

Informal Meeting with Canal & River Trust 20th November 2024

PRESENT

Sheila Chapman, Paul Kerr, Rebecca Mason (C&R Trust), Ann Wright (Clerk)

Purpose of Meeting: To discuss project to improve the towpath between Waverton and Beeston.

It was discussed as funding is limited we need to consider what standard we want the towpath to be and where to undertake works to the best advantage.

Towpath Surface

It was discussed that the path from Golden Nook bridge is in a very poor condition in places very narrow and uneven.

For a path to be considered accessible people need to be able to walk, run, cycle and push a pram or wheelchair on it.

It was discussed that a fully tarmacked surface would be very expensive for example a 7km stretch in Lancaster has cost over £1m. It would also not be in-keeping with the rural nature of the area and be over engineered for the expected footfall.

It was reported that the Trust does not normally level and install grasscrete on towpaths as the paths would need regular mowing.

A towpath in Disley was surfaced with Welsh slate hand laid by volunteers which cost £20k for 300m.

It was noted CW&C had undertake a scheme to resurface a BOAT in Farndon¹, it was agreed the Clerk would contact CW&C to see what the works had cost.

Funding

It was noted that a number of projects have been funded by S106 and CIL funding from developments.

Another source of funding is the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Length of Works

It was discussed which stretch of the towpath should be prioritised.

It was noted the stretch from Golden Nook to Waverton, 4km, is an obvious stretch to do as the towpath would then be surfaced up to Ellesmere Port.

It was noted Golden Nook bridge to Tiverton is approx. 8km and that the route is not all in the Parish Council's area.

It was suggested that a phased approach needs to be devised.

It was discussed working on the towpath from Golden Nook to Red Lane is approx. 2km would be a good project which would have vehicle access and have space for welfare compounds. It was noted where materials have to be moved by boat it increases the costs of the works.

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/share/mjLQ9ZYvdqM7LkYn/>>

It was discussed that standard towpaths are 1.8 / 2m width although in rural areas 1.5m is usually acceptable. It was noted Sustrans require a 3m path width which is not viable.

Conservation Area

It was noted the towpath is in a conservation area. It was stated this would only have a limited impact on the project and that the Trust's heritage adviser and landscape team would assist with the project.

Next Steps

It was agreed to undertake a site visit in the new year with a concept engineer to identify a suitable scheme.

It was noted the Trust would retain historic setts which are often under bridges.

It was confirmed the Trust has included this project in their business plan for next year.

It was discussed it would be advantageous to meet neighbouring Parish Councils and CW&C to get their involvement in the project.

Next meeting

TBC.

Ann Wright
27/11/2024