

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING	Housing & Major Projects Panel	
MEETING DATE:	20 January 2015	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Boat Dwellers & River Travellers Update	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- B&NES Boat Dwellers and River Travellers- A Task and Finish Group review by the Housing and Major Projects Overview and Scrutiny Panel- Draft Strategic River Group Governance Structure		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 In July 2013 a Task and Finish Group set up by the Housing and Major Projects PD&S panel reviewed the issues relating to Boat Dwellers and River Travellers within B&NES. The review put forward a list of recommendations for consideration. These are now being taken forward by the Strategic River Group, which has been established to take an overview of issues relating to the River Avon in B&NES. This update provides a progress report on the work of the Strategic River Group and how they are taking forward the recommendations in the Boat Dwellers and River Travellers review.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Housing and Major Projects PD&S Panel are asked to comment on the progress made by the Strategic River Group and the Boat Dwellers and River Travellers review.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

3.1 In 2014/15 there is currently a £460k budget for the River Corridor Fund; £440k of this is funded by Corporate Borrowing the remaining £20k is secured match funding; in addition to this, further match funding is being negotiated. This is being spent on a variety of projects set out in section 4.

3.2 A further £150,000 has been provisionally allocated in the capital budget for 2014/15 funded by Corporately Supported Borrowing. This is subject to approval at Council in February 2015.

4 THE REPORT

4.1 In March 2014 Bath and North East Somerset Council established a Strategic River Group. The purpose of the group is to provide strategic oversight of the River Avon from Dundas Wharf to Hanham Lock. It contains representatives from B&NES, the Environment Agency, Canal and Rivers Trust, The River Regeneration Trust and Wessex Water. A draft Governance Structure has been attached to this report.

4.2 The Strategic River Group is in the process of defining a River Avon Corridor Strategy and Action Plan. The key themes of the Strategy will be

- Safe and Active Communities;
- Environmental River Improvements;
- Economy and Development;
- Sustainable Networks and
- Adaptation to Climate Change.

4.3 A series of projects relating to these themes are already underway, using the River Corridor Fund allocations and match funding from partner agencies, such as the Environment Agency:

- Minerva Rowing Club: funding for improvement works to the clubhouse
- Old Boathouse: works to bring the derelict building back into active useage
- A range of river safety measures to improve safety along the river, including new railings at Widcombe Lock, the provision of improved secure safety devices along the river and a river Greening Trial to provide softer edges to the river
- Options analysis for Pulteney Wier and Twerton Gate

4.4 Attached at appendix 1 is the governance structure associated with the Strategic River Group. This demonstrates how different key issues associated with the river, such as flooding, safety and boat dwellers link into the Group

4.5 The recommendations from the Boat Dwellers and River Travellers review are captured in the Safe and Active Communities theme. At the last meeting of the Strategic River Group it was agreed to form a Task and Finish Group reporting to the SRG, to deliver the actions in the review. The group will consist of members from the Canal & Rivers Trust and B&NES Planning, Housing, Environment and Equality and Diversity teams.

4.6 The initial actions of the Task Group will be:

- Review the current evidence base relating to Boat Dwellers and River Travellers
- If necessary improve and expand the evidence base and develop appropriate guidance for boat dwellers

- Review the current voluntary code and consider how appropriate moorings can be incorporated into the planning system via the current Placemaking Plan process
- Review existing best practise and if necessary undertake visits to those authorities highlighted

4.7 The Task Group will report in summer 2015

5 RATIONALE

5.1 The River Avon is a key asset for Bath and North East Somerset and needs active management

5.2 A range of organisations have statutory and other responsibilities for its management from safety to flooding to the wider river economy and ecology

5.3 It is therefore essential that a long term, considered view is taken of the River and the Strategic River Group has been established to lead and coordinate this process

6 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 Doing nothing was not considered an option, given the range of issues that need addressing

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 Finance and the Strategic River Group have been consulted in drawing up this paper

8 RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

Contact person	Zoe Hancock
Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	