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**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE  
ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
HELD ON 7 APRIL 2011**

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**EEOSP.27/11      CONNECT2 CYCLEWAY**

The Assistant Director (Local Environment) (Ms Culleton) presented report LE.07/11 that provided the background to and an update on the Connect2 Cycle Scheme. The project sought to connect the North and South of the City with a continuous cycleway. Sustrans had decided to withdraw their funding from the scheme, despite the City Council submitting information to show that the scheme was on programme for completion by the March 2013 deadline.

Ms Culleton explained that during the past 2 ½ years the City and its partners had completed approximately 2000m of the Connect2 scheme. Other elements of the scheme were under construction or due to commence in the next few months. Despite the progress it became apparent that completion of the full original scheme was unlikely due to the financial climate. Sustrans recognised the risk and placed the scheme “at risk”. The City Council submitted a revised scheme to which Sustrans requested answers to specific questions and additional information which was supplied. Within the information was a requirement for Sustrans to confirm their commitment to the amended scheme and the funding by 10 December 2010. Unfortunately that confirmation was not forthcoming and Sustrans insisted that the City Council continue with the programmed activities up to the end of February without a guarantee that funding would be secure thereafter.

Ms Culleton advised that at that time the city judged that it had provided sufficient information for the “at risk” level to be removed. However, Sustrans did not agree and a letter was received from Sustrans in February 2011 stating that they had applied to the Big Lottery Fund for agreement to withdraw the funding offer of £975,000.

Ms Culleton explained that it was anticipated that the Castleway ramp element would be provided with the Sainsbury’s development and an interrupted route of 2700m from the Sheepmount to Strand Road would be available when a short section near the Sands was provided.

The City Council remained firmly committed to the delivery of the whole scheme subject to financial support from partners, including Sustrans. That commitment was clearly demonstrated by the continuing work on cycle routes as detailed and the City Council believed that the amended scheme was still deliverable and that the situation was improved with recent offers of assistance towards the scheme from the County Council. The City Council would continue to progress the scheme as funds became available and

hoped that it was not the end of Sustrans involvement. Since February 2011 Sustrans had agreed to meet with Council representatives following discussions with the County Council.

The Local Environment Portfolio Holder advised that a letter had been received from Sustrans at 3:15pm on Friday 25 February 2011 requesting answers to questions by Monday 28 February 2011. It was anticipated that the Sainsbury development would go ahead and the County Council had engaged in a brokering meeting with the City Council and Sustrans. County Council Officers had visited Sustrans in Bristol on 4 April and had been advised that funding had been withdrawn and were given several excuses for that decision.

Officers had repeatedly requested meetings with Sustrans and requested further information but had received no response. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the City Council was still committed to the scheme but that there was still some work to be done. He believed that a letter should now be sent to the Big Lottery, either from the Leader of the Council or the Chief Executive, to explain the situation from the City Council aspect as the reputation of the City Council was at risk.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

In response to a query the Portfolio Holder advised that Sustrans was a registered charity. The Assistant Director (Local Environment) (Ms Culleton) confirmed that there was no complaints or appeals procedure on Sustrans' website.

- *Sustrans was formed before the millennium to set up a cycle way from John O'Groats to Lands End and were awarded £43m at that time. That scheme had not been achieved and it was not clear whether that funding had been spent.*
- *It may be useful to send a joint Parliamentary letter regarding the matter as the Council were being blamed for the matter when they were not at fault. It may also be useful to write to Prince Charles as he was keen on Cumbria and rural issues in general.*
- *It would be useful to have a briefing paper on lessons learned and what was happening next.*
- *Has the money allocated for the scheme been allocated elsewhere and would there be any recourse if it had?*

Sustrans had advised that they had other schemes under review.

- *In dealings with charitable organisations in the past if there was any deviation from a charity funded scheme, or if the scheme was not to continue, permission had to be sought for the change or some of the money returned. If the Big Lottery had*

*allocated money for a specific scheme would Sustrans not be legally bound to change the scheme without consultation?*

The Portfolio Holder advised that the scheme had been put “at risk” as the City Council did not have the funding for a new bridge over the River Eden. However alternatives had been submitted but no confirmation had been received that the alternative had been accepted.

Ms Culleton advised that Sustrans had confirmed that they could not guarantee the funding. She had requested information regarding their variation procedure as there had been no formal approval of the amendments and had been advised that they could not guarantee the funding.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that 2000 metres had been completed and that the remainder of the scheme would be completed by the deadline of 2013.

- *A formal complaint should be made to the Big Lottery if Sustrans had no appeals process.*

While it was acknowledged that Sustrans was a registered and had done some good work it was important that the reputation of the City Council was maintained.

RESOLVED: 1) That the report on Connect2 Cycleway be noted.

2) That the Panel were grateful for the explanation regarding the situation and the work that had been done and was planned for the future.

3.) That the Panel supported the Executive’s decision with regard to sending a letter to the Big Lottery to explain the Council’s position on the matter.