

## COMBER GREENWAY STEERING GROUP

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The Comber Greenway Steering Group (CGSG) has been set up to consider options for the future ownership and future management arrangements for the Comber Greenway. The purpose of this document is to set out the Terms of Reference for the CGSG.

### Background

2. The Comber Greenway was constructed in 2008 and is currently in the ownership of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). It is a 6½ mile shared use off-road (i.e. traffic-free) path almost entirely along the route of the former Belfast and County Down Railway mainline between Ravenscroft Avenue car park, Belfast and Belfast Road, Comber. The greenway passes through the areas of three councils: Belfast City Council (3 miles), Lisburn City and Castlereagh Council (2 miles) and Ards and North Down Borough Council (1½ miles). It is the only greenway in Northern Ireland in the ownership of DfI.
3. In November 2016, DfI published '*Exercise – Explore – Enjoy: a Strategic Plan for Greenways*'. This plan sets out proposals for a 1,000km greenway network across Northern Ireland divided into a 400km Primary Greenway Network and a 600km Secondary Greenway Network. The existing Comber Greenway forms part of the proposed Primary Greenway. In addition, the Comber Greenway forms a major part of the main eastern approach route to Belfast that has been identified in the draft Belfast Bicycle Network which was consulted upon in early 2017.
4. '*Exercise – Explore – Enjoy*' provides a vision and framework for a more strategic programme to develop greenway routes across Northern Ireland. It underscores the significant contribution which greenways could make to the Executive's draft Programme for Government Framework 2016 – 21. However, it also highlights the key role that local government has in the delivery of the greenway network in light of their responsibilities for recreation and green spaces. This has been reflected in the Department's Small Grants for Greenways Programme which has provided funding to Councils to draw up feasibility studies for their greenway plans.
5. Several Councils have already developed successful greenways including the Waterside Greenway (Derry City and Strabane Council) and the Connswater

Community Greenway (Belfast City Council). The work of these councils in developing multi-faceted greenways, including community facilities beyond what the Department for Infrastructure is able to provide under its statutory powers, and the current maintenance role that all the three councils have in respect of the Comber Greenway demonstrates that Councils are well placed to more effectively deliver, operate and maintain greenway infrastructure.

### **Scope of the Project**

6. The purpose of this project is to consider whether the Comber Greenway should be transferred into the ownership of the three councils through whose land it passes. It will also consider the terms upon which such a transfer might take place.
7. Specific issues that will be considered include the following:
  - a. Investigation of the extent of the greenway – identification of the land area that would be included in any transfer (including maps);
  - b. Details of any covenants on the land;
  - c. Current condition of asset and details of any proposed works;
  - d. Legislative issues;
  - e. Asset valuation;
  - f. Ongoing maintenance arrangements.

### **Steering Group**

8. A steering group has been established for this project with membership, at official level, as follows:
  - Department for Infrastructure – Andrew Grieve (Chair)
  - Belfast City Council – Rose Crozier
  - Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council – Ross Gillanders
  - Ards and North Down Borough Council – Graeme Bannister
  - Department for Infrastructure – Eileen Cowan
  - Department for Infrastructure – Iain Cleland (Secretary)
9. The steering group will oversee the work as it progresses and will arrange for contributions to be made from the relevant officers in the Department and in each council. The outcome of the project will be the production of an options appraisal for the future of the Comber Greenway. This options appraisal will be provided to the Councils for consideration.