

Work Under Way on South West Durham Heritage Corridor Project



DISUSED RAILWAY NO MORE: Work has started on a stretch of the walking route along the old railway line between Barnard Castle and Bishop Auckland

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WORK on the first stage of a potential £2m project to turn an old Teesdale railway line into a walking route is finally underway.

The South West Durham Heritage Corridor Project, also known as the Teesdale Rights of Way Improvements, has been “a long time in the making” as plans to turn the old railway line from [Barnard Castle](#) to [Bishop Auckland](#) into an accessible route originally appeared in the old District Plan.

The project, co-ordinated by the Teesdale Action Partnership (TAP), was stalled in 2010 because of funding difficulties but revived last year when funding was approved.

It has been further delayed by legal and ecological issues as some of the line, which closed in the 1960s, is privately owned while other areas have become a haven for wildlife.

Now, with the backing of Durham County Council, work has started on a 575 metre section of the path in the Cockfield area and is expected to be finished within the next few weeks.

Work includes creating a new resurfaced path, as well as drainage works, gates, fencing and habitat works with the finished stretch expected to accommodate the likes of walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Through its former Tourism Task and Finish Group, TAP members have agreed to fund a section of the route in the hope it would show other potential funders what could be done.

The stretch connects with two other existing paths with the work costing £19,000 in total, of which £8,070 is coming from TAP and the remaining balance coming from the Local Transport Plan.

TAP co-ordinator Craig Morgan said: “It is great to see this project getting started. The TAP Tourism Group saw this route as a key part of the tourism offer in the Teesdale area and wanted to do something to help kick start what will hopefully be a much bigger project.

“It is also welcome that the development of the route does feature in the draft version of the County Durham Plan, which means that the council does see the long term benefits that opening up the path could bring to the area”.

Mike Ogden, of Durham County Council’s access and rights of way team, added: “It’s good that we have actually done something on the ground and it might make other funders realise that it’s feasible – it shows what can be achieved.”

He added: “We can provide a balance between access and also provide nature conservation and at the same time use disused land that’s been disused for a long time.”

Source:

http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/11774876.Work_underway_on_South_West_Durham_Heritage_Corridor_Project/