

West Lothian island village footpath could be two years away

Plans for a path from West Lothian's 'Island Village' of Stoneyburn are set to go before the council later this year.

But it could be another two years before the path is built, councillors on the Fauldhouse and Breich Valley Local area committee heard this week

By that time the original £2m funding package will have expired and new money will have to be found.

In a report to the committee Graeme Burton, the council's Design Engineering Manager, said the two-year deadline had been built in to accommodate the potential for Compulsory Purchase Orders on sections of the route.

Mr Burton told councillors that negotiations were ongoing with landowners along the route and wildlife surveys of bats and newts are currently underway, with plans being prepared for the council to consider after the summer.

In his report he added: "It is still likely that the Council may have to consider pursuing the route of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), to ensure all the necessary land along the route is secured for the project. A CPO cannot progress until planning permission has been granted.

"Officers will continue to work with the current design

consultant Local Transport Projects Ltd and ecologist Gavia Environmental to progress the design of the cyclepath link.

“Officers are keen for the project to be progressed but the time-line for delivery is dependent on the conclusion of the required surveys, planning approval and potential land discussions and any negotiations that may have to take place.

He added: “The anticipated timescales officers estimated previously were in the region of 18 to 24 months to get the appropriate permissions and secure the required land. Once funding is secured, it would then take in the region of ten months to a year to carry out the tender process to procure a suitable contractor to construct the project.

“These dates are estimates at this time and will not be known in more detail until the appropriate planning and CPO processes are progressed.”

Councillor Cathy Muldoon asked for the committee to be given regular updates on the proposals.

Villagers, who live in what they brand the Island Village, have been fighting for more than two years already for a footpath and cycle route to Fauldhouse three miles to the east. That’s where the nearest health care facilities for the village are.

Additionally, they are campaigning to complete a footpath linking Stoneyburn and East Whitburn

Despite lying at the almost geographical centre of West Lothian Stoneyburn has few bus connections and few pavements beyond the village boundaries, making walking hazardous along narrow and winding B-roads which are heavy with undergrowth and hedging in the summer.

Sandy Edgar, one of leading campaigners for the improved footpaths welcomed the progress but admitted he disappointed

at the potential for delay.

“We are pleased to see continued progress on this vital connection for our island village. Enhanced connectivity will contribute positively to the physical and mental well-being of all residents, while also providing a crucial link to neighbouring villages and transport networks.

“However, we are disappointed with the current time frames and would welcome any opportunity to accelerate the process, while recognising the necessary steps involved in its development.”

The council has long supported the footpath plan and enlisted Sustrans to help. The bulk of the £2m costs will go on the development of a new shared use footpath/cyclepath crossing over the A706 which will be by way of an overbridge.

The Sustrans promise of funding through Places for Everyone funding expires in September, but councillors were assured that replacement funding can come from the new Transport Scotland Active Travel Infrastructure Fund, which council officers will apply for in the 2026/27 financial year.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter