

Report on	Feasibility study – Reopening disused tunnels linked to Great Northern Railway and Northland Estate for Off-Road cycling and walking routes
Date of Meeting	Thursday 11 November 2021
Reporting Officer	N Hill Head of Parks
Contact Officer	A Reid Parks & Countryside Development Officer

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To seek Council approval to appoint a qualified consultancy to develop a feasibility study for the potential re-opening of disused tunnels linked to Great Northern Railway and Northland Estate for Off-Road cycling and walking routes (Appendix Map).
2.0	Background
2.1	The Portadown, Dungannon and Omagh Junction Railway opened a Dungannon in April 1858. In September 1961 the station was relocated as the line was extended to Omagh railway station completing the Portadown – Derry railway route that came to be known as 'The Derry Road'. In 1876 it was taken over by the Great Northern Railway and built a branch line from Dungannon to Cookstown in 1879. The line ceased to operate on 15 February 1965. A section of the now disused railway line tunnelled from Milltown through to lands adjacent to what is now Gortmerron link Road. The tunnel remains closed at both ends but is suggested to remain relatively intact.
2.2	Within the same proximity, OSNI Historical 2 nd Ed (1846 – 1862) maps further illustrates a short under pass/tunnel under the Moy Road. Historically this tunnel linked a private laneway, which ran from Northland House to Moygashel Mills. This tunnel has been recently reopened at one end by contractors (at Tunnel Lodge) to facilitate development.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Council wish to appoint a team of suitably qualified consultants to explore potential options to reopening these tunnels for public access and to provide off-road links to Dungannon's green spaces. Council Officers will investigate the potential to link the reopening of the tunnels to potential Active Travel projects, for the purposes of creating linkages to new and existing walking and cycling routes across the town.

3.2	The feasibility study will seek to research, consult, develop and advise council on the options to unlock the potential of the tunnel infrastructures and create the business case platform for an exciting subterranean access project. This has the potential to be a significant active travel asset for Dungannon town and railway enthusiasts nationwide.
4.0	Other Considerations
	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
4.1	Financial: Feasibility study for the potential re-opening of disused tunnels linked to Great Northern Railway and Northland Estate for Off-Road cycling and walking routes estimated budget allocation £20,000. Budget identified under MUDC Capital Programme 2020-2024 as part of the Outdoor Recreation Strategy subject to Council approval of annual capital budget allocations.
	Human: Existing staff resources sufficient to coordinate project support. No additional staffing resource required.
	Risk Management: In conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Will be developed as part of the project and in conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
	Rural Needs Implications: Will be developed as part of the project and in conjunction with Council policies and procedures.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Members approval is sought to progress with the procurement and appointment of qualified consultancy to develop a Feasibility Study/Business Case for the potential re-opening of disused tunnels linked to Great Northern Railway and Northland Estate for Off-Road cycling and walking routes in conjunction with potential future Active Travel development opportunities for Dungannon town.
5.2	Members approval is sought for P&R committee approval for all identified capital expenditure associated to project as presented.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	App – OSNI Historical 2 nd Edition 1846 - 1862