

HUNTLY CYCLE HUB PROJECT

DOUGLAS WHEELER ASSOCIATES LTD: OUTLINE PROPOSAL

1. INTRODUCTION

The Douglas Wheeler Associates Ltd team (DWA) welcomes the opportunity to submit this outline proposal to assist the Huntly Development Trust (HDT) to develop and assess the feasibility and potential for development of a Regional Cycle Development Hub (RCDH) at Huntly. RCDHs are part of Scottish Cycling's Facilities Strategy to develop the sport in Scotland. The project has potential to deliver significant community and economic development benefits and offer income-generating opportunities for HDT. Since receiving the brief, we have reviewed relevant background documentation and spoken with Donald Boyd.

DWA have direct experience of leading multidisciplinary teams to research and develop leisure and visitor facilities particularly as part of town and town centre regeneration strategies and action plans. DWA also have extensive experience in concept development, preparing business plans, options appraisals and feasibility studies for community development and income generating projects. Doug Wheeler is also an enthusiastic road/MTB cyclist and completed the 2009 Etape Caledonian. DWA have budgeted to use a cycle facilities design specialist.

The Team have a varied and deep experience of working with different local communities and businesses on effective town regeneration strategies, action plans and feasibility studies. This includes 'hands on' experience of: developing viable community benefit and income generating projects; effective networking with service providers, stakeholders and partners and in meaningful community and business involvement.

Feasibility Study: Brief

HDT considers that Huntly and district is in a good position to benefit from the growing popularity of cycling. The town is centrally located on the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness, accessible by rail and bus and offers good and diverse quiet cycling opportunities: short, relatively flat road circuits, longer more hilly rides e.g. into the Cairngorms National Park and off-road forest trails in the immediate vicinity. This project seeks to strengthen Huntly's cycling profile by **extending the scope of existing facilities at the Huntly Nordic and Outdoor Centre (HNOC)** to create one of Scottish Cycling's RCDHs.

Therefore the overall aim of the feasibility study is to allow HDT and its potential partners to make a more informed decision on the overall benefits and costs of pursuing the RCDH project at Huntly.

This outline proposal summarises key issues, approach, methodology, resourcing costs and pricing.

2. KEY ISSUES & CHALLENGES

In this section we have summarised some of the key issues that will affect the feasibility study. The key issues identified are not exhaustive and others will undoubtedly emerge.

HNOC: How to Make the Asset Perform Even Better

The HNOC is situated near to the River Deveron on the north side of Huntly, close to Huntly Castle. It comprises a small complex of buildings, a rollerski track extending to some 750m and a matted training area. A dry ski slope is a popular attraction, offering 'tubing' for young and old alike. Main users of the HNOC are schoolchildren from across Aberdeenshire, the Huntly Ski Club and the British Junior Development Squad. As an indication of the importance of the asset, HNOC and Huntly Ski Club produced 3 skiers and the Team GB coach for the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games.

HNOC also has a number of mountain bikes for hire but is best known for its excellent work in cross-country skiing. Aberdeenshire Council who currently own and run the HNOC are actively considering the centre's future within the context of the Council's draft revenue budget for 2011-12, the challenging current public sector funding position and the need to identify further budget savings in order to maintain a balanced budget position. Therefore the feasibility study needs to

consider whether ownership and management could be transferred to another organisation like HDT, private sector or a multisport partnership.

The feasibility study needs to identify the potential for HNOC to host a RCDH and how best that could be owned, managed and operated for maximum benefit and so as to ensure the sustainability of the existing facility.

Promoting Huntly Town as a Cycling Hub

For some time now, it has been recognised in different locations of the UK that cycling hubs and ‘trail head’ centres are a good idea. Mountain biking in particular is growing exponentially in popularity using this principle. The potential for promoting cycle tourism hubs as a focal concept for **integrating local cycle routes with linear routes**. In Huntly this could include establishing connections to the **National Cycle Routes 1 at Turriff and 195 at say Ballater**. The hub can then be promoted as part of a **wider cycling holiday product** that could be developed in ways that would appeal particularly to those interested in centre-based breaks / longer holidays and day rides. These are markets which may not to be widely catered in Huntly for but which hold significant potential for growth for visitors AND residents.

Therefore in a wider sense, **cycling hubs are 'centres'** which have something special to offer all types of on and off-road cyclists (where possible), whether they be touring, centre-based, or just out for the day. They have a variety of high quality routes accessible from the town centre, together with ample cyclist-friendly facilities, services and information. The hub concept would need to have popular local support and endorsement from Aberdeenshire Council, Huntly businesses and residents and other bodies. Appropriate marketing of the hub and mechanisms for developing and maintaining a choice of cycle routes and facilities would need to be in place. The use of public transport for cycling would need to be encouraged. Cycling hub status brings significant benefits including:

- Building a reputation as an outdoors-orientated destination
- Generating regular income for the local economy
- Helping to ensure that ALL cycle routes and facilities are well maintained
- Encouraging local people, as well as visitors, to cycle more
- Contribute to local tourism plans and regeneration strategies like the emerging Retail Strategy, Town Sustainability Plan and the ‘multipurpose Huntly Hub’.

Clearly there could be very **strong links and benefits to the local community in Huntly** and especially for young people with significant community wellbeing, health, education, training and employment opportunities arising, as an example for say Huntly Mental Health Association.

The feasibility study need to test the level of popular local support for and community benefits from the cycling hub concept in addition to the possibility of further development and investment at HNOC.

3. APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

We have identified 10 discrete tasks to be undertaken over a **14 week** period. The following work programme provides full details.

<p>1: Commissioning Meeting [week 1]</p>	<p>A Commissioning Meeting with HDT will be held at the start of the assignment to agree work programmes across all four feasibility studies and the basis for consultation. We will discuss the proposal, agree the work programme and project management arrangements, set dates for progress meetings and workshops, agree contacts and receive all documentation. We will also agree consultation contacts among local and business and community representatives so that these can be coordinated across all four studies so as to avoid confusion.</p>
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<p>2: Partner/Stakeholder Consultation: Perspectives & Regeneration Fit [week 1]</p>	<p>We will undertake consultations with the various key stakeholders, statutory, voluntary, community and private sector organisations that have a stake in the RCDH. The consultations will ensure that the project is starting from a firm foundation with clear, shared aims and that any (additional) stakeholders and their views are identified early in the study. The aim will also be to identify more clearly what the potential users (ski-iers, cyclists and other sports) would like to see at the facility. The consultations will include (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDT • Aberdeenshire Council • Huntly Ski Club • Scottish Cycling • Specialist cycling/youth clubs/users (BMX, speedway, cyclo cross, MTB, road) • SnowsportScotland • Community Council • Huntly Business Association • Huntly & District Tourism Action Group • Scottish Natural Heritage • Forestry Commission • LEADER • VisitScotland • Local Councillors <p>Based on the consultations and a review of relevant documentation we will prepare a succinct summary of the strategic policy context and how the emerging RCDH fits the changing regeneration context in Huntly. Any approach to external private investors or public funders like HLF or Big Lottery will require a clear statement of how the project fits within a strategic regeneration context.</p>
<p>3. Concept Development [week 2]</p>	<p>Will use the outcomes from Tasks 1 & 2 to clearly define the purpose of the RCDH, what is meant by the concept and the options for realising it in Huntly. The aim will be to identify the fit with other facilities and services available in Huntly, revenue streams, added value, benefits and risk. The preferred concept will be agreed with HDT before progressing.</p>
<p>4. Impact Issues [week 3]</p>	<p>We will estimate the potential and likely number of users the centre could attract. This will involve determining the natural catchment for the centre, as well as identifying whether the facilities could bring users from further afield e.g. for national training camps, criteriums, etc and engage others in the area who do not yet participate in sport. Based on these assumptions we will prepare economic and social impact assessments of the proposed centre.</p>
<p>5. Technical Issues: Initial Layout Plan [week 3/4]</p>	<p>An initial layout plan and specification for the proposed facilities: closed road circuit, mountain bike training skills area and possibly a BMX area and any other facilities identified will be prepared. This material would form the basis of presentation material that could be used in public engagement session. The simple layout plan would be accompanied by a photomontage and other visual material to give a 'feel' for how the facility could look. This would include an outline facility design that would enable phased implementation as funding becomes available.</p>

6. Legal Issues [week 4]	We would identify which consents will be required in order to develop the facility and from whom. We will also clarify land ownership details for the whole HNOC site, the principles of asset transfer and issues of liability and insurance for the operational phase.
7. Organisational Issues & Best Practice Review [week 5/6]	We will undertake a best practice review to identify and make recommendations as to the best organisational model for the Huntly situation. This will include identifying whether the centre can be an income generator for HDT. Profiles will be prepared that include a summary of the vision, driving principles, organisational models, how they work, what they deliver and lessons for Huntly. The projects could include: Redbridge Cycling Centre and the emerging Marsh Tracks cycling facility in Rhyl.
8. Huntly Hub: Development Workshop with HDT & Business & Community Representatives [week 7]	DWA will facilitate a Development Workshop with HDT and business/community representatives to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review progress on tasks 2-7 • Explain the project, gather community views and help address any concerns that may arise • Review the options for RCDH with a focus on HNOC • Assess the possibilities for promoting Huntly town as a cycling hub • Identify areas of consensus and conflict • Identify and evaluate funding and delivery options • Build consensus on a preferred way forward. <p>DWA will design and prepare appropriate illustrative material based on Task 4 above and feedback forms, collect, process and feedback the data. HDT will undertake practical arrangements including booking and covering cost of venue, catering and promotion of the workshop.</p>
9. Huntly Regional Cycle Development Hub: Outline Business Plan [weeks 8-11]	Based on a positive outcome from the first eight tasks, working with HDT we will draft the Huntly Regional Cycle Development Hub Prospectus and Outline Business Plan . The main sections are likely to be: <p>Context & Market Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government/ local policy context • Contribution to existing strategic plans and local priorities for Huntly like Town Sustainability Plan • “Need” and summary Market Research analysis <p>Concept: Preferred Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision for the Huntly RCDH • Mission statement: need that project addresses • Key aims and objectives: short, medium & long • Why the project is required & who benefits from the project • Fit with funding priorities and aims of for example SG’s Cycling Action Plan for Scotland, Scottish Cycling, Cycling Scotland, SportScotland, Sustrans, Community Empowerment Action Plan and Big Lottery Fund/ Growing Community Assets Programme and other strategies • HNOC: initial layout plan and specification <p>Key Components</p> <p>The summary market testing will include assessing demand and competing supply for other potential ‘ideas’ like:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities that could bring users from further afield e.g. for national training camps, criteriums • Specialist cycling facilities (BMX, speedway, cyclo cross, as well as MTB, road) • Corporate sports activity packages • Co-location of facilities and services • Huntly town as a cycling hub • Synergy with other initiatives including emerging Retail Strategy, Town Sustainability Plan and Community Planning Partnership. <p>Economic Social & Environmental Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential social impact of the project • Wider community benefits • Role supporting economic recovery & growth in Huntly • Supporting Huntly businesses & attracting investment • Contribution to long term sustainability • Social & public benefits to the Huntly community • Environmental benefits <p>Partners & Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding matrix: private & public sectors • Wider network involvement • Key roles • Capacity building • Other sources of funding & additionality <p>Business Plan: Financial Analysis: Costs & Revenue Projections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline user profile: occupier profile & revenue streams • Outline capital costs • Simple revenue/income & cost projections: three years • Phasing & assumptions • Risk analysis • Sensitivity Analysis • Specific project outcomes • Overall potential financial viability • <p>Delivery & Long Term Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDT's role • Delivery of a self sustaining enterprise • Governance • Marketing & promotion • On site management • Staffing requirements & costs. • Management/leadership & skills <p>Implementation Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phasing • Next steps • Who does what? <p>A draft report will be prepared for HDT comments.</p>
<p>10. Final Report [week 12+]</p>	<p>A final report for will be prepared that takes on board HDT comments</p>