

Route 403 Cross Council Working Group Update to Calne Area LHFIG – January 2023

The Working Group was established last year to “preserve and enhance the 403 Sustrans Route between Chippenham and Avebury as a multi-user route for active travel and leisure, well-being and commuting purposes, and to promote its use to, and care by, the local community.”

The Group now comprises representatives from Calne Town Council, Calne Without Parish Council, Bremhill Parish Council, Cherhill Parish Council, Chippenham Town Council, Wiltshire Council’s Rights of Way Team, Sustrans, Sustainable Calne and the Chippenham Cycle Network Development Group.

Progress to date includes:

- The route between Chippenham and Avebury has been cycled by members of the group. Issues relating to route alignment, width, surfacing and signage have been recorded and mapped.
- Requirements for replacement and supplementary signage have been identified in detail. Additional signs have now been received from Sustrans and we are making arrangements to install.
- The Group have been liaising with Sustrans on the potential diversion of a section of the route to the east of Yatesbury, where the existing surface along the margin of a field is poor and suffers from obstruction by the adjacent hedgerow. An alternative route along a byway has been identified. A site visit has been arranged with Sustrans to assess the proposal, which is due to take place on 17th January.
- A site visit is being arranged with Hills Waste Management to inspect and assess potential improvements to the surface through the Hills site.
- The section between Calne and Black Dog halt has been inspected for barriers to wheelchair or mobility scooter users. Work is in hand by Wiltshire Council to fill in the cattle grid at the exit from Castlefields Park, which represents a significant barrier. Additional work to assess accessibility restrictions along the Calne to Chippenham section is to be undertaken.
- Two benches provided by Sustainable Calne have been installed along the old railway line.

Much of the route between Calne and Chippenham follows the old railway line. This is reliant on leases with eight landowners, seven of which are five-year leases due for renewal in March 2024. Because of this, Wiltshire Council has engaged Sustrans to undertake a feasibility study to identify possible alternative route options for NCN route 403 between Chippenham and Calne. This study is due to complete at the end of March.

The Working Group is closely following the progress of this study. Members of the Group are mindful of the popularity of the route with both cyclists and walkers and are keen to see the leases renewed, or, preferably, converted into longer-term leases. (This would, in turn, open up the possibility of longer-term investment into improvements in surfacing.)

Cllr John Barnes
Calne Without Parish Council