

**To:** Warden and Members of County Council

**From:** Director of Public Works

## Oxford County Trails Master Plan

### RECOMMENDATIONS

---

1. That County Council receive Report PW 2014-11, Oxford County Trails Master Plan;
2. And further, that the draft Trails Master Plan, currently posted for public review, be forwarded to the Area Municipalities;
3. And further, that upon consideration of public comment received, a revised Master Plan be brought to County Council for adoption and public filing for the 30 day review period required under the Municipal Class EA process in May 2014.

### REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

---

- This report presents the draft Trails Master Plan being posted for public review.
- The draft Trails Master Plan provides
  - Mapping of existing and potential future trails.
  - A flexible framework for trail development across the County rather than a prescriptive plan.
  - Guidelines based on best practices and lessons learned elsewhere for projects of a similar scope and scale.
- The Draft Trails Master Plan will be available for public review until April 25, 2014.
- Following the public review period, the revised Trails Master Plan will be brought to County Council for adoption prior to public filing in accordance with the Municipal Class EA process.

### Financial Impact

Funding for the completion of the Trails Master Plan was included in the approved 2013 County Budget.

The Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

## Risks/Implications

There are no risks associated with the adoption of this report.

## Strategic Plan

1. *i. A County that Works Together* -- Strengthen, diversify and broaden the economic/prosperity base through:
  - *Strengthening tourism-supportive initiatives*
2. *i. A County that is Well Connected* – Improve travel options beyond the personal vehicle by:
  - *Creating, enhancing and promoting the use of an integrated trail and bike path system*
4. *i. A County that Informs and Engages* – Better harness the power of the community through conversation and dialogue by:
  - *Understanding and addressing public aspirations for a more livable community*

## DISCUSSION

---

### Background

Through Public Works Report PW 2013-10 dated February 27, 2013 (Attachment 1) and Report PW 2013-57 dated August 14, 2013 (Attachment 2), Council authorized the development of a County of Oxford Trails Master Plan.

### The Draft Trails Master Plan

With the assistance of MMM Group and guided by the Steering Committee established by Council the following process was undertaken:

- Notice of Study Commencement was advertised in July 2013.
- Public outreach campaign (promotional business card, mobile display board and online questionnaire) was initiated in September 2013.
- A Steering committee was established as outlined in Attachment 1; the first meeting was held on October 30, 2013.
- MMM Group as part of their work plan assembled technical information, mapping and undertook field review.
- Public Information Centres were held on November 28, 2013 in Woodstock and December 4, 2013 in Tillsonburg.
- A draft copy of the Trails Master Plan was presented to the Steering Committee on January 31, 2014.

## Comments

Through this process a Draft Trails Master Plan has been developed that provides:

- Mapping of existing and potential future trails.
- A flexible framework for the development of trails within Oxford County rather than a prescriptive plan.
- Guidelines based on best practices and lessons learned elsewhere for projects of a similar scope and scale.
- Recognizes the County's role as a facilitator of the Master Plan for off-road trails, with the design and implementation of new trails by other partners such as Area Municipalities, service groups, Oxford County Trails Council, etc.
- The County does have a major role to play in the on road cycling initiatives on County Roads and as set out in Chapter 5 of the County's Transportation Master Plan.

The Draft Trails Master Plan is now available for public review on the County website through the online Town Hall **Speak Up Oxford!** at <http://oxfordcounty.ca/Your-Government/Speak-up-Oxford/Campaign-Details/ArticleId/1881/Trails-Master-Plan>

Advertisement of the Draft Trails Master Plan will include the County website, and local newspapers. Documents will be available for review on the County website and at County Libraries. Staff will work with the Area Municipalities to make the draft report available at their offices and through links from their websites.

## Prior Public Consultation

The public interest in trail and cycling infrastructure / opportunities is growing. Significant interest was expressed through the online questionnaire and a set of public open houses by walkers, hikers, cyclists and equestrians. Those who provided input noted the need for the development of more trails, education on where trails are located and information regarding permitted user groups on various trail connections.

Respondents acknowledge the benefits of trail and cycling facility development at the County and local level including:

- Personal health,
- Overall community health, quality of life, making Oxford County a desirable place to live
- Tourism

These benefits are supported by extensive research at the national, provincial and regional level.

## Next Steps

The draft Trails Master Plan will be available for public review until April 25, 2014. Comments received from the Public will be considered as the Trails Master Plan is completed. The revised Master Plan will be brought to County Council for adoption in May 2014; following which the plan will be filed for the 30 day review period under the Municipal Class EA process will be undertaken.

The circulation of the Draft Trails Master Plan to County Council and the Public gives an opportunity for dialogue on the document prior to completion as well a further promotion vehicle for the project. It is hoped that this step will promote awareness to the public and that the dialogue will improve the final document.

## Conclusions

Staff believe that the Draft Trails Master Plan fulfills the expectations of the work plan approved by County Council. Further consultation and dialogue on the Draft plan will assist in making the final document even better.

## SIGNATURE

---

### Report Author

Original signed by

---

Peter Winn, P.Eng.  
Project Engineer

### Departmental Approval:

Original signed by

---

Robert Walton, P.Eng.  
Director of Public Works

### Approved for submission:

Original signed by

---

Peter M. Crockett, P.Eng.  
Chief Administrative Officer

## ATTACHMENTS

---

Attachment 1 Public Works Report PW 2013-10  
Attachment 2 Public Works Report PW 2013-57



**Report No: PW 2013-10**  
**PUBLIC WORKS**  
**Council Date: February 27, 2013**

**To: Warden and Members of County Council**

**From: Director of Public Works**

## **Oxford County Trails Master Plan**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

---

- 1. That County Council approve the Work Plan and Steering Committee for the Oxford County Trails Master Plan outlined in Document 1 of County Council Report PW 2013-10.**
- 2. And further, that County Council appoint Warden Donald McKay and Councillor Ted Comiskey as County Council representatives on the Steering Committee.**

### **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

---

- This report fulfills Resolution No. 6 from the December 12, 2012 County Council meeting.
- The Work Plan includes a Steering Committee and public consultation and will lead to a Trails Master Plan document that will facilitate future trail development, operation and maintenance throughout the County.

### **Financial Impact**

The cost of this project is included in the 2013 County budget.

The Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

### **Risks/Implications**

None

## DISCUSSION

---

### Background

At the December 12, 2012 County Council meeting, Resolution No. 6 was passed. It read as follows:

*“That the request from the Oxford County Trails Council, for an expenditure of up to a total of \$75,000 during the 2013-2014 calendar years for the completion of the "Oxford Master Trails Plan", be referred to 2013 Budget deliberations and, further, if funding is granted through the budget process that the Public Works Department be requested to report back to Council with recommendations regarding the involvement of the Oxford County Trails Council in the completion of the Plan.”*

The 2013 budget contains the \$75,000. requirement for the Oxford County Trails Council and this Report sets out how the Master Trails Plan Study will be undertaken.

### Comments

The County involvement in the Trails Master Plan is not envisioned as the start of major County funding of trails. Although there will be projects where we could be a partner, staff see the County involvement as a facilitator of the Master Plan. Trails are projects where partnerships, volunteers and multiple funding sources are often required. What is needed in Oxford County is an overall plan so that these partnerships can forge ahead.

### Conclusions

With County Council approval of this Report, Public Works staff will proceed with the setup of the Steering Committee and hiring of the Consultant.

## SIGNATURE

---

Original signed by

---

Robert Walton, P.Eng.  
Director of Public Works

### Approved for submission:

Original signed by

---

Peter M. Crockett, P.Eng.  
Chief Administrative Officer

## ATTACHMENTS

---

Document 1: Oxford County Trails Master Plan – Work Plan, February 15, 2013 (RW)

## OXFORD COUNTY TRAILS MASTER PLAN - WORK PLAN

---

- Project Budget: \$75,000.
- Project Administration: Oxford County Public Works
- Project Input: Steering Committee (outlined in this Work Plan)
- Technical Expertise and Master Plan preparation: Consultant
- Deliverable: Oxford County Trails Master Plan document for final approval by County Council

Oxford County Council has had limited involvement in Trails in the past. Area municipalities, Conservation Authorities and the Oxford County Trails Council have undertaken numerous trails projects. The projects to date have not been undertaken in a bigger picture scenario considering inter-municipal trail connections or other partnerships. By undertaking the Master Plan, the County envisions that they are a facilitator, not the driving force behind future projects.

The concept for the Oxford County Trails Master Plan is for the County to facilitate the following:

1. Documentation and mapping of all existing trails including their unique features, operations, maintenance, etc.
2. Identify opportunities and constraints for trail improvements, linkages and partnerships including benchmark costing.
3. Engage the public.
4. Create a document that sets out the Master Plan for trail creation, operation and maintenance.

A consultant will be retained by the County to undertake the project and produce the Master Plan document. The Steering Committee will give input into the Request for Proposal for consultant selection.

The Study will follow the Master Plan process set out in the Municipal Class EA process which does include public consultation.

## **STEERING COMMITTEE SETUP**

- The Oxford County Trails Council has nominated Mike Hawkins, Don Lazenby, Dan Major, Kelly Batt and Dixie Westcar to participate and they will be invited to sit on the Steering Committee.
- A representative will be sought from each of the eight area municipalities.
- A representative will be sought for each of Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, Grand River Conservation Authority, Long Point Region Conservation Authority and Catfish Creek Conservation Authority.
- Public Works will run an advertisement for two members of the public-at-large to apply for participation.
- The Oxford County Warden will be the Steering Committee Chair and one additional County Councilor will be nominated by County Council.
- County staff (Tourism, PHES) will be consulted for their expertise as needed.

It is anticipated that the steering committee will meet approximately 4 times and that there could be sub-committees set up for specific issues.

The schedule will be confirmed with the successful consultant. At this time it is anticipated that the Final Report to County Council will be in November 2013.



Report No: PW 2013-57  
**PUBLIC WORKS**  
Council Date: August 14, 2013

**To: Warden and Members of County Council**

**From: Director of Public Works**

## Oxford County Trails Master Plan – Progress Update

### RECOMMENDATION

---

1. That County Council receive Public Works Report No. PW 2013-57 for information.

### REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

---

- The Oxford County Trails Master Plan project has commenced and is scheduled for completion in January 2014.
- Next steps include circulation of information gathered to date and public consultation regarding the development of the Plan.

### Financial Impact

The cost of this project is included in the 2013 County budget.

The Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

### Risks/Implications

None

### Strategic Plan

1. A County that **Works Together**
  - i) Strengthen, diversify and broaden the economic/prosperity base through:
    - Strengthening tourism-supportive initiatives
  - ii) Enhance the quality of life for all of our citizens by:
    - Promoting community participation and life-long involvement in recreational and cultural activities
2. A County that **Is Well Connected**
  - i) Improve travel options beyond the personal vehicle by:
    - Creating, enhancing and promoting the use of an integrated trail and bike path system

4. A County that *Informs and Engages*

- i) Better harness the power of the community through conversation and dialogue by:
  - Understanding and addressing public aspirations for a more livable community

## DISCUSSION

---

### Background

At the February 27, 2013 meeting, County Council voted in favour of approving the Work Plan and Steering Committee for the Oxford County Trails Master Plan contained in Report No. PW 2013-10.

Public Works established a Steering Committee by seeking representatives from each of the eight municipalities, four conservation authorities, and two members from the public-at-large. Other committee members include nominees from the Oxford County Trails Council, County Council, and County Staff.

Public Works prepared a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) document for consultant selection and presented it to the Steering Committee at its first meeting on May 9, 2013. The comments received from the Steering Committee were incorporated into the RFP before it was released. Proposals from fourteen (14) potential firms were received and evaluated by Public Works staff, resulting in the MMM Group being awarded the contract.

After a project initiation meeting between Public Works and the Consultant, a second Steering Committee meeting was held on July 24, 2013. At this meeting, the members were given the opportunity voice their expectations and comment on trail opportunities and uses. The Consultant also presented their work plan schedule, consultation strategy, and public and stakeholder engagement material which included the following:

- Notice of Study Commencement
- Public Outreach Campaign (Promotional Business Card & Mobile Display Board)
- Study Online Questionnaire
- Ongoing Study Promotion (e.g. Contributing to local newsletters, attending public events, local media, social media, etc.)

Steering Committee members were asked to:

- Review and provide comments to the vision, goals and route selection criteria
- Review draft consultation materials
- Review existing trail conditions, mapping, and provide comments on opportunities, barriers and potential routes for future consideration
- Provide staff with any useful background information

In addition, staff was asked to:

- Coordinate input from the Steering Committee

- Prepare a Report to Council for information (this report)
- Distribute the consultation materials
- Finalize study webpage
- Coordinate the online questionnaire

The Consultants next steps include:

- Receive and consolidate existing mapping
- Review background information
- Prepare route network
- Undertake field investigation
- Schedule stakeholder workshop

## **Comments**

Completion of the Trails Master Plan Document is scheduled for January 2014. The final document is expected to include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Documentation and mapping of all existing trails.
- Opportunities and constraints for trail improvements, linkages and partnerships including benchmark costing.
- Review and evaluation of successful models used by other municipalities for funding of capital, operation and maintenance costs associated with having a viable trail network.
- A plan for development, operation and maintenance of trails throughout the County.

The next stage of this project will be distribution of the consultation materials that were prepared and presented to the Steering Committee on July 24<sup>th</sup>. This will inform and encourage the public to comment and participate in the development of the Trails Master Plan

Public Works staff will work with Communications staff to develop a webpage to post the Notice of Study Commencement and online questionnaire including coordination with local municipalities, conservation authorities, and local interest groups.

Steering Committee members will assist with having mobile display boards set up at community centres, conservation areas and special events.

The distribution of consultation materials and input from the public through the online questionnaire will lead up to the next stakeholder workshop and public information centre.

A presentation to County Council of a draft Trails Master Plan is anticipated in November 2013. After input from Council the Master Plan is anticipated to be completed and submitted for Council approval in January 2014.

## **Conclusions**

The Trails Master Plan project is proceeding in accordance with the Work Plan outlined in Report No. PW 2013-10.

## **SIGNATURE**

---

### **Report Author**

Original signed by

---

Frank Gross  
Construction Coordinator

### **Departmental Approval:**

Original signed by

---

Robert Walton, P.Eng.  
Director of Public Works

### **Approved for submission:**

Original signed by

---

Lynn S. Buchner, CGA  
Director of Corporate Services/Acting CAO