

## River Wear Trail – Fatfield – Cox Green Bridges wheeled pedestrian route

### Project Description and Overview

The project will restore to a high standard the accessibility of the River Wear Trail between Cox Green and Fatfield bridges. The route will be made much more inviting and accessible to a broader range of residents and visitors. Specifically, the route will become step-free, enabling the north + south bank circuit to be used by many in wheel chairs and with push chairs. The work will also secure the long term availability of the route by restoring the revetment supporting the path. The project will also endeavour to resolve the condition of a notable feature passed at Cox Green Riverside, the Alice Well.

The purpose of the project is to make the attractive and restorative riverside environment more welcoming, accessible and safe. This will be achieved by restoring the revetment support for the path, using both timber and planting traditional riverside willow, resurfacing substantial lengths of degraded path, modifying the southern ends of the two bridges to remove the steps, and installation of point access control structures to improve restrictions to unlawful use by motorbikes, horses and cyclists.

Improving the riverside paths, which are a focal point of the historic and newer riverside communities, will foster greater public enjoyment of, and pride in the local natural environment. In particular, the project will improve the facilities for quiet walking and wheeled pedestrian activities. It will provide a relatively easy 2.5 mile circuit along the dramatic tidal river, past historic sites and under the spectacular Victoria Viaduct.

Improving riverside access was identified in the Tyne & Wear Rights of Way Improvement Plan, which was subject to very extensive consultation with residents, Councillors, businesses and land owners. One of the key land owners along the riverside apart from the Council is the Woodland Trust who support these improvements. Since the inception of this project, it has become clear from discussions that the Alice Well is a point of local pride, and as an attractive feature of the circuit this project will endeavour to resolve its declined condition.

Once designs are finalised residential properties that front onto the areas to be worked on and the Friends of James Steel Park will be advised of the detail.

The project will benefit the residents of and visitors to the area. There is no question that the riverside path is popular, evidenced by its use. As part of the project, footfall measuring counters will be installed on an experimental basis to monitor use of the riverside route over several years following scheme completion. Such systems are commonly used on popular local and national trails, and suitable advice will be taken to select the most reliable and robust method. The data will inform on scheme success.

The target group is those who currently do and currently may take physical exercise along the riverside footpaths. They will be encouraged to use the route by visible improvements to the attractiveness and accessibility of the paths, by a press release following completion of the substantial works, and by a signing scheme that will promote the new accessibility of the circuit.

Future maintenance will be funded through existing revenue budgets for public rights of way, allocated within the Highway Maintenance.

<b>Costs</b>	
Cox Green Bridge ramping of steps	£10,000
Fatfield Bridge ramping of steps	£9,000
Revetment, surfacing, fencing, signage, user counters	£46,000
Access control barriers	£5,000
Alice Well resolution	£2,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£72,000</b>

<b>Source of funding</b>	
Local Transport Plan Cycle budget	£15,000
PROW budget	£10,000
Washington Area Committee	£26,500
<b>Coalfield Area Committee</b>	<b>£19,500</b>
C&CS Parks	£1,500

<b>Timescales</b>	
Revetment, surfacing, fencing, signing and access controls substantially completed	30/3/10
Fatfield Bridge ramping of steps	30/3/10
Cox Green Bridge ramping of steps	30/5/10

**Tim Ducker, Cycle Network & Public Rights of Way Officer**  
**21 October 2009**