

Arnside to Grange Trail

Background

ATOG (Arnside to Grange) formed over 10 years ago in response to high level community interest in the Arnside Viaduct being adapted to enable walkers and cyclists to cross the Kent Estuary and provide a new traffic-free link between Grange-over-Sands and Arnside.

The group has raised funds internally and externally to commission several studies and undertake cost exercises for creating a trail link between the two communities. In 2022 Morecambe Bay Partnership took the lead for the partnership group in commissioning a feasibility study and undertaking community consultation to progress the vision to a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) required for serious consideration.

The partnership steering group has representation from the key stakeholders required to back a scheme of this nature:

- Network Rail
- Lake District National Park Authority
- Westmorland & Furness Council
- Natural England
- Cumbria Community Rail Partnership (Furness Line)
- Holker Estate
- Dallam Tower Estate
- Sustrans
- Arnside & Silverdale AONB
- Founder community members, interested parties and local landowners

The ATOG partnership exists to promote and achieve a vision for a traffic-free accessible trail connecting the communities of Arnside and Grange over the Kent Estuary by creating an iconic promenade style attraction and practical carbon reducing active travel link. If successful, the opening of the Arnside to Grange Trail will be good news for Westmorland and Furness's future, connecting communities, increasing active travel, improving health and wellbeing, reducing carbon emissions while boosting the local green economy and creating a fantastic attraction for visitors and local people to enjoy.

Our activities align to the following Westmorland & Furness Council Plan priorities:

For People, supporting active, healthy happy lives for young and old.

For Climate, in the drive to become carbon net zero.

For Communities, working closely with residents and businesses to enable them to shape their own destiny and thrive. Building strong links with parish and town councils. A thriving voluntary and third sector.

For Economy and culture, sustainable, inclusive, economic growth. Retaining our young people and attracting investment and skilled people.

What the funding will support

The funding will increase capacity to enable the progression of a range of activities that will offer a major contribution to the region's efforts to engage with the climate emergency, and the national net-zero targets, link communities, create exciting low carbon solutions and accessible active travel experiences for all.

Firstly, we intend to progress the Arnside to Grange Trail scheme to Outline Business Case (OBC) status which is the planning phase of the project and acts as the final technical assessment stage prior to the initiation of scheme procurement. The purpose of the OBC is therefore to:

- Confirm the investment option which optimises Value for Money (VfM);
- Prepare the scheme for procurement; and,
- Put in place the necessary funding and management arrangements for the successful delivery of the scheme.

We will commission PJA consultants to provide the technical engineering, environmental, active travel planning and place making expertise, and we will directly work with partners and the community to achieve:

- agreement in principle from Network Rail;
- robust plans for development, management and maintenance of the trail route;
- engagement of local people and behaviour change toward a shift from a reliance on motor vehicles to public transport and active travel options;
- improvements in health and wellbeing of the population by more people becoming active and exercising outdoors;
- greater understanding, appreciation and care for the natural environment of Morecambe Bay;
- new active travel opportunities;
- support for the scheme that provides a compelling case for construction funding.

The Technical Work

- Development of an Outline Business Case
- Full team site visit with Network rail and employment of a Banksman
- Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority liaison/projection work
- Landscape Appraisal
- New visualisations
- Value Engineering and Specification work
- Arnside Station access and village traffic reduction work
- Commission Network Rail expertise to submit a Form A certificate of approval in principle.

Community and Partnership Work

Morecambe Bay Partnership are currently delivering complementary low carbon active travel initiatives. This grant would increase our capacity to create a culture whereby people look for alternatives to motor vehicle transport as their first option around the coast of Morecambe Bay. Along with our work to champion walking and cycling routes that connect communities and provide leisure activity, and accessible trails for people with mobility issues, we are investing in infrastructure and opening our first Community Active Travel Hub at Grange Station to make active travel more accessible. The grant will give us the capacity to engage more with the local community, visitors, businesses, and other partners to raise the profile of active travel options and benefits, increasing participation in walking, cycling and local green infrastructure development.

Cycling and walking is the only practical way to achieve true carbon net zero movement of people. The creation of safe, easy, accessible active travel routes that connect communities should be seen as a priority in the toolkit to tackle carbon emissions. Active travel will never be for everyone or every occasion, but investment in quality infrastructure is essential to encourage and enable more people to change their behaviour. The Arnside to Grange Trail would be a showpiece example of how Westmorland and Furness are serious about active travel playing its part in tackling climate change, achieving net zero, protecting natural habitats, improving the environment whilst providing quality leisure space for local communities.

The proposed construction of a 5.5km raised boardwalk along the railway embankment and a cantilevered bridge over the viaduct creates a new leisure space that also limits the current harmful encroachment by people and dogs onto the highly sensitive saltmarsh. The enclosed trail route can play an important part in reducing bird disturbance and preventing damage to sensitive flora and fauna. These are all factors of concern locally to us and our partners Natural England and RSPB who are tackling this problem. We believe the trail provides an opportunity to bring people closer to nature and educate them to care about the special environment and wildlife of the Bay.

During our 2022/2023 feasibility work we engaged with local communities sharing our plans for a trail and seeking their opinion.

During a 2-week survey period over 6,000 people responded and gave the trail their overwhelming support. **99.6% supported the trail** (2.6% with some reservations).

Two drop-in consultation events in Grange-over-Sands and Arnside were attended by over 500 people who were keen to see plans and ask questions of the team. The feedback was incredibly positive.

This scheme is more popular with local people than any other we have worked on.

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Wider benefits

Eden Project Morecambe will generate an influx of new visitors interested in the environment, nature, Morecambe Bay and sustainable tourism. The trail experience will entice visitors to extend their trip, spending money further round the Bay benefiting local Cumbrian businesses and communities.

The scheme gives a high VfM 'Benefit to Cost Ratio' of 2.61 derived from figures from similar schemes like the Keswick to Threlkeld Trail. This only represents active travel benefits; actual benefit will be higher.

Contribution / benefit to local people:

- New leisure facilities, connecting communities, safe cycling and walking.
- New volunteering opportunities bringing people together with an interest in low-carbon life choices and helping others
- Promotion of active travel; making bikes, Trampers and mobility scooters easily accessible to local people; events and new community networks
- Organisations who aspire to net zero working together
- Free active travel taster sessions, guided rides, walks and events that improve the health and wellbeing of local people
- Practical solutions to the climate emergency available in the community.

Expenditure

Cost Description	Total including VAT
Project management and community delivery - inc. payroll, travel, and training	£25,640.00
Overheads @ 10%	£9,090.80
Subcontracting - technical and engineering (PJA & Network Rail)	£61,968.00
Equipment, events, marketing/PR materials	£3,300.00
Total	£99,998.80

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