

**Proposed Expenditure of Balance of Funding Provided by Benton Hall Golf Club**

Agenda Item 6(a)

**Portfolio Area:** N/A  
**Report Presented by:** Juliet Strathern

- Background Papers: -**
- Witham Local Committee Report and Minutes 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008.
  - Witham Local Committee Report and Minutes 24<sup>th</sup> March 2009
  - Designing for Cyclists: A Guide to Good Practice (Essex County Council) 2006
  - Braintree District Local Plan Review 2005
  - Unilateral Undertaking Agreement – Benton Hall
- Corporate Implications:**
- Funding needs to be spent by 2011.
  - Promoting accessibility for the disabled.
  - Finance provided through Unilateral Undertaking Agreement.
  - Promoting a “cleaner and greener environment” by encouraging cycling as a mode of sustainable transport.
  - Providing an improved path for cyclists and pedestrians who may use the route to commute or for recreational purposes, and promote improvements to lifestyle (“Everyone Can Enjoy a Healthy Lifestyle”)
- Options:**
- **Improvements to provide a cycle/pedestrian link along part of the Blackwater Rail Trail from Pasture Road to Blackwater Lane, Witham.**
  - **Not to carry out improvements to provide a cycle/pedestrian link along part of Blackwater Rail Trail from Pasture Road to Blackwater Lane, Witham.**
- Risks:**
- Loss of finance if not spent according to the legal agreement requirements.
  - Construction costs increasing due to unforeseen circumstances.

**Executive Summary**

**This report seeks authorisation for improvement of the Blackwater Rail Trail from Pasture Road to Blackwater Lane, Witham to provide a cycle/pedestrian path using the remaining balance of finance from Benton Hall Golf Course development**

**Decision**

**It is RECOMMENDED that Members approve the expenditure of the remaining funding provided by the Benton Hall Golf Club development on:-**

- **Improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail to provide a cycle/pedestrian link along the Blackwater Rail Trail from Pasture Road to Blackwater Lane, Witham.**

## **Background**

In the summer of 2008 Phase 1 of improvements to the Blackwater Rail Trail to provide a cycle/pedestrian link between Constance Close and Blue Mills Hill were completed. The scheme was funded by a Unilateral Undertaking Agreement with Benton Hall, Golf Club.

Following the completion of Phase 1 improvements, there is approximately £37,000 remaining of the financial contribution which must be spent by 2011.

At Witham Local Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2009 Members were asked to consider various options as to where the remaining balance of funding should be spent.

Members agreed that the remaining balance of funding should be contributed towards a toucan crossing (pedestrian and cycle crossing) on Maldon Road, subject to consultation with Benton Hall Golf Club.

However, Essex County Council Highways have since agreed to fund the full cost of the crossing which will be installed as a wide Puffin crossing for pedestrians only, but would give the option to be upgraded to a Toucan crossing for pedestrians and cyclists if required, at a later date.

The following option is to be considered by Members as to where the remaining balance of funding could be spent:

### **Improvements to provide a cycle/pedestrian link along the Blackwater Rail Trail from Pasture Road to Blackwater Lane, Witham.**

The Braintree District Local Plan Review 2005 supports the provision of cycleways and indicates proposed routes on the Inset Maps, including a route along the Blackwater Rail Trail from Pasture Road to Blackwater Lane, Witham. Please see map Appendix A.

The remaining £37,000 could provide a cycle/pedestrian link (hardened gravel type surface) between Pasture Road and Blackwater Lane. The length of this section is approximately 400 metres. The works would include site survey and an ecological survey, design, safety audit of proposals, construction works and fees.

This option would provide linkages for cyclists/pedestrians/wheelchair users to access the Whetmead Nature Reserve, Witham River Walk and the Town Centre.  
*(In accordance with the wording of legal agreement).*

As part of the scheme the existing steps on Blackwater Lane would be removed and replaced with a graded ramp enabling easy access for cyclists and wheelchair users. Lighting is not proposed as part of the scheme.

Planning permission is not required for these proposed improvement works.

Adjoining residents will be notified of the proposals prior to construction.

Essex County Council Country Parks will remain responsible for the future maintenance of the Blackwater Rail Trail section between Pasture Road and Blackwater Lane.

Improvements to this section of Blackwater Rail Trail would provide a strategic link to the Town Centre, adjacent Industrial Estates, Whetmead Nature Reserve and the Witham River Walk. It would also form part of the National Cycle Network Route 16 (Maldon to Witham).

**If Members approve the scheme it is anticipated that the improvement works would commence in August 2010.**

**- Link from Blue Mills Hill to Benton Hall Golf Club**

Braintree District Council approached Benton Hall Golf Club to see if they would be interested in a link from the car park of the golf club to the Blackwater Rail Trail (*which is adjacent to the boundary*) to provide a link for cyclists and pedestrians who may wish to use the leisure club facilities. Benton Hall Golf Club were not keen to pursue this option and suggested that they would prefer the remaining balance of funding to be spent on improving the Blackwater Rail Trail to provide a cycle/pedestrian link in Witham town centre.

<b>Corporate Implications</b>				
<b>Financial:</b>	Funding needs to be spent by 2011.			
<b>Legal:</b>	Finance provided through Unilateral Undertaking Agreement.			
<b>Equalities &amp; Diversity:</b>	Promoting accessibility for the disabled.			
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	Providing an improved path for cyclists and pedestrians who may use the route to commute or for recreational purposes and promote improvements to lifestyle("Everyone Can Enjoy a Healthy Lifestyle")			
<b>Environment &amp; Climate Change:</b>	Promoting a "cleaner and greener environment "by encouraging cycling as a mode of sustainable transport.			
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	Local Committees	Y	Partners	Y
	Public	Y	Staff	Y
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No			
<b>Public/Private Report:</b>	Public			
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Juliet Strathern			
<b>Designation:</b>	Senior Planning Policy Officer			
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## Appendix A

### Improvements to provide a cycle/pedestrian link along the Blackwater Rail Trail from Pasture Road to Blackwater Lane.

