
Sustainable Access to Education and Employment LEP Scheme – Delivering Kent’s Rights of Way Improvement Plan

To: **Maidstone Joint Transportation Board 14th October 2015**

Main Portfolio Area:

By: KCC, PROW & Access Service

Classification: **For recommendation**

Ward: Loose, Tovil and Bridge

Division: Environment, Planning and Enforcement

Summary: This report provides further detail on the approved LEP scheme to provide a direct active travel route between Loose and Maidstone, known as the Loose Greenway.

1.0 Introduction and Background

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is to update the JTB on progress made on the LEP approved scheme for the development of an active travel transport route between Loose Village and Maidstone Town Centre.
- 1.2 The overall purpose of the investment is to encourage cycling and walking by providing attractive, direct routes for cyclists and pedestrians to Maidstone Town Centre and reduce the need for vehicular use on short journeys to the school and local services in Loose.
- 1.3 It is intended that this project will also deliver benefits to reduce congestion, pollution and improve health and well-being for Loose residents.

2.0 Loose Greenway (LEP) Scheme

- 2.1 The scheme was approved through the LEP in 2014 and grants have been approved. Since then KCC’s PROW and Access Service have been progressing with the required land negotiations to enable construction in early 2016.
- 2.2 The scheme is supported by the North Loose Residents Association, KCC Councillor Brian Clarke and MBC Councillors, Susan Grigg and Derek Mortimer.
- 2.3 Recent consultation with the Loose Parish Council has highlighted resident concerns with a section of the route going into the Loose Valley. Residents have raised concerns in respect of the motor vehicle and motorbike use along with cyclists speeding. Residents also felt that the proposed surfacing and width would be of detriment to the conservation value of the area and crucially the Loose Amenities Association have stated that they will not enter into agreement with the County Council to widen the route to width suitable for the proposed use. Residents also believe that the gradient of the hill will deter users and would provide no benefit to the ageing community of the valley. Officers and Councillors have highlighted that this section of the route is intended to be of benefit to new and existing residents of Coxheath and pupils accessing the New Line Learning Academy (NLL) at Cornwallis.
- 2.4

A position statement on the matter was requested from Loose Parish Council who have responded as follows: “ We discussed this matter at our Parish Council meeting of the 21st Sept 2015 and the opinion of the Parish Councillors in respect of the Greenway improvements to footpath KB22 was as follows:

1. The LPC supported the view that the (Kirkdale) path to be widened back to that originally mapped in 1952 and the old surfacing exposed.
2. The LPC supported the remainder of the proposed route and of the principle of creating a traffic free pedestrian cycle route to Maidstone.
3. The LPC wish to support the popular choice of ragstone/Limestone surfacing.
4. The LPC were in favour of the timber’ gateway’ feature as shown during the presentation. We would also like further engagement on a potential ‘route symbol/logo’ with ragstone featured in this.

2.5 Suggestions were made by the public that the pavements and grass verge between Linton Crossroad and the valley could accommodate a shared pedestrian/cycle pavement. This will be investigated by officers.

2.6 Representations have also been made to support the proposed Kirkdale link. Points raised in favour have included the increase to personal security and accessibility. The current path is narrow and surfacing becomes very muddy in winter. Improvements would include surfacing and drainage. The concerns regarding vehicle use and speed can be addressed by the introduction of chicanes and barriers at either end of the path. Further representations have stated that the Kirkdale route is of far less a gradient than the road alternatives and therefore would be more attractive.

2.7 The Kent Local Access Forum supports the improvements in particular for the connectivity of the non-motorised network and evidenced demand from less able users, parents with children in pushchairs, cyclists and equestrians.

2.8 Attached to this report is an outline plan of proposed longer distance route for reference of the locations mentioned in this report. Until such time as an agreeable solution to the Coxheath/NLL link is found the project is being confined to the area between the Loose Primary School at Lancet Lane to Maidstone Town Centre. Works to upgrade the first section between Cripple St and Lancet Lane are expected to commence this winter.

2.9 ***Members of the JTB are invited to recommend whether further alternatives into the valley should be sought, or determine that a Highways Act Section 26 “Creation by Order” for the “Kirkdale” link into the valley should be pursued.***

2.10 Further engagement is planned in October with the Primary School and those residents of Shepway and Westwood Roads whose property abuts the path being improved.

2.11 Consultation with the management companies for the Riverside flats, off Clifford Way/Hart Street, are also programmed for October.

3.0 Financial

3.1 The project has an approved £250,000 budget, further amounts may be forthcoming through developer contributions.

3.2 Approximately £150,000 of the funding is committed at this stage.

4.0 Legal implications

4.1 The route follows the alignment of an existing Public Right of Way and as such the planning authorities have confirmed this scheme falls within permitted development rights.

4.2 Creation agreements have been secured for stretches between Lancet Lane and Cripple St to upgrade the existing Public Footpath to Public Bridleway status to facilitate cycling.

4.3 A section of existing Public Footpath along the River Medway is to be upgraded by way of a Cycle Tracks conversion Order to formalise access rights that reflect the current use.

4.4 Decisions on the appropriate legal approach to the link to NLL and Coxheath are outstanding.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 The scheme remains on course for delivery in 2016 with designs and stakeholder engagement progressing well other than on the section from Loose School south.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 The Officer recommends members review the proposed Outline Plans and contact the Lead Officer with any comments or recommendations they wish to provide.

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| Future Meeting if applicable: | Date: |
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| Contact Officer: | |
| Reporting to: | |

Annex List

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| <i>Annex 1</i> | <i>Scheme Proposal / Plan</i> |
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