**Balloon Tree Copse: Project Proposal**

**Location**

Balloon Tree Copse lies along the south side of the A166 road between Gate Helmsley and Stamford Bridge. It was bought by Sustrans to allow a more pleasant route for National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 66 - now part of the Way of the Roses coast-to-coast cycle route.

**Aim of the project**

The tarmac surfaced cycle path runs parallel with the road along the edge of the copse (see aerial view attached). Sustrans maintains the path but does not have the resources to manage the woodland. As a result the trees retain the original plantation layout. Proper management requires the thinning of the woodland to allow individual trees, including a number of native species, to flourish

The copse is an popular walking destination for residents of Stamford Bridge which lies on Route 66 across the historic railway viaduct. The aim of the project is to enhance the amenity and aesthetic value of the copse for the benefit of local walkers and for cyclists using the NCN. A soft surfaced path will meander through the wood providing a loop for walkers. This will pass through a clearing with a picnic table and bench with a vista over the open country to the south (see plan attached).

**Project stages**

Work will proceed in stages, partly due to seasonal constraints and partly due to the uncertainty of funding.

*Stage 1* – opening up pathway and clearing.

Limited initial felling will take place to create the footpath and clearing. This must take place in early spring to avoid the bird nesting season.

*Stage 2* – Woodland Management

Advice will be sought on how best to manage the woodland to promote the health of native species and increase biodiversity and range of habitats for bird and other wildlife. Actual felling will commence at the end of the nesting season

*Stage 3* – Picnic Area

*Stage 4* – Surfacing the footpath

Stages 3 and 4 are dependent on external funding but could commence as soon such funding is in place

Stage 5 - An Interpretation Board would not only explain the variety of habitats created in the wood and the wildlife this attracts but also advise touring cyclists of the opportunities to recuperate in Stamford Bridge and learn of the unique history of the village.

**Who will do the work**

The project is being promoted by York Greenways Champions - a partnership between Sustrans volunteer Rangers and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. Their volunteers will work with a team of young adults with learning difficulties from the Brunswick Organic Nursery. We would hope to involve local volunteers once the project is under way.

**Costs**

*Stage one*

This work can be undertaken by volunteers using equipment loaned by the Greenways project. However, if funding can be obtained quickly, we would prefer to involve the Brunswick Organic Nursery team whose expenses (transport and supervision) amount to £150 per day. Two days work would be required a total cost of £300.

*Stage 2*

Funding will be sought for the services of a tree specialist to undertake an inventory and devise a management plan. The actual tree felling would require the team to be retained for four working days. Chainsaw hire with protective equipment is £83 per day plus £100 per day for a trained operator.

*Stage 3*

We have an estimate for a robust picnic bench and table with bird, owl and bat boxes for £560 plus VAT

*Stage 4*

We have an estimate for £ 5,380 plus VAT for a limestone path and £1,470+ VAT for woodchip.

*Stage 5* Interpretation Bards cost £1200 to supply and erect

These estimates are from Brunswick Organic Nursery, a not-for-profit social enterprise and are considerably cheaper than a commercially based estimate.

**Beneficiaries**

We consider this copse to be an under-used asset for the local community and will provide health benefits by encouraging walking and offering a tranquil spot to rest with open views. It is also an opportunity to enhance the experience of touring cyclists, including those undertaking the coast to coast ride.

The work involved will provide useful experience and health benefits for volunteers and in particular encourage the self-esteem of the team from Brunswick Organic Nursery.

The interpretation board would benefit the local economy by encouraging touring cyclists to use food and accommodation services. At present the cycle route does not direct cyclists into the village centre.