

Green Infrastructure

Jo Bagnall (Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Regeneration) held a remote meeting last week to discuss possible Green Infrastructure projects for the three towns. The clerks from Leek and Biddulph attended, as well as representatives from SMDC and Staffordshire County Council.

What is green infrastructure?

Natural England's green infrastructure definition states:

'Green infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green space, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities'.

General project opportunities to consider – suggested by SMDC

1. Support for tourism through development of a linear route along the River Churnet from Rudyard to Denstone - developed as a multi-user trail that is well connected to other green infrastructure, particularly linking to the towns to capture day spending by walkers and cyclists.
2. Support for the delivery of a network of well -connected pathways providing routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. It is understood that in particular, there is a shortage of connecting bridleways.
3. Enhance and develop pathways along rivers and canals, and promote additional links to provide access to them from as wide an area as possible, also providing links to nearby habitats and open spaces.
4. Create and improve links within and between towns and villages, to local areas of recreation and open space and from towns into the countryside, including by improving existing rights of way. Identify any opportunities to provide new, or to improve existing footpaths that enable access into the countryside from new developments proposed on the edge of the towns.
5. Support access to heritage assets / historic landscapes by using green infrastructure to strengthen or restore historic links.

Possible opportunities for Leek

1. A project to enhance the "green wedges" into the town at Ball Haye Green in the north and Ladydale in the south.
2. Maintain and upgrade the existing network of off-road paths, including the Staffordshire Moorlands promoted walks network:

<https://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/article/901/Self-guided-walks>

- Leek and Caldon canal via Ladderedge Country Park
- Leek landscapes – 9 miles around Leek
- Leek to Peak – 7 miles around Tittesworth
- Longsdon walk – Leek to Longsdon via Ladderedge Country Park
- Rudyard lake

3. Create pedestrian and cycle links between Leek town centre and key destinations:
 - Green spaces such as Ladderedge Country Park, Brough Park and Birchall Playing Fields and visitor attractions in the Churnet Valley.
 - Areas of employment including Cornhill.
 - Education sites including Westwood College, Leek High School and Churnet View Middle School.
4. Project work with schools / young people to link the schools and other areas of the town to nearby wild spaces.
5. Consider opportunities for the disused railway footpath to Rudyard.