

North Yorkshire County Council
County Area Committee for the Harrogate District

15 March 2018

Receipt of Petition “Save Nidd Gorge and the Nidderdale Greenway”

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise of the receipt of a petition and the consideration which has already been given to that petition; to invite the petition organiser to speak to present the petition to the Area Committee; and to ask the Area Committee to consider how it wishes to respond to the petition.

2.0 The Petition

- 2.1 A petition containing 2,314 signatures was received on 15 December 2017. The wording of the petition is set out below:-

“To: Carl Les – Leader of North Yorkshire County Council and David Bowe – Corporate Director of Business and Environmental Services

‘Save Nidd Gorge and The Nidderdale Greenway’

Listen to the Harrogate Area County Councillors and remove the inner relief road package (E) from the public consultation process.

Where is this important?

On December 7th the Harrogate Area County Councillors decided – by 13 votes to 2 – to remove the inner relief road option (package E) from the forthcoming public consultation into traffic congestion in Harrogate.

The Harrogate Area Committee took this informed decision following widespread concerns about:

- 1) The environmental harm a relief road would do to Nidd Gorge and The Nidderdale Greenway.
- 2) The unacceptable increase in traffic through the community of Bilton.
- 3) The ineffectiveness of relief roads as a solution for congestion relief.

The councillors are our democratically elected representatives. Their overwhelming opposition to the inner relief road must be respected by the Business and Environmental Services Executive and the North Yorkshire County Council Executive.

The democratic will of the committee must be upheld by North Yorkshire County Council.”

- 2.2 The organiser of the petition is Mr Chris Kitson (Chair of Nidd Gorge Community Action).

3.0 The County Council's Arrangements for Responding to Petitions

3.1 The County Council has adopted arrangements for receiving and responding to petitions, under which:-

- The receipt of petitions is published on the County Council's website.
- If a petition contains signatures from 1% (1,586) or more of the population of Harrogate District, but less than 5% (30,130) of the County's population:-
 - The petition is scheduled for debate at a meeting of this Area Committee.
 - The petition organiser is offered the opportunity to speak for five minutes to present his/her petition at the Area Committee's meeting.
 - At the Area Committee meeting, after the petition organiser has presented his/her petition, the petition will be discussed by County Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes and a decision made on how to respond to the petition.
 - The arrangements list the following as possible responses which Area Committees can consider when receiving petitions:-
 - (a) to take the action the petition requests;
 - (b) not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate;
 - (c) to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee; or
 - (d) where the issue is one on which the county council executive are required to make the final decision, the county council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.
- The response to the petition must be communicated in writing to the petition organiser and also be published on the County Council's website.

3.3 Mr Chris Kitson has indicated that he wishes to take the opportunity to speak for 5 minutes to present this petition to the Area Committee.

4.0 Information Regarding the Petition

4.1 The petition asks the Leader of the County Council and the Business and Environmental Services (BES) Corporate Director "to listen to the Harrogate Area County Councillors and remove the inner relief road option package E from the public consultation process". (The Area Committee's Minutes record its recommendation as "That only package B be taken forward, subject to the consultants firstly working-up a package of specific actions that will be put to the public as part of the consultation".)

Note:-

- *Package B was demand management and behavioural change.*
- *Package E was relief road, highway operational improvement and sustainable transport, with urban realm improvements.*

- 4.2 A decision on Harrogate Relief Road Review, including the Area Committee's recommendation, was taken by the BES Corporate Director, in consultation with the BES Executive Members, on 15 December 2017.
- 4.3 The BES Corporate Director invited Mr Chris Kitson to present this petition, on 15 December 2017, to himself and the BES Executive Members before a decision was made concerning the Harrogate Relief Road Review. Mr Rod Beardshall of Nidd Gorge Community Action, on behalf of Mr Chris Kitson, spoke to present the petition to the BES Corporate Director and Executive Members on 15 December 2017.
- 4.4 The decision made on 15 December, by the BES Corporate Director, following consultation with the BES Executive Members, was as follows:-
- to further develop the sustainable transport elements of both Packages B and E to identify the potential locations and impacts of the different measures;
 - to further develop the alignments of the Inner Relief Road to help identify the potential benefits and impacts (including on the Nidd Gorge and Nidderdale Greenway);
 - to prepare an initial economic analysis (BCR) for the Inner Relief Road;
 - to undertake pre-consultation engagement with local businesses and representative groups through an Harrogate Congestion Engagement Group;
 - to take a further report to the Area Committee prior to deciding on the future consultation options.

The above decision differs to the action recommended by the Area Committee and requested by the petition.

- 4.5 The report considered by the BES Corporate Director and Executive Members on 15 December set out the difficulties which would arise if the Area Committee's recommendation was to be approved. The report is on the County Council's website via the following link:-

<http://democracy.northyorks.gov.uk/committees.aspx?commid=92&meetid=3583>

- 4.6 The report included the officer advice that discounting Package E at that early stage had the potential to compromise the business case for future Government funding for Package B. That was particularly relevant because the evidence based Options Assessment Report had identified both Package B and Package E as 'better performing packages of interventions' requiring further consideration. In addition, regardless of any decision about whether to consult the public on Package E and a relief road option, it was likely that the County Council would need to undertake further development work on Package E in order to demonstrate to the DfT, in a Strategic Outline Business Case, that the final proposed option was the best option.

5.0 Summary

- 5.1 A petition was received on 15 December 2017 which is required to be considered at a meeting of this Area Committee. The petition organiser, Mr Chris Kitson, is entitled to speak for up to five minutes to present the petition to the Area Committee.
- 5.2 This petition has already been presented, discussed and taken into account when a decision was made, on 15 December, in respect of the action requested by the petition.

- 5.3 Other information also taken into account when the decision was made on 15 December was that discounting Package E at that early stage had the potential to compromise the business case for future Government funding for Package B. That was particularly relevant because the evidence based Options Assessment Report had identified both Package B and Package E as 'better performing packages of interventions' requiring further consideration. In addition, regardless of any decision about whether to consult the public on Package E and a relief road option, it was likely that the County Council would need to undertake further development work on Package E in order to demonstrate to the DfT, in a Strategic Outline Business Case, that the final proposed option was the best option.
- 5.4 The Area Committee is asked to respond to this petition. The County Council's petitions arrangements set out a range of responses for Area Committees to consider when responding to petitions. These are listed at (a) to (d) on the second page of this report.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 That the Area Committee, having heard the presentation of the petition from the petition organiser, consider how it wishes to respond to the petition.

Barry Khan
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Background Document: North Yorkshire County Council's petitions information and advice, a copy of which is on the County Council's website