

Community Engagement - Todmorden Harriers Facebook Group

Todmorden Harriers is a club for road, fell and cross-country runners, with more than 300 members. Members also take part in a wide range of other outdoor pursuits, including road biking, mountain biking, walking, climbing and swimming. On 15th December 2020 Town Deal Board and Todmorden Harriers member Jim Duffy posted on the club's Facebook group asking for feedback on possibilities relating to these activities being developed by the Town Deal Board for inclusion in the Town Investment Plan (TIP). The original post, and all relevant responses, are reproduced below, grouped according to the idea or theme addressed.

Original Post

"Tod bidding for up to £25m!! As you may know, Todmorden will be bidding for up to £25m in government funding for economic regeneration projects under the 'Towns Fund' scheme. We've got a Town Deal Board, of which I am a member, collaborating with Calderdale Council in putting the bid together. The board will have a vision and set of objectives which include aims to promote active travel and healthy lifestyles and recognise the potential of outdoor pursuits to play a part in developing the local economy. We'd like to hear any ideas or thoughts you have, as people who know about this kind of thing, about what kinds of infrastructure, facilities or services could help make Tod a better place for walking, running, cycling (road, MTB) or other outdoor pursuits. The aim would be to encourage local people, attract visitors, and make Tod more appealing as a place to re-locate. One possibility being considered is an 'active outdoors' centre in the town, which would cater for the needs of locals and visitors with an interest in the outdoors. Do you think that would be a good idea? What kinds of services do you think it would be good to offer in such a centre? Don't be shy! Tell us what you think!"

Traffic-free bike and walking paths

"Well surfaced dedicated road bike tracks, for traffic free travel in the valley and beyond. These could potentially be part of the national network, which could also attract more people to the town."

"Yes, this [well surfaced dedicated road bike tracks, for traffic free travel in the valley and beyond]. I tried using the path that runs from behind the bus station to Hallroyd Crescent on the cargo bike the other week, and ended up spinning 180 degrees in the mud."

"Making the canal more road bike-friendly."

"Improvements to the towpath to enable road bikes to bridge the cobbled and often very slippery overflow channels."

"Away from road walking paths to local schools. This would mean a higher level of maintenance on paths already there that kids could take from houses to schools. Making new ones that don't follow roads."

'Active Outdoors' centre/accommodation

"An active outdoors centre could be a great resource. A cafe catering to outdoor sports trade, maybe try and get one or more gear shops/repairers there. Something like the hub in Leeds Middleton Park or Glentress in Peebles."

"Active outdoors centre sounds good."

"Something like a bunkhouse located centrally offering guided rides as well as just accommodation. Tod Social club type building."

"We already have three outdoor centres in Tod. 2 cater for school trips only but they have a lot of qualified instructors who would be happy to take groups out locally on their own insurance. We also

have loads of cafés. Merging the two together to build a new centre would be a bit of a waste of money. We also have a youth hostel in tod as well already."

Running track

"A proper running track like Leigh sports village."

"Active outdoors centre . . . should include . . . outdoor running track"

"Outdoor running track."

Climbing wall¹

"A decent climbing wall/centre. There's not much provision in the valley so it'd bring in people from nearby towns."

"Absolutely agree with this [having a climbing wall]!"

"Active outdoors centre . . . should include . . . indoor climbing wall"

Sign-posting/route information

"Some new boards/leaflets with walking/running/biking routes? So just some sprucing up [of paths] then an ad campaign? Calderdale's hills very much seem to be "hidden gems", some signs describe it as "magnificently modest" - people don't know what's here!"

"If we are sign posting stuff can we limit it to paths or spots suitable for large numbers of tourists? I think we should be careful not to accidentally turn local spots in to a Gaddings dam scenario². If we have facilities in place that can cope, brill. But there are some local spots unknown to the mass media that would be great to keep that way. I hope I don't sound selfish but some spots are over-used by just the locals as it is."

Pump track

"A pump track in the park for beginners to intermediate. We're not using the old golf course that's there much at all."

Sheltered bike racks

"Sheltered bike racks in town and at the super markets. Lidl for instance has its bike rack at the very end of the car park with zero cover. Morrisons has theirs just out of camera reach out in the open."

Base for CROWS (Community Rights of Way Service)

¹ Response: "I'm a climber myself and much as I'd love more climbing facilities in Tod I think there are a few issues with the idea. Firstly, with the Towns Fund, one of those is around competition/displacement - there is already a small climbing wall in Tod, and it wouldn't be good to do anything with the money that could damage any existing business. Secondly, any new venture would need to be commercially viable and low-risk and at the best of times I think that's something that's difficult to achieve for walls in locations outside of larger population centres. The closure of walls in recent years in Huddersfield and Rochdale, and some time ago in Burnley, suggests they are not easy operations to sustain even in towns bigger than Tod. COVID-19 has also of course been a huge problem for indoor sports facilities, and even now things are looking up I think it will be a while before we can tell what kind of economic conditions will emerge and what they will mean for the prospects for new climbing facilities. So really, taking all these factors into account, unfortunately I think it will be some time before we could reasonably think about the possibilities."

² Gaddings dam is a reservoir on the moors above Todmorden. For a number of years it has been widely publicised as having 'the highest beach in England', and environmental and infrastructure problems have arisen from the resulting large increase in visitor numbers.

“Maybe indirect funding [for countryside rights of way/path improvement] then? A base in the town for CROWS or a similar group?”

Suggestions that fell outside the boundary for Towns Fund interventions

“Park and ride for Gaddings dam”

“I don’t know the hills around Tod as well as a lot of people on here, but funding some sympathetically executed rights of way improvements would be good – there are plenty of hillside tracks which are in danger of sinking into the bog forever. Not to mention the open cast mine that is the direct path up to Gaddings.”

“Path maintenance (more money to CROWS?)”

“Don't know if this is out of the boundaries too but...working with local water companies to open up more reservoirs for beach access/swimming, like Gaddings and Sparth: <https://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com/access-all-areas/> to ease overcrowding, parking issues, litter and erosion at, well, Gaddings.”