

## HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SERVICES

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### **KENNET AND AVON CANAL - TOWPATH SURFACING WORKS**

#### **Purpose of Report**

To consider the recommendation by the Devizes Transport and Air Quality Group to provide a bound surface finish on the towpath between Prison Bridge and Town Bridge, Devizes.

#### **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

The proposal meets two of the priorities of the Council's Business Plan. These priorities being:

**Outcome 3** – Everyone in Wiltshire lives in a high quality environment.

**Outcome 5** – People in Wiltshire have healthy, active and high quality lives.

#### **Background**

In October this year a lock paddle was left open overnight which allowed water to pour down through the lock causing severe erosion of the embankment over a length of about 150m. As a result, the Canal and River Trust need to carry out a series of emergency repairs to bring the towpath back in to use.

One element of the Devizes Transport Strategy is to encourage residents to replace car trips by walking and cycling and encourage more children to actively get to school. The tow path provides a backbone to the cycling and walking network in the town. But in many areas the quality of the towpath surface is poor and does not lend itself to these types of trips.

Earlier this year the council worked in partnership with the Canal and River Trust to improve the towpath surface from London Road to New Park Road. The length of towpath improved is shown in Appendix 1 and the improvements have been welcomed by many in the town. Appendix 2 shows what the towpath section looked like before and after the work were carried.

The unfortunate incident and resulting damage to the towpath means that the Canal and River Trust's contractors will be on site repairing the damage. There is an opportunity to make some financial savings if the Council acts swiftly and decides to pay for the surface improvements to the damaged section of towpath. However, to provide the maximum impact the Transport and Air Quality Group considers that the entire length of towpath surface between Prison Bridge (Lock 47) and Town Bridge (Lock 50) should be improved. This is a length of approximately 685m and is shown in Appendix 1.

#### **Main Considerations for the Council**

The damage to the towpath means that the council can secure savings to the surface improvement works if the work is carried out at the same time. The towpath will also only need to be closed once as the repair and improvement work will be carried out at the same time.

#### **Safeguarding Considerations**

None

#### **Public Health Implications**

Improvements to the canal surface will encourage more residents to walk and cycle contributing to their own wellbeing and having a positive impact on the air quality in Devizes.

### **Environmental Impact of the Proposal**

A reduction in car trips in Devizes will have a positive impact on air quality in the town.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

None identified.

### **Risk Assessment**

None.

### **Financial Implications**

The Canal and River Trust have estimated that the cost of resurfacing the section of towpath between Prison Bridge and Town Bridge is £180,000. If the surfacing work is carried out when emergency repairs take place then a saving of £15,000 can be realised.

Therefore, the Devizes and Air Quality Group are proposing to allocate £165,000 from developer contributions to pay for the surfacing work.

It should be noted that officers will endeavour to find other sources of funding to reduce the burden on the finite S106 pot.

### **Legal Implications**

The Council will enter into a grant agreement with the Canal and River Trust to ensure effective delivery of the project.

### **Options Considered**

The only other option to be consider is to do nothing.

This would miss an opportunity to make a financial saving of £15,000. In addition, combining the surfacing work with the repair work would significantly reduce the amount of time that the towpath had to be closed if the surfacing work were to take place at a later date.

### **Reason for Proposal**

The surface improvement to the towpath will encourage residents to use the towpath more for walking and cycling trips. This is likely to deliver not only individual health benefits but wider environmental benefits by contributing to air quality improvements in the town. Doing the work alongside repair work realises the financial savings.

### **Proposal**

To endorse the recommendation by the Devizes Transport and Air Quality group to provide a bound surface finish on the towpath between Prison Bridge and Town Bridge, Devizes.

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**The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:**  
None