

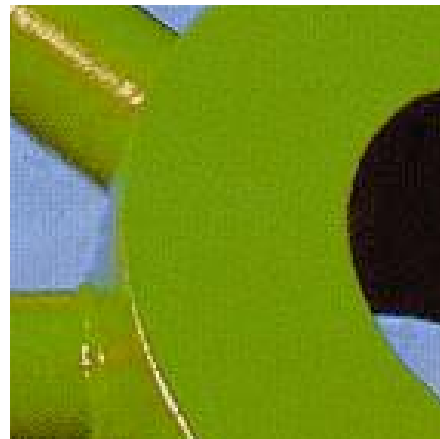
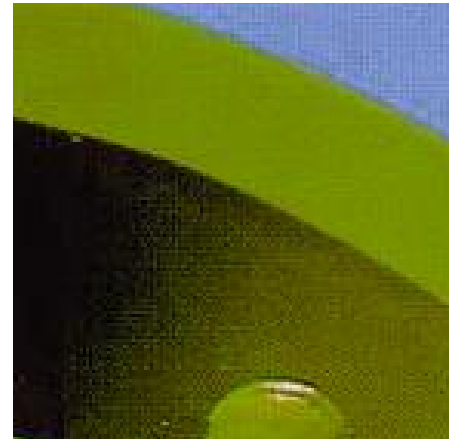
Croal Irwell Regional Park Project Proposal

Creating a green artery from the centre of Manchester to the West Pennine Moors : June 2003

redroseforest



Salford City Council



Croal Irwell Regional Park Project

Improving the image by creating a green artery from the centre of Manchester to the West Pennine Moors

Rationale for park area

The Irwell is Manchester's major river. It has quite literally driven the development of the area from forming the Ship Canal to the old water dependant industries further up the valley. It already contains a high proportion of land in the public realm, a national cycleway, the longest sculpture trail in Europe, a wide range of tourist, recreational, cultural and heritage assets with a population of 1.5 million within 10 miles. There is however, still very high percentage of derelict, underused and neglected land, multiple public ownership, large gaps in provision, different standards of provision and anti social behaviour occurring throughout the area.



There is a real actual and perceived image problem. While a geographically distinct area, it has no overall sense of identity and little sense of connection between the existing honeypot sites.



The heart of the park area is specifically mentioned in the ODPMs "Northern Way", where the NWDA funded Newlands Programme will create the biggest new park in Europe. Newlands itself realises that it is only one strand of delivering the Croal Irwell Regional Park Project and this point was made to and reinforced by DPM John Prescott on his recent visit there.

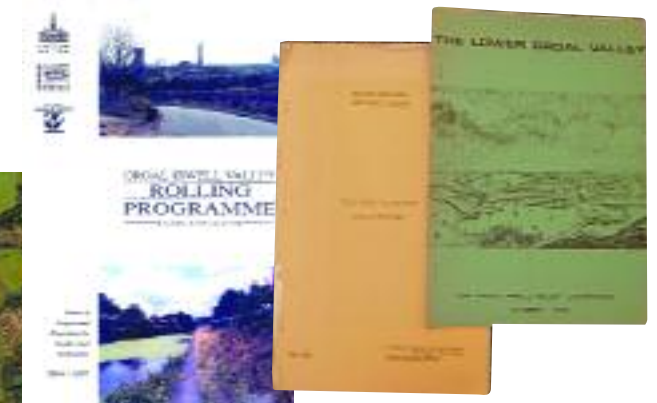
Several regeneration schemes within the boundaries will add value to the proposal.

These include;

- **£7 million NWDA funding for the Newlands Programme**
- **£3 million NWDA funding for the Newleaf Programme**
- **£20 million NWDA, HLF and European funding for Bolton-Bury Canal restoration Programme**



The Croal Irwell is a “core” area in the Red Rose Forest Plan and also identified in AGMA’s Greater Manchester Strategy as a Regional Park location.



There is a long history of cross authority working for environmental and social gains in the Croal Irwell Valley dating back to 1965. A lot has already been achieved via the Croal Irwell Valley Plan, the Rolling Programme of Reclamation for the South Irwell Valley and the Irwell Valley Adventure. There is still good strategic working relationship between Bolton and Bury MBCs and the Salford City Council via the Red Rose Forest Partnership. All parties are committed to the Croal Irwell Regional Park Project.

Location and Description

The proposed Regional Park Project starts in the centre of Manchester as a narrow corridor close to the River Irwell/Ship Canal. It manages to take in museums and cultural assets of the city centre before it loops round central Salford and starts to run northwards by the University of Salford. The character here changes and the valley becomes wider with more open space and derelict land. This area becomes the core of the Regional Park roughly bounded by A56 to the east, the A666 to the west and the A58 in the north. The core area takes in several existing Country Parks, strategic linear routes and several major soft end use regeneration



programmes. Beyond this point the Park splits into two fingers. One runs north up the Irwell Valley, through Bury and up past Ramsbottom to link in with the West Pennine Moors/East Lancs Regional Park. The other finger runs north west towards Bolton joining the West Pennine Moors at Jumbles Reservoir.

Policy Background to Croal Irwell Regional Park Project

- Regional Park Interim Policy Statement. NWDA, March 2004
- RPG 13 partial review. NWRA, March 2004
- Greater Manchester Strategy. Promoting Culture, Sport and Tourism, Key Issue 2 - Improving participation in arts, sport and informal recreation
- Salford Deposit Draft UDP Policies EN6 & R3.
- Bolton MBC adopted UDP Policy CE17
- Bury MBC adopted UDP policies EN8, EN9 and OL5
- Croal Irwell Local Plan 1986

Aims

- To create a regional “ First Impressions” gateway to Manchester providing a high quality, dynamic and exciting exemplar of multifunctional rural/urban fringe regeneration.
- To develop a strategic multifunctional sustainable approach to the long term land management, planning and development of this important area of land running from the heart of Manchester to the West Pennine Moors.

Objectives

- Improve the visual infrastructure of the area, creating a better image and attracting inward investment
- Tackle the extensive derelict, underused and neglected land legacy.
- Create an attractive visitor destination focused on recreation and existing and proposed cultural and heritage assets.
- To support and develop opportunities to improve the natural heritage and biodiversity.



- To create an accessible landscape that re-establishes the linkages between the conurbation and its natural hinterland.
- Involve local communities in the development of the Regional Park and use investment to build capacity within them.
- Develop a framework for existing and future regeneration programmes to slot into.



Risk

Given the considerable investment planned in the area, there is the potential that the identity of the area will be further fragmented. Individual programmes can add up to a greater sum than the individual parts if brought under the umbrella of the Croal Irwell Regional Park Project. Without gaining such critical mass the exemplar status many programmes seek to achieve will be at risk from competing projects.

Partners

Red Rose Forest, Bury MBC, Bolton MBC, Salford CC, Forestry Commission, Groundwork Trusts, BTCV, East Lancs Railway, NWDA, Mersey Basin Campaign, British Waterways, GMWDA, United Utilities.

Next Steps

The Croal Irwell Regional Park Project Partnership need to produce a Vision Document similar to the Weaver Valley Vision Document but with more technical information. Much of the background information is readily available and can be compiled as an in-kind contribution but for certain aspects the technical expertise does not exist in-house so will have to be brought in.

The Vision Document would be the first stage in the evaluation process. The next stage would be to produce a detailed Regional Park Project Plan informed by the Vision Document and the Regional Park Strategic Framework Document.

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