

STATEMENT TO CALNE AREA BOARD 12 MARCH 2019

CHIPPENHAM TO CALNE CYCLEWAY

My statement to the Area Board is as follows:

The creation of the permissive cycle route and erection of the bridge was a project promoted by the former North Wiltshire District Council in 1999/2000.

The cyclepath is known as the North Wilts Rivers Route. It is a 16km shared use cycle and pedestrian path. Part of the route is owned by Wiltshire Council, Chippenham Borough Lands Trust or is within the control of the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust, all of whom provide access free of charge. The remainder, around 7km, is owned by eight different private landowners and leased to Wiltshire Council. These landowners have historically been unwilling to commit to any long term arrangement and the land is let on individual leases of 5 yearly terms without any security of tenure (ie no automatic right to renew) and with rents that are usually increased at each renewal. The leases are all due for renewal on 1 April 2019. The non-renewal of the leases and consequent closure of the cyclepath was approved by the Corporate Leadership Team as part of the revenue savings plan for 2019/20 but has been postponed by Members subject to an appropriate consultation programme being undertaken. To date seven of the eight landowners have confirmed willingness to renew and we expect the eighth to confirm shortly and the cyclepath should remain open until at least the end of March 2020.

The bridge was built as a landmark structure and as one of a dozen Millennium Bridges in the Country. Following creation of the Unitary Authority, the bridge has been inspected as part of the Highways asset stock although not strictly a highway structure. So far only periodic inspections have been carried out and the costs borne by the highways budget. It is now apparent that the bridge needs extensive maintenance works to preserve it and quotes have been obtained for this work.

At last night's Calne Without Parish Council the sum of £70,000+ was mentioned so, as this figure has entered the public domain, I will confirm that the figures quoted to me by the Highways Department are in excess of £70,000.

That is the information I have.

Christine Crisp

12 March 2019