identify opportunities for change linked to the vision. The Yarrow Meadows site was identified by partners as being available to deliver multiple benefits to the river and community. Yarrow Meadows is approximately 20 hectares in size, owned and managed by Chorley Council, it is in the river valley which runs the length of Yarrow Valley Way near Gillibrand. Developing a master plan for the site allows potential future investment to deliver benefits under multiple themes. The

Environment Agency have assessed the site as being suitable to deliver WFD mitigation measures and NFM measures. This project will deliver Natural Flood Management interventions based on the Geomorphology and Biodiversity Assessments.

## **THE CASE FOR CHANGE**

17. The Croston Flood Alleviation Scheme on the River Yarrow has provided protection to the village of Croston. Natural Flood Management interventions will help to reduce and slow the flow to enhance the objectives of the scheme, add aid climate resilience and deliver multiple benefits to local people and wildlife. The River Yarrow Water Body WFD status is listed as 'heavily modified'. The objective is to reach good status by 2027 with the waterbody currently at moderate ecological potential. Failing elements include invertebrates, macrophytes and phytobenthos and phosphate. The elements at risk include eutrophication, physical modification, sanitary pollutants and sediment. This project will aim to identify solutions to physical modification and sediment which will contribute towards improving all of the failing elements.
18. It has been a long term aspiration to improve the footpath network and access into Yarrow Valley from Gillibrand housing estates and also through the valley bottom. In December 2016 £75,000 + LPI S106 was received from the developers at Gillibrand for a specific purpose to make footbridge and footpath improvements linking Gillibrand with Whitworth Road and improving other footpaths in the vicinity of the Gillibrand development. An EMD granted approval to tender out this work in January 2017. This work is included in the capital programme as the Big Wood Access Improvement project and is now complete with £20,000 remaining to be allocated. It is proposed to utilise this funding to continue improvements in the Gillibrand area, installing a new footbridge as outlined on the masterplan to link Wallets Wood to Yarrow Meadows. This is currently a well-used unauthorised desire line. Access and safety will be improved for all. Improved signage and interpretation boards would also be installed subject to budget.

## **MASTERPLAN**

19. In 2017 various site visits and surveys were undertaken by specialists within Yarrow Meadows. Geomorphology and Biodiversity Assessments have identified opportunities and constraints on the site. Utilising the data collected and recommendations, Chorley Council officers have produced a draft masterplan that provides a vision for the site to deliver multiple benefits for people and wildlife. It is proposed to share the masterplan with adjoining landowners and the community to engage them with the project and involve them where possible in project delivery. The delivery of the masterplan will incorporate a number of mitigation measures outlined in order to begin a change in classifications of WFD. This will include floodplain connectivity, bank rehabilitation, preservation or restoration of habitats, removal or softening of hard banks, inclusion of woody debris, non-native species eradication, woodland creation and woodland management. Please refer to the masterplan for further details.

## **CONSULTATION**

20. Subject to Exec cabinet approval it is proposed to carry out a light touch consultation. The masterplan will be displayed at entrances into the site from Yarrow Valley Way and also at the Information Centre at Treeface Cafe. The masterplan will also be directly sent to adjoining landowners to ensure that they are aware of the plans for the valley and that they are in agreement with the suggestions. Over the Spring/Summer of 2018 balsam bash posters will be put up on site to engage and educate regular users of the site to help eradicate this non-native weed. Over the period of project delivery, local schools, scout groups and local residents will be involved with helping deliver small projects within the masterplan where resources allow, such as bird box making, tree planting and wildflower planting.

## **FINANCE**

21. The table below illustrates the source of finance for the project and what is proposed to be delivered.

Source	Delivery	When	Budget
Water Framework Directive (EA funding)	Masterplan project delivery. Woodland management to plantation to thin trees and enhance understory	2018	£8,000
S106.Gillibrand. To be spent on footpath and bridge improvements linking to Gillibrand.	Continuation of project to install a new footbridge as outlined on the masterplan to link Wallets Wood to Yarrow Meadows. This is currently a well-used unauthorised desire line. Access and safety will be improved for all. Improved signage and interpretation boards would also be installed.	2018	£20,000
Government Grant for NFM. Grant confirmed in writing but not yet claimed.	Masterplan project delivery and monitoring.	2018 - 2020	£50,000
Local Levy. EA Funding. Grant to be awarded to Chorley Council in April 2018	Masterplan project delivery and monitoring.	2018	£10,000
S106 Dog and Partridge 10/00359/FULMAJ – Habitat Preservation contribution for “the enhancement of habitat on Yarrow Valley County Park in Charnock Richard”	It is proposed to utilise this budget to deliver improvements to Yarrow Valley adj to Charnock Richard as outlined within in the masterplan. Exact projects will be agreed with ward members.	2019	£11,135
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£89,135</b>

## PROJECT DELIVERY

22. The Environment Agency (EA) are key partners and much of this project is being delivered through in kind staff time from the Environment Agency in order to carry out surveys and draw up specifications and schemes for tender. It is proposed to begin delivering the masterplan projects utilising the funding in 2018. It is proposed that EA staff will design up the habitat creation and enhancement including wet woodland, new tree and shrub planting and wetland scrapes in the vicinity of the palaeo channel. It is also proposed to design the new footbridge to connect Wallets Wood to Yarrow Meadows, removing the failed river bank reinforcement and engineering new bank stabilisation techniques and carry out further access and way-marking improvements to the paths. All of this work is located in one small area of the valley and neatly delivers key elements of the project. Tendering and contract award of this package of work will be carried out by Chorley Council. This work is being carried out on Council land. Any technical support will be provided by the EA. It is anticipated that this work will cost in the region of £30,000.
23. It is also proposed to tender out woodland management of the plantation woodland which was planted as part of the new road creation over 15 years ago. These trees have never been thinned and managed. Over a three year period, in line with best practise, (2018 – 2020) it is proposed to thin the trees, enhance the understory and open up strategic views across the valley. In year one a contractor will be awarded the work, in subsequent years further thinning work is proposed to be carried out in a partnership with Myscough College as part of their education programme. It is expected that this work will cost in the region of £8,000 and quotes will be sought for this work and the job awarded by Chorley Council. The work will be awarded to one contractor.

24. The £50,000 Natural Flood Management Grant will be delivered over a longer timeframe. The grant is very much about baseline data and monitoring. In 2018 baseline data will be collected by partners (EA) including stream power calculations, fixed point photography and botany surveys. It is then proposed that the Environment Agency design up full specifications and drawings to enable Chorley Council to tender out all of the remaining masterplan projects in 2018/19. From this suite of works, priorities will be chosen for delivery to fit with the budget. Ward members will be engaged in making decisions of which projects will be delivered taking into account the S106 that has to be used for the enhancement of habitat on Yarrow Valley County Park in Charnock Richard.
25. Any works that can't be completed will have further funding sought to aid delivery. The contract will be awarded and works carried out on site during 2019. Further monitoring of the project will then take place in 2020. The majority of projects will be habitat enhancements which need no management interventions. This project will not impact on current management practises of the site and will help enhance areas to make future management more sustainable.

### IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

26. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	*	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	*
Legal		Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

### COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

27. The Yarrow Meadows Masterplan project will be added to the capital programme as part of the 2018/19 budget paper to be approved by Full Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

### COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

28. The total spend even if aggregated would fall to be an intermediate level contract under the Council's contract procedure rules. In the circumstances the contracts can be awarded separately and Procurement should be consulted to ensure the most appropriate process if followed for each contract.

MARK LESTER  
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
The Douglas Catchment Partnership. Action Plan 2016	2016		Mod gov
Yarrow Meadows Masterplan	January 2018		Mod gov
Big Wood Access Improvements EMD	January 2017		Mod gov

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Lindsey Blackstock	5218	17/01/2018	***

