The Valley of Stone Greenway: Rossendale and Rochdale Railway Path and Cycleway

Working Report
October 2013

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The Valley of Stone Greenway: A Rossendale and Rochdale Railway Path and Cycleway

Table of Contents
1. Introduction and summary
2. The policy context for this Greenway Route
3. Description of Valley of Stone Greenway Route
4. Blockages and gaps
5. Technical issues and challenges
6. Options and alternatives
7. Development sites and their contribution
8. Crossings and links
9. Connecting footpaths and bridleways
10. Technical details and standards
11. Entrances, railway heritage and sculpture features
12. Estimates of cost
13. Sources of funding
14. Outline programme of work
15. Maintenance and management matters

Appendices
Appendix 1. Route description and detailed proposals
Appendix 2. Schedules of estimates of costs
Appendix 3. Heritage quarry sites and tramways
Appendix 4. The link to Bacup Town Centre
Appendix 5. The opportunities of developments
Appendix 6. The initial leaflet used to describe the project

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1. Introduction and Summary of the Valley of Stone Greenway Project

Over the course of 2013 Lancashire, Rossendale and Rochdale Councils have been working on developing a popular path along the course of the former railway from Rawtenstall to Rochdale. This route would be the basis for encouraging walking and cycling, for school and business commuting as well as fitness and health, through this densely packed valley in the South Pennines.

Since the railways closure over 40 years ago various sections have been made into paths including the Alan Fishwick Way in Rawtenstall, the Whitworth Cycleway down from the summit at Britannia, and the spectacularly beautiful section through Healey Dell Nature Reserve. But other sections of the line have been sold off and factory expansions across the formation have resulted in a number of significant obstacles to a continuous route seeking to avoid the heavily trafficked main road through the floor of the valley.

With plans for a Mountain Bike Centre at Futures Park to support the popular trails in Lee Quarry and Cragg Quarry, and the nationwide increase in cycling for everyday trips - for the journey to school, work and for leisure - there is a fresh incentive to complete a whole route.

Despite these difficulties, which the present work has sought to overcome, this is an immensely valuable greenway route. It runs through an almost continuously built up corridor through which it can promote walking and cycling journeys of every kind but, at the same time, it manages to draw a thread of green countryside to create a memorable journey with views of the hills and quarries which the railway was built to serve.

1.2 The Greenway Route Project Work

The quality of the route, and thence its popularity, will depend on its continuity to make a useful way for local people. The project work has focussed on negotiating solutions to overcome blockages and of drawing up details to show how the path could be built.

The project has also sought to bring forward physical work in parallel with its proposals. Rochdale Borough Council has refurbished the whole of the Healey Dell path and has made some improvements to problem areas, notably the flooding through the Whitworth Road Tunnel. Profitts have gained a planning consent for significant works to reconstruct the existing path at Rakehead Lane and realign it to achieve much easier gradients so that the route can be opened up to a much wider range of people including those in wheelchairs and with buggies. They have also reconstructed the path through Stacksteads Park. Detailed proposals have been prepared for a number of key sections including the SlingCo Gap at the north end of Whitworth with the support of that Company, and the difficult connection to Stubbylee Park as the first part of a solution to bypassing the Council Depot gap at New Line Tunnel.
The study has also considered the opportunities offered by the numerous developments along the way and these have been drawn up and are shown in a separate appendix to this report. Any chance of making a good connection to the centre of Bacup is critically dependent upon the vision of Rossendale Council to bring forward a riverside promenade through the now unused lands owned by Sulzer Ltd. Another example of the necessity for the Council’s guidance is Rossendale’s inclusion of a potential link to the Whitworth Community School through the current Persimmon Orama Mill Housing Development.

Another aspect of this project of real interest is its history in serving the stone quarries in this valley. The numerous tramway inclines and wagon ways which serviced this industry and connected down to the railway, are described in a further appendix. It is proposed to mark each of these with a large rock from each quarry placed at this connection and for each to be set with a plate detailing this remarkable history. We are grateful for the help of the Friends of the Valley of Stone Group in this area.

1.3 The Programme, estimates of cost, maintenance and funding

These are all aspects vital to making progress on any project of this nature. The Project has been co-ordinated by a Project Group which has met at intervals at Futures Park and detailed proposals for all these matters are set out in this report. This envisages a timescale of 3 – 4 years to see this route through to completion.

Although the distances are not great, this project has posed an unusually large number of issues to overcome and matters which require Council support and commitment, all something which is difficult in these austere times.

At the Rochdale end there is the added complexity of the direct option to the Town Centre via the Spodden Valley running past the site of the former Turners Asbestos Works, and of the new Metrolink route to the Town Centre being built without provision for cyclists either along its route or on the trams themselves.

This report recommends that a Project Team comprising local people is set up to maintain the momentum of the current work and to support the Lancashire, Rossendale and Rochdale Councils in seeing this Valley of Stone Greenway through to a successful completion and a popular future.

John Grimshaw and Colin Hubbard
September 2013
2. The Policy context for the development of the Valley of Stone Greenway Route

There are a number of good reasons for creating this Greenway Project. They include:

1. To contribute to the delivery of local and national transport policies by encouraging walking and cycling for short journeys. In this particular area with all transport options crowded into the floor of these steep valleys, the railway corridor is almost the only means of fulfilling these transport policies.

2. To assist social cohesion by creating and strengthening outdoor access links between and within communities through the creation and promotion of these paths and links.

3. To contribute to the delivery of local and national health policies by providing opportunities for people to more easily incorporate walking and cycling and physical activity into their daily life for fitness and health. (Rossendale and Rochdale are two of the most problematic areas in the UK for ill health caused by unhealthy lifestyles).

4. To contribute to the economic vitality of the area by creating opportunities for outdoor recreation and wildlife based tourism business to develop in addition to local shopping.

5. To enhance the appreciation of the natural and industrial heritage of the Valley of Stone. Taken together these points add up to supporting a number of policy facets and to making a widespread contribution towards the health of the local community.

3. Description of the Valley of Stone Greenway Route

The name of this railway path route from Rawtenstall to Rochdale was chosen on account of the long history of stone quarrying in the area, the numerous quarry tramways connecting with the railway and the buildings along the valley constructed from this local stone.

The railway was built in stages by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. The line from Rochdale to Facit opened in October 1870. The extension to Bacup then followed opening in November 1881. Here it joined the East Lancashire Railway which had been progressively opened from Rawtenstall, first to Waterfoot in 1848, and then to Bacup in 1852. The traffic on that line justified its doubling, a work which was completed in 1876 when the Cloughfold Viaduct was widened and the second Newchurch tunnel built through the narrow Thrutch Gorge (the Glen). The lines closed in almost reverse order, first in1952 the Bacup and Facit line, then in August 1967 the last train ran from Rochdale to Whitworth, the section to Facit having closed a little earlier. Bacup to Rawtenstall closed in December 1966.

1980: The Healey Dell Trail from Dell Road to Massey Croft at the south end of Whitworth. This 2.4km long path runs through the local nature reserve and across the 30m high Spodden Viaduct. It is locally popular and is a remarkable resource for Rochdale and Whitworth. 1988: The Shawclough Road to Taylor Street section followed on the extensive “reclamation” of the railway route which included the removal of the Shawclough Road and Lower Healey Lane Bridges and the complete infilling of the long cutting from Whitworth Road to Taylor Street. As a result this 2.0km route is rather fragmented, and its usage has never developed despite its urban location. This has not been helped by some steep gradients and a number of restrictive barriers. This section has been refurbished during 2013 and now looks much better after years of neglect.

1995: The Alan Fishwick Way, 1km long from Hill End Lane in Rawtenstall to the old visitor centre beyond Lench Road. This section was constructed to a high standard with dual paths to accommodate equestrians as well as pedestrians and cyclists. Unfortunately its continuation was blocked by Buckhurst Plant’s occupation of the railway with the consequence that this section at present cannot serve as a useful route anywhere and consequently is only lightly used.

From an early date the Councils constructed paths along sections of the railway route recognising that this was a useful corridor which had the potential to serve large urban areas. The most notable of these sections of paths were opened as follows.
2010: The Whitworth Cycleway from the north end of Whitworth to the Britannia Summit 2.8kms. This is an excellent route built to high standards, except in its ramp gradients at Old Lane in Shawforth and Oak Street in Facit where inadequate measures have been taken to overcome the loss of the former railway bridges. These very steep ramps, and the absence of a link to Station Road at its southern end means that this route is very much less popular than it deserves to be. Our report addresses all these shortcomings with practical solutions.

2011: The Britannia Cycleway would have continued the Whitworth route for another 1.2kms but inadequate drainage provision, coupled with a small land slip has resulted in a deeply eroded surface which is largely unusable. Fortunately with the basic path in place, reconstruction should not be too difficult. This is the only section of the railway which really retains its original characteristics as it runs on a deep cutting, under a number of remaining bridges, all in a world of its own which is surprisingly separate from the nearby noise of main road traffic and new housing development.

Lee Quarry and Cragg Quarry Mountain Bike Routes
As well as the work on the Valley of Stone Railway Path the Councils have developed the remarkable network of popular mountain bike routes in Lee and Cragg quarries. These have become really popular, so much so that it is now planned to construct a mountain bike centre and café at Futures Park.

2013: The Stacksteads Park Link 260m long was reconstructed to a high standard just this year and reflects the Council’s ongoing commitment to open up a complete route.
4. Blockages and Gaps

For the Valley of Stone Greenway to achieve its full potential as a popular local route useful for everyday trips, and as a route of national renown drawing visitors to the area, it must be constructed to a high standard and it must be continuous end to end.

The ends should be defined as the Town Centres and Railway Stations to give access to as large a population as possible and each blockage along the way must be overcome. The principle barriers at present are shown on the map.

They comprise 4 sections over which the ownership of the railway has been completely lost and through which there is no clear route. There are also a number of technical obstacles ranging from a missing bridge, to severe erosion, and difficult road crossings. These must be resolved to ensure that the route is used to full potential.

In Rochdale barriers erected to control motorbikes completely undermine the continuity of the route for cyclists who have to negotiate 4 ‘A’ frames and 3 kissing gates each of which requires the cyclist to dismount and for some like people with child seats makes the route inaccessible. These should all be removed, and if barriers are needed at all they should be replaced with adjustable barriers such as the one illustrated from the Harrogate railway path. These can be left wide open once the problem of motorbikes is under control as a consequence of popular use.

Adjustable barriers near Harrogate
4.1 The Gemini and Buckhurst Plant Gap

This obstacle is possibly the most problematic on the whole route as it is difficult to resolve and being so close to Rawtenstall itself it cuts off the whole upper section of the Greenway from the Town Centre.

At present the path from the Town stops at the former information centre. The public can walk down a rough track and cross the river through Gemini’s buildings but this right of way is far from satisfactory as it crosses the active factory working areas so it would be most unsuitable for a popular shared use route.

The road through the factory – Holt Mill Road – may have public rights and on an interim basis one could envisage the public walking their cycles through here and then making a shared use pavement as far as the works road beyond the Buckhurst Plant Station buildings.

For a permanent route the only practical options are to either wait for Buckhurst Plant to plan to redevelop their warehouse site and ensure that a good path is incorporated in that development, or to create a new path looping up on the hillside to the south of the works. This is detailed in the Appendices and is recommended as the way forward because, although the route requires the agreement of Buckhurst Plant, it can be separated from all of their operations.

4.2 The Ormerod Gap

The Ormerod Gap is the next obstacle along the route. We had hoped to work a path along the south bank of the Irwell but were unable to negotiate an exit to Lee Road via No.2. This remains the preferred option should the situation ever change there. For the interim there is little choice but to follow a route along the footway of the main Newchurch Road. For half its length there is a more than adequate wide footway past the factory walls (although clear markings are needed across entrances), but for 120m in front of the Terrace the way is rather narrow varying from 2.4m wide to 1.4m with a delineated 1.0m wide frontage to the Terrace itself as can be seen in the photograph.

Looking towards Futures Park from Holme Street showing the well defined pavement in front of the Terrace frontage
4.3 The Council Depot and New Line Tunnel Gap

The railway route swept off to Bacup Station via a tunnel under New Line Road. This tunnel is now used as a road salt store with adjacent depot by Lancashire County Council. Should this use ever cease this makes the best way through to Bacup and a safe crossing of the main road.

Access to Bacup remains a problem. The only direct option is to provide cycle lanes either side of Newchurch Road and Market Street, something which would be reasonably straightforward as there are few frontages on this wide road. But for a Greenway route we recommend a route via Stubbylee Park then a crossing to Park Road and the conversion of the north/west footway to Bacup to shared use.

For the moment we see the best way forward is to make a high quality zigzag ramp up to Stubbylee Park as the start of a route via Moorlands Park and past Height Barn Farm through to New Line Reservoir. This would give an excellent quality route and draw both Stubbylee Park and Moorlands Park into play with a popular route connecting them to Futures Park and all the Mountain Bike Centre activity generated there.

The details of all these options are shown in Appendix 1.

A. Futures Park
B. Route via Height Barn Land to New Line Reservoir and the Britannia Greenway
C. Potential shared use pavement route to Bacup Town Centre
D. Course of former railway which would make the best promenade route of all once the former Sulzer site is redeveloped. The support of Next Century will also be invaluable in making the connection through from the road or the tunnel to the riverside. Note that the current Rockcliffe Housing also offers links and connection opportunities.

1. Incorporate a promenade path in the Futures redevelopment
2. Zig-zag up at 1:15 gradient centred on open glade to minimise tree loss
3. Existing drives in Stubbylee Park
4. Stubbylee Lane
5. Link through Height Barn Farm land

4.4 The SlingCo Gap

At present the Whitworth Cycleway debauches out into the main road, which is followed for 200m to reach the relative tranquillity of Station Road. A direct link avoiding all of this has been agreed with SlingCo Ltd who support the route shown here.

A. Whitworth Cycleway to Summit at Britannia
B. Cowm Park Way North mostly built on line of railway, leads through to the Healey Dell Greenway
C. The Facit Incline is a significant feature of the landscape
D. Excavate ramp to achieve 1:20 graded slope from main path
E. Link along boundary of SlingCo works
5. Technical Issues and Challenges

As well as the obstacles and gaps arising from the loss of land ownership along the railway, the Greenway route faces a number of barriers, gaps and road crossings which need to be dealt with. These are less of a problem than are the obstacles because the land ownership is generally with the Councils and their resolution is mainly a funding issue. The list here is selective and does not include such matters as the reconstruction of the Britannia Greenway which are of a more routine nature! The details of all the points mentioned here are set out in Appendix 1.

1. Irwell Bridge and Newchurch Tunnels

Because the western tunnel is blocked off and the Irwell Bridge is missing this is a real gap in the route at present, although it is possible to follow the footway along the Newchurch Road to join the open eastern tunnel to regain the Greenway. The Appendix includes the details of this scheme drawn up ready for an early planning application.

2. The Rakehead Lane ramps are currently much too steep, and Proffitts now have planning consent to reconstruct them and greatly ease gradients by crossing over the road much further down the hill.

3. Similarly at Blackwood the path climbs very steeply at 1:6, up the line of the tramway incline in fact. Again, Proffitts have consent to make a new alignment dropping down the hillside at a gradient of 1:20 over 400m.

4. At Shawforth the current route can be levelled out with a new path cutting away to the former stone making sidings.

5. At Facit the ramp down to Oak Street is very steep and a complete barrier to all but the most able. The proposal for a new zigzag ramp also gives access to planned playing fields.

6. Shawclough Road crossing is a real obstacle on account of the speed and volume of traffic on this road. In an ideal world the best solution would be a new bridge which could be fitted in here, but otherwise the very least which is required is a central island and zebra crossing.

7. Lower Healey Lane is only a small road now used by pedestrians to the local school, but the removal of its bridge has resulted in a steep drop down and climb up again which reduces the range of people who can use this route. The Appendix details modest earthworks to ease this slope and sort out the drainage in the gulley below.
6. Options and Alternatives

The development of any Greenway Route is always faced with options and alternatives the outcome of which is never finally resolved until the path is built and opened thereby fixing the solution.

This Valley of Stone Greenway is no exception and a number of the issues are discussed in this report, including the best way for a link to Bacup which will depend upon the results of ongoing negotiations.

However the approach to Rochdale Town Centre presents a particularly difficult problem because the direct and most attractive route, via the Spodden Valley, is not supported by the Council on account of its proximity to the former Turners Asbestos works.

We have included the Spodden route in some detail in Appendix 1 because even if the Works area causes delay, some of the routes key components depend upon redevelopments along the riverside near the Town Centre where it is crucial to incorporate a riverside route, even though this might only be for the benefit of local residents living in the north west of Rochdale.

As far as we can see the Woodlands Road/Spod Road route is already regularly used by local people, and perhaps by as many cyclist as use the railway path route. (This route, as we have already discussed, is fragmented and unattractive to any cyclist making a regular trip.) In the light of this it seems to us that the Spodden riverside route could well be promoted now, at no risk to the Council and its inclusion in the overall scheme would greatly increase the range of local residents who could access the Valley of Stone Greenway.
7. Development Sites

Much can be achieved through careful integration with developers over their sites and by ensuring that they include extensions to the route and links in their works. Indeed if they do they will have the satisfaction that a greater number of journeys by their residents will be made by foot or bicycle – sustainable transport – than otherwise would be the case.

The most critical example of this here is in the forging of a link to Bacup. Here the large landholdings of the closed Sulzer works occupy the floor of the valley and any redevelopment should orientate itself to face onto the river and incorporate a promenade in its plans.

Indeed it is of great importance that when drawing up planning briefs for a number of sites, the opportunities they present are not lost.

Another absolutely important example is at Buckhurst Plant where, unless resolved through negotiation for a southern hillside route, the only solution would be to incorporate a good route in the eventual redevelopment of the Railway Warehouse area. As the site is only some 3kms from the Town Centre of Rawtenstall, and the Station, so the completion of the Greenway Route would mean that residents could make many everyday trips without a car.

We have prepared detailed appendices covering the issues and opportunities of all the current development sites along the route (Appendix 5) and the challenges to reach Bacup Town Centre which relies on support from developers. (Appendix 4)
8. Crossings and Links

The main road through the valleys carries large volumes of heavy traffic which constitutes a real barrier between communities and activities on either side of the road.

Between Rawtenstall and Britannia most of the resident population are to the north of the road whilst the Greenway and the Stubbylee/Moorlands Parks lie to the south, so convenient and safe crossings of the main road are essential.

The only dedicated crossing suitable for cyclists on the whole route is the Pegasus light control at Waterfoot which is situated to also assist equestrians riding the Pennine Bridleway.

There are also 4 zebra crossings and 2 pelican light crossings for pedestrians. None of these can be conveniently used by cyclists. Improvements could be made. Access to the Pelican at Peel Street in Rawtenstall could be much improved by simply making a link to the adjacent greenway path for example.

Pelican lights near Peel Street showing adjacent greenway but no linking path.

The map shows the location of the more significant crossings which are likely to need resolving if the Valley of Stone Greenway is to be truly accessible to as many people as possible.

These are:
1. Rook Hill Road to Baldwin Street which would be the most direct route for most Stackstead’s people to reach the Greenway for Rawtenstall. A crossing here would also be useful to reach the bus stop.
2. A crossing at Futures Park is needed for people travelling along the main road and for reaching the café with its footpath to Fernhill Close.
3. Crossing New Line from Park Road to the Stubbylee Park entrance is vital for access to the Park.
4. Crossing New Line from the Sidings link will open up access to everyone coming from the Bacup direction travelling towards Rochdale.
5. There are now quite a number of houses in the Britannia area and a crossing is needed to reach the summit.
6. In Whitworth the north end of Tonnacliffe Road needs to connect across to Massey Croft.
7. The southern end of this road at Broadley needs access to Station Road.
   In Rochdale the problem is more about resolving crossings along the length of the route. The chief of these are as follows:-
8. Shawclough Road is a considerable barrier depressing usage of the greenway.
9. Fieldhouse Road needs a priority crossing.
10. At the end of the long greenway route down the Spodden Valley a crossing is required over Spotland Road.
11. College Road is the last barrier to tackle as the remaining junctions all have lights of some sort or other. At St. Mary’s Gate the existing lights are due to be renewed and so could readily accommodate cyclists whilst at either end of Dane Street existing lights need to be pressed into service.
9. Linking Paths and Bridleways

The Valley of Stone Greenway can be viewed as the spine route linking to, and making more accessible, any number of exiting paths and bridleways. There are over 30 public footpaths and tracks connecting with this Greenway. Many of them are little used even though they open up wonderful countryside and useful connections.

The map here shows just a selection of these paths chosen by Arthur Baldwin of the Friends of the Valley of Stone Group. These loops illustrate just how useful a completed Greenway could be in unlocking the open countryside in these valleys.

The Greenway could make the start of each of these paths clear and should devise a simple map to attach to each starting off point showing the nearest loop walks and advertising any event of guided walks. The sketch shows another variant of the stone seat with just such a “board” onto which local volunteers could undertake to paste maps and guides.

At a local level there are networks of short paths provided in the refurbished Stacksteads Park, and at Healey Dell there has long been a number of scenic footpaths all accessed from the railway which runs through the nature reserve as a spine route.

Locations where Path connections need emphasising
1. Hill End Lane
2. Townsend Street –Newchurch Tunnel No.1
3. Rakehead Lane
4. Stacksteads Park
5. Futures Park
6. Deanesgreave Bridge
7. Crown Street
8. Valley View
9. Facit Incline
10. Hall Street
11. Healey Dell entrance

Selected paths linked to the Greenway

- Selected footpaths
- Key bridleways
- Valley of Stone Greenway
10. Technical Details and Standards

Successful Greenways result from a number of ingredients coming together to make an irresistible whole. These include:

- Offering a useful route for everyday journeys of every kind including trips to work, school and shops, as well as casual recreation and walking the dog.

- Offering attractive and memorable surroundings so that people want to see the greenway and visitors come on account of its reputation. This route certainly has special potential in sections as diverse as the Spodden Viaduct over Healey Dell, the uplands at Britannia and the whole connection with the Lee Quarry mountain bike areas.

- Having a smooth and all weather surface suitable for casual use by a wide number of people throughout the year and in most weather conditions. In this respect the Whitworth Cycle Route section is almost ideal in the quality of its finish, although it is not usual to use concrete kerbing for rural greenway routes.

- Adequate width for comfortable shared use and a wide grass verge for equestrians are both important. A width of 2.5m is usually considered to be the minimum in rural areas and 3.0m in urban sections where possible.

- Easy gradients for the less able, for wheelchairs and buggies, also extends the range of users and in some cases provides the only opportunity for wheelchair users, for example to have access and paths through the countryside. As far as possible main path gradients should seek to achieve slopes of 1:20 or less, with links at perhaps 1:15. This is not always possible and where, for example on the Stubbylee zigzag, the ruling gradient is 1:15, then level resting areas at each of the bends is most desirable.

- Continuity at road crossings and the absence of barriers is a point of particular significance as each unprotected crossing, and each restrictive barrier is a deterrent to some people, and taken cumulatively they eat away at the potential usage of the route. This is very evident in the Shawclough Road to Taylor Street Greenway in Rochdale where 3 unprotected road crossings, 4 tight barriers and 2 steep ramps combine to cause difficulties for cyclists, particularly children, tag bikes, disabled cyclists/users and buggies on this section of route as it currently stands.

All junctions with roads should have smooth flush kerbs and defined crossings which give priority to the greenway user as far as possible. The optimum solution is a raised pavement zebra crossing where the pedestrian and cyclist has clear priority.
Greenways should be free of barriers as far as possible, abuse by others such as motorcyclists stifled by the popular usage by masses of walkers and cyclists, combined with clear bylaws enforced by voluntary rangers and the police.

- Signing needs to direct the public from popular centres onto the Greenway and then off again at local destinations. There is much to be said for modest signing maintained by voluntary rangers rather than costly one-off signs which are difficult to replace.

- The project group should work hard to create the Valley of Stone Image through leaflet, design and sculpture, all with the interest of reinforcing this as a special place which people care for, love and use.

11. Entrances, Railway Heritage and Sculpture Features

This Greenway is no ordinary path, it is the Valley of Stone Greenway. It goes through a rugged countryside, past the remains of massive retaining walls and structures and it should be detailed to reflect this scale and toughness. Its entrances and features should set out to proclaim that this is a particular place, a greenway which is the pride of the area.

For example entrances could be arranged as short defiles through a stack of rocks as shown in the sketch. These materials are readily available and would provide a durable entrance.

Another significant feature is to mark the locations where each Quarry or Colliery tramway connected with our main line railway. These tramways are described in detail in Appendix 3. Here we suggest that a single large block, of the sort which might have been quarried, is positioned close to the original junction as a seat. This could be backed with a heavy steel plate laser cut into the shape of a wagon and pierced with the name of the Quarry in question.

The whole question of the interpretation of the history of the quarries and their connecting tramway is fascinating and of great interest. The Friends of the Valley of Stone have developed a number of guided walks looping up from the Greenway and each of these could be marked with a sentinel stone and a plaque of the route in question. There are a large number of public footpaths which intersect with the Greenway and each of these would be the opportunity for a stone seat and a steel marker post cut out with the route and destination.

Another feature of this Greenway route are the remaining stone walls and bridges over the line. Each of these should be treated as visual features and kept clear of rubbish and vegetation. For example the Station Road wall at Broadley Station is a magnificent feature and a narrow path could be kept open along its base so that the public could tread the full immensity of the work.
Another significant masonry “sculpture” is the Lee Colliery Tramway Bridge near New Line reservoir. This is partly obscured by trees all of which should be felled to expose this large skew arch to view.

Of course the most magnificent structure of all is Spodden Viaduct. This is a site best appreciated from below and some effort should be made to create a vantage point offset from the path so as to glimpse the viaduct, and even better a clear path to encourage visitors to walk down to the river and look up at Spodden Viaduct in all its magnificence.

The Spodden Valley Cultural Trail is currently underway (Mid Pennine Arts) and it is to be hoped that its outcome celebrates the railway/greenway route as well as other features of the area.

12. Estimates of Cost

The estimates of cost shown here are based on the works being carried out by local contractors with an interest in the works and managed as effectively as possible. Ideally the design and development of each next phase will be tied in with the supervision of the current phase in order to achieve the most efficiency.

The route has been broken down into the 21 sections shown on this diagram and the detailed schedules in Appendix 2 set out the unit rated used so that adjustments can be made to the budgets as circumstances permit.

Note 1:
These estimates include 20% for engineering, management, signing and advance preparation of adjacent sections. These prices are net of VAT.

Note 2:
For detailed breakdown see schedules.
Summary of Costs: Rawtenstall Station to Rochdale Station

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<td>New Line Car Park (New Line Tunnel gap)</td>
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<td>790</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Oak Street</td>
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<td>1390</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Massey Croft (and Link to Community School -150m)</td>
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<td>1760</td>
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<tr>
<td>To Rosendale Boundary (repair existing)</td>
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<td>140</td>
<td>580</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rossendale Totals</td>
<td>14 810</td>
<td>3320</td>
<td>6 660</td>
<td>4 830</td>
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<th>Total m</th>
<th>New path</th>
<th>Existing path</th>
<th>On road</th>
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<td>1710</td>
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<td>To Taylor Street</td>
<td>2430</td>
<td>2080</td>
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<td>To Station via Drake Street</td>
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<td>2000</td>
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<td>Rochdale Section via Railway Path Totals</td>
<td>6240</td>
<td>3890</td>
<td>2350</td>
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Totals for Rawtenstall to Rochdale: 21 050 3320 10 550 7180 1824
13. Sources of Funding

Funding for the Valley of Stone Project is likely to come from a plethora of sources. There might be the possibility of a single large grant from for example the Heritage Lottery Fund, or from some new Government initiative such as the recent Ambition Fund launched by the Department of Transport. Whilst this would be very welcome the reality of the situation is that numerous opportunities will need to be tracked down and applied for, against a range of elements approved and waiting to go. There might be as varied as a new junction from a road safety budget, or a new milepost sculpture programme from an Arts fund.

Recent monies have some from the following:

- County Council Transport Budget (£60k Stacksteads Park)
- Lancashire Environment Fund (£30k Rakehead Ramp)
- Natural England: Pathways for Communities (£110k Blackwood)
- 106 monies (£30k Rochdale refurbishment)

Broadly speaking the funding sources are from Transport Allocation, other local authority funds, developers through works and Section 106 monies, environment programmes and Lottery funding. Some large sums may be available from wind farm developments in the area. All of these need to be followed up.

Two points of importance are:

i. The Valley of Stone Project should have a number of separate elements ready to go with land agreements and detailed planning consent. Many funding bodies are looking for a committed and early spend of their monies and this can only be guaranteed if the schemes are ready on the shelf so to speak.

ii. The preparation of these advance works is difficult to fund, so each construction grant application should include a small sum for the ongoing preparation of the next subsequent scheme

Three important elements of the Greenway are funded and construction should be put in hand as soon as possible

- The Massey Croft Link by United Utilities
- SlingCo gap by County Council
- Blackwood and Rakehead with fund assembled by Proffitts

These three works will go a considerable way to opening up the Valley of Stone Greenway.

14. Outline programme of work

Our programme of works envisages tackling each missing section or reconstruction in an order which progressively extends the existing paths to add value to what is already in place, although even this ideal would be changed depending upon the arrival of grants.

For the current year 2013-14 we should see the SlingCo gap overcome which opens up a continuous route all the way from Rochdale to the summit at Britannia. United Utilities funds can construct the missing section of railway path at Massey Croft and Proffitts’ successful grants will reconstruct the Blackwood Road and Rakehead Section to ease existing steep gradients.

2014-2015 would see funds found for the reconstruction of the Britannia section which will further extend the Whitworth Greenway and Rochdale will see the Metrolink works complete so that access to the Station will be possible although the Town Centre itself will still be in turmoil. And the Spodden Valley route could be signed to Spotland Bridge. Planning consent will be in place for Newchurch Tunnels and Bridge so this could go ahead if funds are found.

If funds are found then the Stubbylee Park ramp and the Ormerod frontage should be constructed at the same time as the Futures Park development.

2015-2016 is less definite but our target would be to complete the Buckhurst Plant Gap and to complete the Height Barn link to Newline Reservoir. If this was done then the route would be substantially open, particularly if Rochdale have sorted out the deficiencies on their section of railway path.

2016-2018 Matters in Rochdale will take a while as some connections and links are dependent upon developers. Similarly it will take some time to create the best route into Bacup, a route which we see as a promenade from Futures Park to as near the Town Centre as possible. But an early opening of a crossing of New Line to Park Avenue and a connection around the back of Next Century and along Sulzer’s riverside would be most welcome.

Certainly the target could be to have a popular route complete, publicised and operational for Easter 2016.
15. Maintenance and Management

The maintenance and management of Greenway corridors is a most important issue, especially in these times of great financial limits when Councils have extremely slender budgets.

The central objective of the Valley of Stone Greenway Project is to construct the work so soundly that maintenance is minimised and to make it so good that it becomes extremely popular and can play its part in the overall transport and leisure structures in the area. Once the route is carrying significant numbers of pedestrians and cyclists and indeed some equestrians, then a small allocation of revenue funds from the transport budget would be appropriate.

Unlike roads Greenway routes can be maintained by volunteers who can cut the verges, clear the litter, make minor repairs and act as volunteer rangers. In addition these traffic free routes can offer a range of projects suitable for people doing community work assignments and job creation programmes. A positive adoption of local input greatly assists in the public seeing this as their place and somewhere which they might care for as if it were an extension of their own garden.

We suggest that the Valley of Stone Greenway sets out from the start of its next phase to build up a team of active volunteers. Whilst such teams are quite usual – Sustrans has 2000 or so volunteers spread around its routes – we suggest here that a programme is put in place to give these volunteers a role in the management of the Greenway as well as a responsibility for maintaining it. An example of this is the voluntary groups which already help to maintain Healey Dell itself and the Joy Street section of the Greenway, under the direction of the RMBC countryside ranger Richard Whittle. Richard also has significant knowledge of the heritage and wildlife of Healey Dell making him an invaluable resource on the ground. There are already a number of existing groups along the route who might each be persuaded to take on a section of the trail. Whitworth Town Council, Stacksteads Friendly Riders and so on. Perhaps the way forward is to put in place a coordinating body which holds funds and equipment to support each of these local endeavors.

To this end we recommend setting up a Community Interest Company – something which can very appropriately be organised by the Co-op, given that they were founded in Rochdale and that this company goes out to win shareholders and funds. With the paving of Trafalgar Square and other prominent public places coming from these quarries it may well be that a large number of people might want a share in the “ownership” of the Greenway, and indeed the Lee Quarries, if the two projects were aligned.

In this scenario we envisage maybe 1000 people from across the Country subscribing to £100 shares and the resulting capital being used to acquire some maintenance equipment, mowers etc. and to manage the work. This would not be a panacea for funding the maintenance but more importantly a means of setting up a formal organisation to support and complement the Council’s work.

The Valley of Stones Greenway Group should promote events along the route with a view to both popularising the route and its link to Lee Quarries and also fundraising for maintenance works.

If all this is put in place then the annual costs to the Council could be very small. At this preliminary stage we suggest a budget for £10,000/year to cover aspects which cannot be dealt with by volunteers. In addition a Council officer would need to be allocated the part time role of liaison officer and link to Councils programmes and policies.

List of Reference Documents


Appendix Documents

1. Route description and details
2. Schedules of estimates of costs
3. Valley of Stone Heritage Sites: Details of tramway connections with the main railway: Colin Hubbard July 2013
5. Development site opportunities
The Valley of Stone Greenway: A Rossendale and Rochdale Railway Path and Cycleway