



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Sustrans Application for Interreg IVA Funds
Date:	16 January 2008
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Relevant Background Information

To seek Members support for a Sustrans initiative.

Key Issues

Members will be aware that Sustrans is the sustainable transport network of cycle and pathways in Northern Ireland.

Sustrans has existed since it was established in Bristol 1977.

Currently Sustrans Northern Ireland is seeking to secure funding to put in place a trans-national cycle network linking Northern Ireland with Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. The organisation has developed a bid under the Interreg IVA Programme, tourism theme.

The trans-national cycle network will provide a number of strategic long-distance routes and crucial links in infrastructure, facilitating and improving cycle access between the core eligible regions of Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The new routes will all be designated as part of the National Cycle Network (NCN), a UK-wide high quality network of signed and maintained walking and cycle routes and the emerging National Cycle Network in the Republic.

The ambitious project will greatly enhance the tourism potential of these regions enabling the promotion and branding of a cross boundary walking and cycling product for tourists and residents alike.

It will represent the first concerted effort to provide a high quality linkage between the Northern Ireland NCN and the wider network on the mainland.

The project will also forge links into the Republic of Ireland along identifiable desire lines.

The project will also incorporate a range of infrastructure enhancement works within important urban settlements along the wider project network; namely Enniskillen, Omagh, Strabane and Derry. Improvements to walking and cycling routes in these populous border towns will be vitally important to the creation of a high quality and accessible network of cross-border routes.

Sustrans has vast accumulated experience relevant to this project acquired through the marketing and promotion of the National Cycle Network. The NCN is a vast system of routes now comprised of well in excess of 10,000 miles of walking and cycling tracks extending to all parts of the UK. Sustrans has a very sophisticated and informative website promoting and interpreting the Network to the general public and visitors.

Part of this project would be to enhance existing interactive website facilities such as the National Cycle Network, Cycle NI and similar websites in the Republic of Ireland. These sites will contain detailed information on travel, accommodation, services, facilities and route attractions. In addition to this, it would be the intention to link the website to the respective sites of the regional tourism organisations, cycling and outdoor recreation groups and relevant local authorities.

The project will run from 2009-2011 and deliver 150km of new and improved infrastructure extending across the eligible regions of the Interreg IVA programme i.e. Western Scotland, Northern Ireland and the border countries between the regions, and provide an extensive resource for utility, recreation, leisure and tourism activities as well as significant environmental benefits.

The total estimated cost of the projects £8,154,500 with an expected 75% of this being secured from the Interreg programme. Sustrans will seek to secure the match fund 25% from other partners including NITB, Failte Ireland and local authorities directly benefiting from the new infrastructure.

The Belfast City Council area will not directly benefit from new cycle infrastructure as this already exists. However, Belfast City Council is asked to formally endorse the application given that a fully integrated cycle path network would greatly enhance the tourism and leisure product within the Belfast area and add to Belfast's niche tourism portfolio

Recommendations

It is recommended that members endorse the Sustrans application for Interreg IVA funding at no financial cost to the Council.

Key to Abbreviations

NITB – NI Tourist Board
Interreg – Interregional (European fund)

Documents Attached