
**Maidstone Sustainable Access to Education and Employment LEP Scheme –
River Medway Towpath**

To: **Maidstone Joint Transportation Board 21st March 2017**

Main Portfolio Area:

By: Colin Finch, KCC, PROW & Access Service

Classification: **For Information**

Ward: Allington, Bridge, Fant, and Barming

Division: Environment, Planning and Enforcement

Summary: This report provides an update on the approved LEP scheme to improve the River Medway towpath between Barming Bridge and Aylesford Bridge

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 a traffic free sustainable transport route alongside the River Medway from urban fringes into central Maidstone.
- 1.2 The overall purpose of the investment is to encourage cycling and walking by providing attractive, direct routes for cyclists and pedestrians to access employment, education and other facilities in Maidstone Town Centre and along the River Medway corridor.
- 1.3 It is intended that this project will also deliver benefits to health, transport and enhance the desirability of Maidstone as a location for employment and residence.

2.0 Sustainable Access to Maidstone Education and Employment (LEP) Scheme

- 2.1 The scheme was approved by leaders of both KCC and MBC through the LEP in 2014. An information paper was submitted to this board in October 2015 and this report provides the latest information.
- 2.2 The design phase of the project was completed in late April 2016 and the procurement process for the construction tender was approved by the County Council's Strategic Commissioning Board in May this year following the receipt of the detailed design drawings.
- 2.3 Two construction tenders have now been awarded and have commenced. The Aylesford to Allington section being constructed by BAM Nuttall. The Allington Lock to Barming section being constructed by EOS Civil Engineering, a Kent based company known to the PROW & Access Service.
- 2.4 Ecological mitigation had taken place through the summer months. This included reptile relocation, a new Dormice corridor and the planting of numerous trees. More of which will be planted this coming Spring. Flood Defence Consents were awarded for the works at the end of September.
- 2.5 Construction started on site week commencing 26th September 2016.
- 2.6 KCC officers attended the Maidstone Cyclefest on 24th September to provide information to the public on the scheme as well as promoting the existing local cycle network.

- 2.7 Work has commenced on branding, signage and parking infrastructure to re-enforce the route as a destination and attractive community facility working with the Maidstone River Park Partnership.
- 2.8 A web page has been created to provide information on the required closures along with the usual “on-site” notices. The town centre section close to Lockmeadow is now closed.
- 2.9 A number of images of the works are attached at appendix 1.
- 2.10 Works from Allington Lock to South Street Barming are due to be completed by March 31st. The area adjacent to East Farleigh lock may however remain closed due to works being completed by the Environment Agency.

3.0 Financial

- 3.1 The projects approved £3 Million budget is currently estimated to be reduced to £2.7 Million.
- 3.2 £2 Million is to be provided through a LEP grant.
- 3.3 MBC have completed a capital contribution agreement towards the scheme of an amount up to £500,000.
- 3.4 Aylesford Parish Council has also approved a financial contribution of £20k towards the scheme.

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 Although cyclists already use the route, unchallenged, a Cycle Tracks Conversion Order will be progressed for the avoidance of doubt and to formalise access rights that reflect the current use.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The scheme remains on course for delivery in spring 2017 subject to weather conditions and river levels. The area of the route within Tonbridge and Malling Borough has been diverted away from the riverside and failing bank.

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

Annex List

<i>Annex 1</i>	<i>Scheme progress photos</i>
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