

**Agenda item 9, St Mary's Church alternative footpath study**

1. As councillors will recall, St Mary's District Church Council (DCC) had prepared a Brief for a study that would look at the feasibility of providing a temporary footpath through church grounds whilst the Brow footpath is closed. The Town Council were consulted on this Brief.
2. The Brief was issued to architects who are currently employed by St Mary's and the response from the architects was received just before the last Town Council meeting. As a result, it was agreed that Councillors Muirhead and Burchnall meet with Merlin Hibbs (St Mary's) to discuss the quote that had been received. That meeting took place on 4 November.
3. The architects were asked to quote on the basis of two possible routes through church lands. The quote for carrying out the feasibility study is £6,101 including VAT. If the study came out with a feasible proposal then a quantity surveyor would need to be engaged to cost the proposal and this would cost a further £780. The total cost could therefore be £6,881.
4. In developing a strategy for stabilising and reopening the Brow footpath, there are three key elements: the protection and reinforcement of the Lune river bank; resolving drainage issues on the landward side of the footpath; and implementing an overall landscape strategy and interpretation plan for the area. Two key elements of the proposed feasibility study (the topographical study and the tree survey) will feed into the development of a drainage strategy. Therefore, these elements will be of a great use to the Town Council and St Mary's in developing a final technical solution.
5. St Mary's DCC is meeting on 8 November, the day before the Town Council meeting. If the DCC agree to commission this feasibility study then it will be on the basis that the Town Council fund 50% of the cost. This would mean a cost to the Town Council of between £3,050 and £3,440.
6. The Town Council has supported the provision of an alternative route whilst the Brow footpath is closed and until a technical study is undertaken it is not known if the construction of a temporary alternative footpath is feasible. It is therefore recommended that the Town Council agree to pay 50% of the cost of the study.
7. The feasibility study might conclude that there is a no feasible solution; that there is a feasible solution that is fundable; or that there is a feasible solution but that solution may be too expensive to the partners or is not acceptable to the land owner. However, until the study takes place no decision on an alternative temporary footpath can take place.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Councillors Burchnall and Muirhead recommend that the Council advise St Mary's DCC that the Town Council is willing to pay 50% of the proposed feasibility study, up to a total of £3,440 and on the completion of the feasibility study a joint meeting of the Town Council and St Mary's PCC take place to discuss both the outcome of the study and the way forward.

**Councillors Burchnall and Muirhead**