

Speyside Way Best Value Review

Option Appraisal - SWOT Analysis

- Option 1** - Status Quo
- Option 2** - Development of a Charitable Trust to cover the management of the whole of the Speyside Way
- Option 3** - Complete separation. Each planning authority takes responsibility for ALL the functions associated with Speyside Way management and maintenance within its own area
- Option 4** - Each planning authority takes responsibility for overall maintenance and development of its own section of the path (as specified in the legislation) as part of the other path networks that are emerging (e.g. Core Paths Networks) with a pooled resource for the Speyside Way that is managed communally by one of the partners on behalf of the others to cover items such as:
- Central information provision
 - Delivery of marketing strategy
 - Development and delivery of interpretation strategy
 - Co-ordination of major events
 - Contributing to discussions at national level on LDRs
 - Planning and managing visitor survey information

Key to Analysis: Where similar points have been made, these are grouped as 'multi-colour bullets', with actual comments colour coded as below. 'Single colour' bullet points are coded in the same way, and represent the views of individual partners.

black - points specifically made by TMC

blue - points specifically made by THC

red - points specifically made by CNPA

Option 1 - Status Quo

Internal

Strengths

- Consistent unitary management throughout/**single focus on whole route/ whole route management**
- All staff fully familiar with the whole route/**benefits of historical continuity (staff knowledge etc)/knowledge of whole route**
- Highly flexible and reactive to problems/**deployment of staffing/resources is flexible along the route/flexibility of staff to resolve problems**
- Purpose built central information point and offices serving staff and users 52 weeks of the year/**one stop shop for complaints/problems**
- Has served the route well to date/**tried and tested**
- Central point of contact for information for users, event organisers, authors, film crews etc
- Full spectrum of central support provided by TMC
- Significant economies of scale - no duplication of resources e.g. staff IT, tools, vehicles, systems etc.
- Widely regarded as 'Best Practice' for LDR management (LDR Standards)
- Good working relationships within group and with landowners and users
- Consistent marketing and promotion
- Managed as a single entity, therefore spend can be targeted where required, not restricted to partner areas.

Weaknesses

- Will not result in TMC savings targets being met
- Not sufficiently flexible to cope with the extension to Newtonmore
- Already covers a huge geographical area - staff travelling time is considerable.
- Continuing differences of opinion about standards, development works, priorities, / **focus on care and maintenance of what is already there (not development and/or improvement) / inflexibility in relation to wider context (ie focus on single line of the path, etc)**
- Perceived by the CNPA to be failing the section of the route within the Park/ **high cost for limited return (especially in terms of staffing, ranger activity and interpretation/ information provision)**
- Management group may 'break' under strain of disagreements / **strains on partnership arrangements and relationships if management arrangements not progressing or developing well**
- Currently places too much reliance on key individuals / **much depends on current route manager**
- Uncertainty about future funding from partners
- **Difficulty of responding to customer demand for developmental changes**

External

Opportunities

- As posts become vacant it may be possible to re-locate 'base locations' to other places along the route.
- Could be expanded into core path management
- Development of a DMP to achieve long term goals
- Use SRDP/Leader resource for developments
- Develop sponsorship links
- Engage with businesses that derive benefit from route

Threats

- LA/public sector funding will come under further pressure/**current and future funding situation /further constraints on capital versus revenue items/high competition for capital expenditure in LA environment**
- **Very limited capability to draw in external funding**
- **Priority of Speyside Way diminishing within LA context (as per forthcoming MC budget cuts)** (Precipitated by Resource Transfer anomalies, not driven by LA priority shift)
- Inability to carry out large capital works
- Key staff leaving post
- Fragmentation of management following funding cuts
- Continuing perception that some partners are not getting value for money

Option 2 - Development of a Charitable Trust to run the whole route

Internal

Strengths

- Continuing unitary management / **single focus on the whole route**
- More flexible working / **deployment of staffing and resources is flexible along the route**

Weaknesses

- May not be legally competent for a 'planning authority' to devolve a statutory duty to a Trust / **unlikely to be acceptable to OSCR – too close to statutory duties and would need development around a wider base**
- Unlikely to result in savings to partners
- Existing MC Speyside Way staff would be redundant / **can they be TUPED to a Trust?**
- Confusion for all (users, landowners etc) at least in the short term / **will take time to build up the knowledge and working relationships that currently exist**
- Cost of setting up a new management system from scratch / **time-consuming to set up**
- Maintenance by 'contracting out' is more expensive than direct labour work-force, therefore likely to represent poor value for money / **difficult to determine 'Best Value'**
- Difficult to provide long term core revenue funding because of pressure on LAs
- **Potential lack of Flexibility** / may well result in poorer overall management provision
- **Where do existing Ranger Services fit in?**

Opportunities

- May be able to access funding not available to LAs/ **Drawing in external funding for development/sourcing funding currently available/scope to receive charitable donations/ outsourced from LAs.**
- **Provides very good basis for partnership work**
- **Flexible in terms of capital and revenue expenditure / funding opportunities to solve long term problems eg bridges**

Threats

- Trust funding may not be sustainable - who then picks up the pieces?/ **long term viability**
- **Loss of connection to statutory duties / the duty to manage and LDR is on a local access authority, not a Trust**
- **Security of employment for staff**
- **Will landowners wish to enter leases/path agreements with a charity?**

External

Option 3 - Complete separation. Planning authorities take full responsibility for all development, management and maintenance functions within their own areas.

Internal

Strengths

- Authorities have complete freedom to run their own route sections as they like / each authority can make its own decisions and have its own priorities /easier to set route management in context of path management in each area
- Budgets can be set independently, and according to available resources/ each authority pays for its own section/ costs borne in relation to local circumstances
- Logistically easier to carry out maintenance functions
- Potential for cost savings/increased returns
- Direct line of accountability and customer responsiveness

Weaknesses

- Loss of 'single front' presented to users and of single route identity / loss of whole route management and marketing/ assumes each managing authority maintains and applies the same priorities
- Fragmentation/duplication in information provision, publications, and of the route itself / lack of focus on whole route issues (potential for each authority to go its own way etc) / difficult to tackle whole-route issues
- Loss of management of the route to a single standard / different standards between sections
- Confusion for all (users, landowners etc) at least in the short term
- Increased overall costs to public sector because of duplication of facilities and loss of economies of scale/ loss of economies of scale
- Break up of team/staff redundancies
- Loss of established whole route knowledge
- Loss of existing staff expertise
- Loss of partnership working
- Inability to continue to fund route

Opportunities

- Flexibility of management within own area/future flexibility of management/ flexible management across wider path network / integration of route with wider path network
- Ability to target funding
- Potential for developmental/improvement works (ie beyond maintenance)

Threats

- LA funding will come under further pressure
- Failure to deal with cross-border issues such as i) events/exemption orders ii) licensing of brand iii) negotiations with publishers of maps/guidebooks
- Medium/long term viability of route as a single entity
- Split of donations
- Moderate capability to draw in external funds (but some potential to do with whole route issues)

External

Option 4 - Separation of physical development and maintenance functions as per option 3, but one authority providing some 'whole route' functions such as central information provision, marketing, events co-ordination, visitor surveys etc

Internal

Strengths

- Some of the benefits of unitary management retained
- Easier to set route management in the context of path management in each area.
- Gives individual authorities scope to deliver their statutory duty in a way which suits capital and revenue budgets, ways of working, interpretation of standards etc. while maintaining 'seamless front' to the user /each authority can make its own decisions and have its own priorities on the maintenance of the route / ability for each authority to target funding rather than to contribute to other parts of the route/ costs borne in relation to local circumstances
- Offers TMC the possibility of meeting budget targets
- Discussion and agreement of the whole route features to be paid for provides a good basis for partnership working / opportunity for more harmonious working between authorities when co-operating only on higher level functions
- Direct line of accountability
- Appropriate focus on whole route issues
- Potential for cost savings/increased returns

Weaknesses

- Duplication of maintenance facilities is not cost efficient / loss of economies of scale
- Less focus on whole route issues than the current arrangements
- Standards may be applied differently on the ground along the route / different standards of maintenance
- There may still be disagreement about the 'whole route' function - delivery, standards etc.
- Difficult to agree on the shared whole route functions and the costs thereof.
- Risk of fragmentation of standards of route maintenance and/or presentation, because of divergence of funding levels available, individual authority policy/ priority changes / fragmented approach
- Loss of whole route knowledge for maintenance
- Loss of existing expertise
- Potential unwillingness/inability of Authorities to continue to fund and support the route to the same standard
- Difficulty of resolving cross-border problems and issues

Opportunities

- To have a clear Service Level Agreement for whole-route management purposes
- Flexible management across wider path network
- Integration of route with wider path network
- Direct line of accountability and customer responsiveness
- Potential for developmental /improvement works (ie beyond maintenance)
- Potential for cost savings/increased returns
- Enhanced capability to draw down external funds

External

Threats

- Reduction in the levels of public sector funding available to managing authorities.
- Unworkable if no agreement proves possible on central role - functions, cost and provider
- Blame culture when issues or problems arise/inability to satisfactorily resolve whole route management, marketing and promotion
- Inability to establish consistent customer satisfaction and monitoring for the route