

Report to: **Hub Committee**  
Date: **18<sup>th</sup> July**  
Title: **Tamar Trails – options appraisal**  
Portfolio Area: **Customer First**  
Wards Affected: **Bere Ferrers, Tavistock South West,  
Tavistock North**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: N/A

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: **N/A**

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**Recommendations:**

**That the Hub Committee:**

1. Support the increase of the Tamar Trails marketing budget line by £4,000 for 2 years.
2. Support the further consideration by officers (with partners) of the feasibility of Options 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 12 in Appendix A through the Tamar Trails Partnership, with a view to informing an 'Active Tamar' bid.
3. Support the encouragement of races and events on the Trails with the establishment of a suitable charging mechanism (Option 13 of Appendix A).
3. Support the annual reporting of income and expenditure and progress against the Options to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 This report brings an appraisal of options available to the Council to seek to close the annual deficit on the Tamar Trails.
- 1.2 Discussion following presentation of a report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (21/03/17) titled '*Update on Tamar Trails Legacy*' made it clear that Members did not wish to just accept a circa £33,000 deficit each year for the remainder of the 25 year Tamar Mining Heritage legacy.
- 1.3 Members requested that officers compile an options appraisal ranging from ceasing involvement with the Tamar Trails, to

- investment in new infrastructure, and further detail about options already being discussed by the Tamar Trails Partnership.
- 1.4 Appendix A presents sixteen options, the estimated costs and income of the options, the pros and cons, and finally a recommendation for each option.
  - 1.5 The options should not be seen in isolation, recommendations reflect the potential to take a variety of these options forward subject to Member endorsement.
  - 1.6 The report recommends:
    - Adjustment of the existing budget to focus funds on marketing instead of repairs and maintenance over the next two years.
    - Establishing a mechanism of actively encouraging events/races on the Trails with the aim of securing income to close the deficit.
    - Further consideration with partners of a potential 'Active Tamar bid' with potential items including a new play area, cross-country mountain bike trail, extension to the carpark, and reconfiguration/extension of the Trails Centre.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (21/03/17) titled '*Update on Tamar Trails Legacy*' clearly details the background to the Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) 'Tamar Valley Mining Heritage Project, (TVMHP)' the Council's role as Accountable Body, and the financial implications of the legacy of the project which were first realistically acknowledged in 2014 and built into the Financial Strategy as a cost pressure.
- 2.2 The report also detailed the activity undertaken by the Tamar Trails Partnership since completion of the capital infrastructure works relating to the TVMHP.
- 2.3 The report acknowledges the excellent product which resulted from the TVHMP which has been enjoyed by the public, with associated health and wellbeing benefits.
- 2.4 Car parking income increased by 50% in 2016 compared to the previous year, and is expected to rise by 30% in 2017 again (much of which is down to the overwhelming success of Parkrun). Nonetheless the deficit would remain at around £28,000 per annum if the current approach is maintained. This being the first option – i.e. the current approach/status quo option – by doing so the Council would be accepting an ongoing annual deficit of some £30,000.

## **3. Outcomes/outputs**

- 3.1 Appendix A seeks to give a range of options that could go some way to closing the deficit (or even making a profit eventually). Options are not without risk, particularly where significant investment is required with no guarantee of return, and any return likely to be in the long term (i.e. 10 years plus). The main recommendations are briefly considered below, however Members should refer to Appendix A for detailed consideration.

#### **4. Increase Trails marketing budget by £4,000 for 2 years**

- 4.1 The existing marketing budget is £6,000 per annum, and delivers outputs including leaflets and distribution, website and updates, and an increasing focus on social media/digital marketing. The marketing focuses on the local market (namely Plymouth and southwest), and the main holiday seasons.
- 4.2 It is considered that there is scope to increase marketing to cover the shoulder/off season and mid-week which currently experience lower footfall, and namely via social media/digital marketing.
- 4.3 The proposal is for the budget to be increased by £4,000 for a period of 2 years, in which time the increase in car parking income will be monitored (it is considered that Parkrun is sufficiently established to be able to separate out the Parkrun factor from any increase resulting from additional marketing).
- 4.4 If after this period it is evident that the additional investment in marketing is not covering costs, then the budget would return to £4,000.
- 4.5 The increase in budget would be covered through use of the existing Trails repairs and maintenance budget which to date (due to young age of infrastructure) has been largely untapped. If the investment is making a return, then the investment will be self-funding longer term.

#### **5. Explore the feasibility of an 'Active Tamar' bid**

- 5.1 The Tamar Trails Partnership have discussed various capital projects of varying scales which might increase footfall and income. These include car park extensions to cope with peak times, a new play area to capitalise on the family market, a cross-country mountain bike track/s (akin to Haldon Forest and Lanhydrock tracks) and extensions to the Trails Centre to add to the product (e.g. a farm shop and retail).
- 5.2 Preliminary discussions with the Greater Dartmoor LEAF have been encouraging. The GDLEAF can fund up to 50% of project costs and will need to see clear economic/employment outputs.
- 5.3 Developing a bid is time intensive, and it is not proposed that Council officers should lead, however there is significant merit in supporting the development of the bid with partners via the Tamar Trails Partnership. The Council would be looking to Tamar Adventures or the Tamar Community Trust to lead on development of the bid.
- 5.4 At this stage investment is not being sought from the Council, however officers would seek to return to Members to report on the bid as it develops and if there are opportunities for investment for the Council that could result in longer term income.

#### **6. Actively encourage races and events on the Trails**

- 6.1 Currently there has been no active encouragement of races or events on the Trails (other than Parkrun, for which the Council is not able to charge as has been made clear by government following an attempt by Stoke Gifford Parish Council).

- 6.2 It is considered that there may be a market for off-road running/cycling/endurance events, either as one-offs or as part of a series, and that there is potential to make some income.
- 6.3 Event organisers appear to be actively seeking new venues for races/events and there is much counting in the Tamar Trails favour (the hills, all leases with the Council, multi-use Trails, nearby to the River Tamar).
- 6.4 There is already a developing market, with a tenant of the Tamar Trails Centre taking regular groups of runners out on the Trails (guided runs), and potentially some appetite from the tenants of the Trails Centre to develop the offering of the Trails for races and events.
- 6.5 It is considered that there is merit in exploring options further with the Trails Centre tenants to actively attract and establish races/events on the Trails.
- 6.6. A charging mechanism would need to be established, potentially with a proportion (e.g. £2) per race competitor going towards 'maintenance of the Trails,' or a fee per event dependent on scale.
- 6.7 The approach also needs some further legal advice with respect to the leases, however the initial indication is that such an approach is likely to be acceptable under existing lease arrangements.

## 6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		<p>The Local Government Act 2000 gave the Council the power to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area.</p> <p>Localism Act 2011 – General Power of Competence, a local authority has power to do anything that individuals of full legal capacity may do giving authorities the power to take reasonable action they need 'for the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident or present in its area'.</p>
Financial		<p>Costs and potential income have been considered as far as possible at this stage within each Option given in Appendix A.</p> <p>Subject to Members endorsing development of these options, the financial detail will be refined and can be reported back to Members within subsequent Overview and Scrutiny reports.</p>
Risk		Risks have been considered namely within

		<p>the 'Cons' column of the Options Appraisal in Appendix A of this report.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that not all risks have been fully explored (e.g. level of clawback). The recommendations of the report do not in themselves create risk at this stage.</p> <p>Some of the options that have not been recommended do carry much higher levels of risk (e.g. Options 11, 15 and 16), and if Members steer officers towards developing other options then officers will be required to make more detailed assessment of the risks associated with these options in due course.</p>
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		None directly arising from this report.
Safeguarding		None directly arising from this report. You need to set out what the Safeguarding implications are.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None directly arising from this report.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		The Tamar Trails network contribute to the ability of the West Devon community to undertake informal recreation.
Other implications		None directly arising from this report.

## **Supporting Information**

### **Appendices:**

**APPENDIX A** – Options to reduce annual WDBC shortfall on the Tamar Trails

### **Background Papers:**

Report to WDBC Overview and Scrutiny Committee (21/03/17) titled '*Update on Tamar Trails Legacy*'

### **Approval and clearance of report**

<b>Process checklist</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Portfolio Holder briefed	<b>Yes/No</b>
SLT Rep briefed	<b>Yes/No</b>

Relevant Exec Director sign off (draft)	<b>Yes/No</b>
Data protection issues considered	<b>Yes/No</b>
If exempt information, public (part 1) report also drafted. (Cabinet/Scrutiny)	<b>Yes/No</b>