

## **Ladhope Planting-Biking – Public Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> October 2016 7pm -9pm Galashiels Transport Interchange.**

**Chair – Cllr Bill White**

**Also in attendance – Cllr Bill Herd**

**There were a total of 50 attendees who registered their names.**

**(Meeting notes by Luke Comins and additional notes from public comments compiled by Hugh Chalmers)**

Cllr White welcomed everyone and emphasised that this was the start of consultation process and that this represented an exciting opportunity.

### **Presentations**

**Luke Comins (Tweed Form)** gave a brief introduction to Tweed Forum and why they were involved in the project. He recognised that the initial proposals had met with opposition from certain quarters for valid reasons, but stated that nothing had been set in stone. He apologised that a map had been circulated at an early stage which showed where trails might go, some of which were on private land, and which had caused offence.

**Hugh Chalmers (Tweed Forum)** talked about how Tweed Forum had met Ben Douglas (owner of Glendearg farm) a year ago and planned new native woodland planting on his farm, which is adjacent to Ladhope Golf course. He was aware that a planting proposal had been discussed in 2008, and decided to follow this up with SBC, James Morison (Estate Manager) in the first instance. The bike trails idea came from Ben and a friend who could see the potential of the site and the potential to bring business to Galashiels.

**Beryl Masson (British Horse Society)** made the following points:

- Economic contribution of horse riding very important
- Important to maintain existing routes
- Need for suitable gates
- Design needs to be sensitively done
- Need for 'positive' signage

**Iain Laidlaw (Forestry Commission)** outlined the dual role of regulating planting and also grant aiding it. He described the application/assessment process and confirmed that Glendearg Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) application had been through the normal process and had been approved. Ladhope was at an earlier stage and the design including provision of views, access etc. all needed to be decided.

**Gareth Owen (Scottish Woodlands)** – described the various stages in planting a woodland including – design and establishment; key features such as views, habitats, landscape etc.; use of native trees; ground prep; protection – fencing vs tubes.

**Ben Douglas (Landowner at Glendearg)** – outlined why the land lent it so well to a possible biking trail including steep gradient, close to a major town, with a train connection, not far from Edinburgh. He stated that the aim would be to cater for all user types not just bikes and the potential to link in with Langlee, Stow and beyond. He described the socio-economic and health benefits that this would bring.

Ranald Boydell (Energise Galashiels) Invited to speak but could not attend – **Cllr White** spoke on Ranald's behalf and stated that you only had to look to Peebles to see the huge benefits that this could bring. He stated that Galashiels had never been a 'destination' and this proposal could change this.

**Pete Laing (Mountain Bike trail designer)** – described the multi-use nature of any such venture, the possibility of linking up with Langlee skills trails. He expounded on the positive qualities that the site had in terms of position, gradient and ground conditions. He emphasised the need to cater for kids and provision of easier trails. He stated that up to 20km of trail could be constructed at a cost of £25/m giving a possible construction cost of £500k. He said that community leadership was essential and gave the example of Golspie who had achieved a similar vision. The trails should really be called a 'Community Trail Network'.

**Questions and discussion, and comments from the floor.**

- Not a community trail, too bike focused (Susan Burrell). Pete Lain (PL) responded that all trails were multi-user and that all recreational activities could be included.
- How long does the fencing stay up (Cllr White)? Gareth Owen (GO) stated that 10 years is normal.
- What about disturbance of wildlife – badgers, SSSI? GO stated that they frequently had to deal with such sites and buffers would be left around them and the licensing process meant that this had to be fully taken on board at the outset.
- What will be used – tubes or fences. GO said that fencing was cheaper but sometimes you needed tubes (e.g. for voles). Likely that it would be a mixture.
- 25 horses stabled at Glendearg so they are significant. The train only allows 2 bikes on so this is a non-starter. Why don't bikers go to Glentress? (Caroline Grant)
- Need to get all sports interest around the table. There is an existing network that could be used (John McBay, Sport Development Manager Live Borders.)
- Is Common Good land the same as public ground? Ladhope is owned by the community so a subtle difference.
- Safety of riders is key. Horses are easily scared.
- Need for mutual respect. Is there a code of conduct (Cllr Herd)? Yes there is.
- Car park is major issue. Also, the issue of crossing the privately maintain road to Langlee Mains. PL outlined this is a common issue and there are very basic measures form making people stop at roads and cross safely.
- Not enough on what the project might bring in economically (Diane Leaver) LC stated that a feasibility stage would be essential and this would ascertain this sort of information (as well as all the other issues of demand, access, parking, costs etc).
- Are bikers insured? Some are but NB that no requirement for any user to be insured.
- Planting would deny Ladhope golf course to ever go back to being an 18 hole course again.
- This development is an essential piece of the jigsaw in reinvigorating Galashiels (Dawn Derbyshire)
- Need for survey of kids and schools? Would come in the next stage.
- The Golf course road is not suitable for traffic (Claire Howden)
- Golf Club was consulted at the beginning.....but not since. Need to be better involved (Graham Forsyth).
- Could be the key to saving the Golf Club and they would be keen to coordinate (Steven King)
- Scott Watson emphasised that different users didn't need to use the same paths.
- Huge benefit that this would bring to the area (Craig Hardie MB Instructor)
- Who pays for the tree planting? Is it just to benefit the bikers? Hugh Chalmers said that the FCS grant would cover most of it and TF could find sources to top it up so it would be cost neutral.
- Worried about spoiling the view. 20% open ground not enough. GO said views can be built.
- Just look at Glentress. Multi-use already there and it works.

- Huge benefit for the youth of the Borders. Glentress too far away for those that cannot drive or cannot get a lift. This would make a massive difference for them (Ruaridh Cunningham)
- We cannot afford **not** to do this. Galashiels desperately needs this.
- Need for Steering Group of the various different users to drive it forward (Cllr Herd)

Cllr White closed the meeting by inviting people to leave further thoughts on the maps and sheets at the back of the room. These comments would be assimilated, and further dialogue would need to take place before any plan for Ladhope was submitted to the Common Good Fund committee (next meeting on the 8th December).

End of meeting notes

### Notes made by those who attended

- That trails for horse riders are kept as rough grass, as I use the Ladhope Golf Course 5-6 times a week to get my horse fit by galloping up and down them.
- That any area for a track for horses on the Ladhope golf course area is left as the ground is now. Horses cannot canter /gallop on hardcore/stone tracks.
- Galashiels is on the east end of the Tweed valley, Peebles to the west. Every opportunity must be taken to create an attractive wooded environment that can absorb all forms of biking at the highest level, with the rail link, Galashiels has the long term potential to exceed Peebles. The woodland at the Golf Course will link perfectly with other woodlands. Fantastic.
- Safety awareness of all people
- Would like to be part of working group. Would like to be included in tree design also.
- It works at Glentress and Innerleithen and could only benefit the town and the area. All we need to do is work together in it and seek common gains for all party's. Greig temple
- Potential issues re vehicle access through Ladhope if parking etc. in area of golf course and increased traffic. In general a good idea. Tom Ingoldsby, (Ladhope Drive)
- Brilliant idea, much needed facility for the growing mountain bike fraternity in gala. Careful design needed for walkers/horses/MBers. Will definitely use it.
- Great idea having MBT Trails in close proximity to Town. This would need to be suitable for all abilities. Would they be bike specific or multi user paths? Who would oversee trails FC or local body?
- Decent path network would empower others to explore including those with disabilities who could use electric powered bikes or adapted cycles. It will generate revenue for the Borders and Gala in particular.
- Gain support and guidance from the Region's sports development team and the clubstort Ettrick and Lauderdale contact John McBay. Sports to be included; Horse riders, cycling, orienteering, archery, cross country running, Events venue. Sports funding is available.
- Fiona Wilson – Langlee Mains resident I'm very concerned at the proposal to plant the top of Ladhope Golf Course as this will preclude it ever returning to an 18 hole golf course. Access is also a high concern as is disturbance to indigenous wildlife. Mountain biking is not compatible with the more gentle pastimes of walking, dog walking and riding. Many older people already enjoy this area for walking and many runners and riders use this area for regular training and daily hacking. Also there is a SSSI site on the lower reaches of this proposal (actually, this is not the case. The nearest SSSI's are at Avenel Gorge and the River Tweed – HC) This is already a multi-use site and it seems crazy to spend £500,000+ just to accommodate mountain bikers who already have good facilities nearby.
- Would like to be part of working group. Susan Burrell
- Graham Forsyth. President Gala Golf Club. we wish to be consulted at all time with the process and from an early stage. Happy to have one or two representatives on any group is required.

- Rick Kenney, Vice Chair of Galashiels Community Council (Chair is Judith Cleghorn). Keen on the idea and wish to be kept informed and be part of the discussion (This is from the afternoon drop-in session)
- MTB trails would be a great gateway for locals and tourists to link the railway to the 7 Stanes trails to the Tweed Valley. They would encourage multi-day stays in the Borders. Opportunity to link them with local providers (bike shops and guides) and the unique MTB BASE course in Borders College.
- Thought it wasn't just mountain bike trails!!!
- Create for all users.
- Have anybody the right to (x) a private road
- What consideration is being given to the residents of Langlee mains!
- Community multi-use trails – opportunity for us all to get along!
- Multiuser path network can only become a positive for gala putting us back on the map. Local cycle trails would enable the next generation of bikers to progress. We have the world class BASE college course in Gala this will benefit them and local kids and workers elsewhere. There is a long trail multi user network in Jedburgh (Jed Forest Trail). This works well and could easily be replicated in the Galashiels area. Fantastic idea to redevelop some land and better the county.

There are some sketches on the maps which will also be referred to during future discussions.

END