

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	11 th November 2014
Report of:	Chief Operating Officer
Subject/Title:	Heritage and Cultural Renewal in Macclesfield (Ref CE 14/15-12)
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Peter Raynes, Finance

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Footpath 53, known as Step Hill, Macclesfield has been closed for health and safety purposes, the key issue originally thought to be one of stability of the wall abutting the footpath. The footpath and steps are important to the local community as an area of historic and special character.
- 1.2 Investigative works undertaken to date indicate that a full repair of the area will cost in excess of £1m. This paper suggests that a phased programme of works be undertaken in order to re-open the footpath and steps to members of the public
- 1.3 The investigative work undertaken has shown that there is an extensive problem in the area with the spread of Japanese Knotweed. Left uncontrolled, this plant can quickly dominate a site, causing damage to paving and foundations, and may increase the risk of soil erosion and bank instability. Treatment of the Japanese Knotweed has commenced, but requires a two year treatment programme, with a further three years monitoring. A further closure order has been granted for two years to allow the treatment of the knotweed and establish the extent of required works.
- 1.4 Whilst there are known structural issues with the stability of the walls, a stability analysis has been carried out using available ground investigation information which has established that the whole slope is potentially unstable. It is believed that the stability of the wall may be dependent upon improving the stability of the whole slope. An indicative solution has been found, which addresses both elements using 'anchors', over the whole earthwork. It is anticipated that a full repair of the area will cost well in excess of £1m and could, potentially, lead to further works in the wider Bunker Hill area. Additional ground investigation will be required to provide greater certainty of possible issues and estimate the costs required to complete the design and installation of anchors.

- 1.5 It is suggested that a phased approach be undertaken, with further geotechnical testing, ground and ecological survey investigative work being undertaken to fully inform any future requirement.
- 1.6 It should be noted that these cost estimates **exclude** design/supervision fees, legal fees, permanent land take costs, Inflation, site investigation costs, geotechnical testing, ecological surveys.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That, on a phased approach:

2.1.1 Approval be granted to, undertake repairs to wall 'D' on the attached plan, sufficient to allow the re-opening of the footpath at rear of town hall car park.

2.1.2 Approval be granted to undertake further site investigation, geotechnical testing and ecological surveys to the Step Hill area, to further establish slope stability.

2.1.3 Following such site investigation, and subject to the eradication of Japanese Knotweed to affected areas, approval be granted to undertake repairs to wall 'A' on the attached plan, to allow the re-opening of Footpath 53 (staircase down Step Hill numbered 3).

2.1.4 Delegated authority be granted to the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, to proceed with any further works required, subject to cost.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 Cheshire East Council is committed to improving the Macclesfield economy, taking pro-active actions to reopen Step Hill ensures that Macclesfield Town Centre remains an attractive location for residents, businesses and visitors and promotes regeneration within Macclesfield.

3.2 To ensure that the integrity of the slope is maintained.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 All Macclesfield Wards

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 Councillors : K Edwards; J Jackson; D Neilson; L Brown; M Hardy; S Carter; D Druce; L Jeuda; B Murphy; L Roberts; C Andrew; A Harewood; L Smetham

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 Re-opening the footpath and steps to members of the public supports the delivery of the following Resident First Outcomes:-
- Outcome 2: Cheshire East has a Strong and Resilient Economy:
Action taken to regenerate Macclesfield Town Centre will help to ensure that our visitor economy grows.
 - Outcome 4: Cheshire East is a Green and Sustainable Place:
Cheshire East's rural and urban character will be protected and enhanced through sensitive development and environmental management of the walls, steps and slopes at Step Hill.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 Capital funding in respect of schemes covered in Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 is available from existing approved budgets. Following those repairs and investigations, if further works are required additional funding may be needed; this will be subject to separate approval once scope and estimated costs are determined.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 As the likely value of the remedial works is below the current EU threshold for works contracts of £4,322,012 the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 do not apply but the works will need to be procured in accordance with the Council's Finance and Contract Procedure Rules.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 A failure to carry out remedial works to ensure the stability of Step Hill could, in time, lead to land slippage, which would have a greater financial and reputational risk to the Council.

10.0 Background

- 10.1 Footpath 53, Step Hill, Macclesfield has been closed for some considerable time, for health and safety purposes, the key issue originally thought to be one of stability of the wall abutting the footpath.
- 10.2 Investigation work has been undertaken by Cheshire East Highways in order to establish an acceptable solution to these stability issues

Project Scope

- 10.3 The scheme was originally approached on the basis that the **key** issue was the stability of the walls. However, whilst there are

structural issues with the walls, it has been established, by carrying out stability analysis from the available ground investigation information, that the whole slope may be potentially unstable. Therefore, in order to find a solution, it has been necessary to widen the project to enable the instability of the slope to be rectified.

- 10.4 Investigative work has shown that there is an extensive problem in the area with the spread of Japanese Knotweed. Left uncontrolled, this plant can quickly dominate a site, causing damage to paving and foundations, and may increase the risk of soil erosion and bank instability. Work is already underway to deal with this issue.

Phased Programme of Works

- 10.9 If approval is received to proceed, it is proposed that the work is undertaken in the phase:-

- 10.10 **Phase 1** - Undertake repairs to wall 'D' on the attached plan, sufficient to allow the re-opening of the footpath at rear of town hall car park.

Phase 2 - Undertake further site investigation, geotechnical testing and ecological surveys to the Step Hill area, to further establish slope stability.

Phase 3 - Following the further site investigation, and subject to eradication of Japanese Knotweed, undertake repairs to wall 'A' on the attached plan, to allow the re-opening of Footpath 53 (staircase down Step Hill numbered 3).

Phase 4 - Proceed with any further works required, subject to cost.

- 10.11 Phases 1 and 2 to be undertaken simultaneously.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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