

CABINET

9 NOVEMBER 2011

HOCKLEY VIADUCT AND NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK ROUTE 23: PROGRESS REPORT

REPORT OF HEAD OF ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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RECENT REFERENCES:

[CAB1509](#) Hockley Viaduct - 19 September 2007.

[CAB2167](#) National Cycle Network Route 23 and the Hockley Viaduct - 6 July 2011.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its meeting in July this year, Cabinet approved the proposal to incorporate the Hockley Viaduct into the final stretch of National Cycle Network Route 23 which links Reading right through to the Isle of Wight. Members were also keen to ensure that the Route provided a car-free option for completing work journeys into Winchester from the Park and Ride South car park.

The project has progressed well since this approval was given. However, following further assessment of the Viaduct and expert advice from the County's bridges expert, a decision is needed now from Members in order to progress works to the Viaduct which – if approved – can only reasonably be carried out during a twelve week 'window' from July 2012. The works would both prevent further deterioration of the structure and put it in a good state in preparation for integration with Route 23 in due course. Most of the works would be needed whether or not the Viaduct were integrated into the Route.

In order to manage these works in a cost-effective and sensitive way, Cabinet is asked to approve the appointment of Sustrans on a consultancy basis to procure and oversee them.

A further report will be brought to Cabinet early in 2012, providing a full project update with designs, costings and legal arrangements for the future management of

the Viaduct. Some key developments are recorded in this report, but its main function is to seek Member endorsement to proceed with the appointment of Sustrans.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet:

1. approves the appointment of Sustrans to project manage and procure the repair works to the Viaduct in section 2.2 (ii to vi) of this report;
2. authorises the Head of Access and Infrastructure to progress the appointment and direction of Sustrans, in consultation with the Head of Legal Services, and that a direction be made under Contract Procedure Rule 3.3(a) accordingly;
3. adds £48,630 to the project budget to be funded by grant from the LEADER programme to the original capital allocation for the project, taking the total project budget to a total of £548,630;
4. authorises the Head of Access and Infrastructure, under Financial Procedure Rule 6.4, to incur expenditure of up to £110,000, as set out in the table at para 8.11 of this report, from the above total sum;
5. requires officers to report back to Cabinet early in 2012 on the results of the tendering exercise managed by Sustrans on the Council's behalf, with a view to seeking agreement to the next stages of the project.

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REPORT OF HEAD OF ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

1 History/Background

- 1.1 In July this year, Cabinet considered a paper setting out a proposal for a useful and sympathetic future for the Hockley Viaduct ([CAB2167](#) National Cycle Network Route 23 and the Hockley Viaduct - 6 July 2011). In summary, this entailed putting the Viaduct back into a good state of repair with the intention of incorporating it into the Sustrans National Cycle Network, forming part of the last stage of Route 23 linking Reading through to the Isle of Wight. A plan showing this last section of the Route is attached at Appendices 1 and 2.
- 1.2 Members approved the plan in principle, including the transfer of management of the Viaduct to Sustrans, and supported the potential of the scheme to create a car-free link into the town centre for commuters arriving at the Park and Ride South car park.
- 1.3 A formal project group was formed shortly after the July Cabinet meeting, and officers from the City Council, County Council and Sustrans have been working on the developing plans. Although it was originally intended that the next project report would be brought to Cabinet in January 2012, it has become clear that Members need to take some earlier decisions in order to prevent further deterioration of the Viaduct, and to accommodate such works at a time which will not be damaging in biodiversity terms.
- 1.4 This report focuses on the key issues requiring Member attention at this time, with a further project report to follow, as originally planned, early in 2012.

2 Essential Repairs to the Viaduct

- 2.1 Over recent weeks, the project team has commissioned initial ecological and technical studies. In addition, the County Council's specialist advisor on bridges has played a significant role in reviewing existing surveys and assessing short and longer term priorities for the Viaduct.
- 2.2 Members are aware that in order to transfer the day to day management of the Viaduct to Sustrans as part of the wider Cycle Route 23, the City Council would have to return it to a good state of repair. Works include:
 - (i) removing trees growing from the internal and external faces of the parapet walls (already in hand);
 - (ii) removing vegetation from the track bed;

- (iii) re-building, where necessary, and re-pointing brickwork of the internal and external faces of the parapet walls
- (iv) reducing the height of the walls to 1400mm (the minimum height to enable cyclists to use the route). The lowering of the parapet wall could be undertaken along its entire length or just at several view points along the structure. This will be considered further as part of the design and procurement of the works.
- (v) taking down and rebuilding brickwork refuges;
- (vi) installing a new drainage system for the Viaduct to ensure that water drains out of the structure, thus preventing future damage.

2.3 In effecting any such repairs, the project team would be mindful of key considerations which will impact on work methods, timing and the commissioning of specialist advice. These include:

2.3.1 Biodiversity: Any engineering or clearance work is likely to have an impact on the flora and fauna on and around the Viaduct, and every effort would be made to minimise this impact. Initial advice has already been sought from the agencies with an interest in biodiversity, such as Natural England, The Environment Agency, and the Council's own Landscape and Open Spaces Team. A bat survey has already been commissioned. In discussions with officers, Natural England indicated that they would have preferred not to see the vegetation stripped from the Viaduct, but it was agreed that once the concrete base is in place it may be possible to 'soften' the track bed to allow some vegetation to return.

2.3.2 Historic Environment: Whilst the Viaduct is not considered suitable for national Listing as an historic structure, it is nevertheless of significant local importance. The Council's Historic Environment Team has advised on best practice in relation to the repairs, including the appointment of a local specialist to specify the correct mortar to be used, and to provide additional guidance and on-site training. Specialist supervision has been also commissioned for the clearance of trees from the parapet walls.

2.3.3 Public Access: Hampshire County Council officers are being consulted about technical and procedural requirements in relation to the proposed public use(s) of the Route..

3 Managing the Works to the Viaduct

- 3.3 Sustrans has already expressed interest in overseeing works to complete the Cycle Route, including those to the Viaduct. They have extensive experience of this work, including work with bridges and similar structures. They are also well placed to seek competitive prices for such works.
- 3.4 The Council is clearly not in a position to take a decision about the whole section of Route 23, as design and costing work is still ongoing. However, it is clear that most of the works listed above will need to be carried out whether

or not the rest of the Route is approved, in order to keep the Viaduct in a safe and usable state.

3.5 Sustrans has therefore offered to manage the works to the Viaduct for a fixed fee of £35,000, which is considered competitive by officers. The contract would include:

- preparation of a design and tender documents for the repair of the Viaduct as outlined in section 2 above, including putting the parapets into a suitable condition to form part of the National Cycle Route Network Route 23. Details of the design and specification of the works would be developed and agreed with the Head of Access and Infrastructure in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport;
- preparation of a planning application for the work to the Viaduct if this is deemed necessary (eg for changing the height of the parapet walls);
- conducting relevant consultation with specialist bodies (eg The Environment Agency) in relation to the works;
- managing any further environmental surveys through the Sustrans ecologist (although the cost of any specialists commissioned by Sustrans during survey or construction periods would be excluded from this fee);
- preparing any other necessary consent applications in advance of carrying out the works;
- submitting invitations to tender to a range of suitably qualified contractors;
- evaluating tenders received, and agreeing with Winchester City Council the appointment of the preferred contractor;
- acting as 'engineer' for the works and managing the contractor's site activity;
- helping to set up and taking an active role in a Steering Group of community representatives to build ownership and enthusiasm for the project.

4 Timing of Repairs

4.1 It is apparent, following discussions with the wide range of statutory agencies, professional advisors and Sustrans that the 'window' for repair work is very restricted. This is the key reason why an early decision is required from Members to proceed with the Viaduct repairs.

4.2 Constraints include:

- a) *Bats*: the breeding season is around May/June time, so the works programme cannot realistically start before July. Roosting season begins in October.
- b) *Birds*: nesting season is from April to September, so the stripping of vegetation needs to be carried out outside these months.
- c) *Frost and cold*: re-building and re-pointing require frost-free temperatures, therefore the works cannot be carried out between November and March.

4.3 In order to factor in these considerations, the project team proposes that works take place in the twelve week window between July and October. It will be necessary to have any consents (eg planning approval, bat licence) in place and the tender process completed in time for a July start. Failure to start on site in July will mean that the whole project would need to be deferred to 2013. Whilst this is not a problem in itself, officers are aware that public pressure is mounting on the Council in relation to the condition of the Viaduct and early action would be well received. This report is timed to enable Members to make a choice between a project starting in 2012 or one starting in 2013.

5 Further Repairs and Maintenance

5.1 With the Viaduct in good condition, Sustrans have indicated that a 'dowry' of £100,000 over twenty years would be required for operational maintenance of the structure (although the Council currently has no budget provision for this). The legal agreement drawn up with them (likely to be in the form of a long term lease) will include a requirement for regular inspection of the structure and monitoring of the brickwork, in particular the brick arches.

5.2 Once the Viaduct has dried out after the proposed repair works, the need for any further brickworks repairs and re-pointing can be assessed. At that time the need for any cleaning of the brickwork should also be considered. It is likely that Sustrans would regard these last works as the responsibility of the Council, as part of its commitment to 'making good' the structure before transferring the management. It is not possible at this stage to estimate the costs of such final works.

5.3 Discussions are still ongoing with Sustrans in relation to a potential lease, details of which will be brought back to Members early next year.

6 Legal Permissions

6.1 Officers have met with County Council colleagues to discuss the status of the Viaduct and the rest of this section of Route 23 in terms of public use. As outlined in the previous Cabinet report, it is likely that there will be a need for a 'Creation Order' for parts of the Route, which would enable full access by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Whilst it is generally understood that cyclists and riders do not mix well, in terms of rural paths, the project team is keen to maintain broad access to the Route if at all possible. Options are still under consideration.

6.2 Public access for the full section of the Route will also depend on permissions from local landowners, which include the City Council, County Council and Winchester College. Discussions are already under way and further details will be brought back to Members in the next Cabinet report.

7 Community Engagement

7.1 The Viaduct is a popular local feature, and the Friends of Hockley Viaduct is itself an expression of this interest. Local cycling groups have also demonstrated their support of the emerging plans for Route 23. Officers are keen to build on this natural interest in shaping a successful project, which in itself fits well with the Community Outcome of building Active Communities.

7.2 There are three other reasons to ensure that local people are engaged in the developing plans for Route 23, which are:

a) a duty to consult as part of the Creation Order process and also as part of any planning applications that are required;

b) the potential to develop a permanent Community Stakeholder Group of local volunteers which would work with Sustrans to support the management, promotion and education activity associated with Route 23 in the Winchester area;

c) the close involvement of local people would be a requirement for any future successful Heritage Lottery Bid related to the enhancement or interpretation of the Viaduct.

7.3 In order to raise the level of community engagement, an open meeting has been organised for Thursday 17th November at Shawford Parish Hall, to be hosted by the Leader. Local residents and stakeholder groups have been invited to a session which will outline plans so far, and invite participants – through a workshop based on the Council’s successful ‘Blueprint’ approach – to feed in their ideas and aspirations.

7.4 It is hoped that a number of participants from this meeting will express interest in forming the nucleus of a Sustrans Community Stakeholder Group.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

8 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS

8.1 This project supports delivery of the High Quality Environment outcome of the Sustainable Community Strategy by encouraging people to use forms of transport other than the car. In so doing, it also addresses one of the five priority areas of the Strategy, which is to reduce the District’s carbon footprint. The completion of Route 23 is included in the High Quality Environment Change Plan.

8.2 By the same token, it supports delivery of the Active Communities outcome by encouraging cycling and walking, and the Economic Prosperity outcome by facilitating ‘low carbon’ tourism.

9 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Members will be aware that the capital programme includes an amount of £500,000, the use of which Members approved in July “in a way which best fits the desired outcome of repairing the Viaduct and ensuring its long term maintenance as part of Route 23”. The report included a very preliminary total project cost estimate of around £1.2 million, although it anticipated that this figure might be reduced through careful design and tendering.
- 8.2 The further assessment work undertaken since July has provided a better idea of the likely costs involved. Based on the preliminary estimates provided by Hampshire County Council, and depending upon the eventual design option selected and the tendering results, the estimate to undertake the Viaduct repair works as set out in this report is in the region of £440,000.
- 8.3 This figure does not include any contingencies or contractor set-up costs. In addition, there would be the management fee of £35,000 for Sustrans, as set out in section 3 above.
- 8.4 A budget of up to £50,000 from the capital programme allocation was approved by Cabinet in July for undertaking preliminary survey and clearance work. Officers then submitted a successful bid for funding from the LEADER Programme, bringing £48,630 to the project. However, this grant could not be used to offset the cost of works which had to take place before the funding decision was confirmed, so costs for vegetation clearance of around £25,000 have been incurred from original £50,000 allocation. Members are asked to add the £48,630 of funding from the LEADER programme to the original allocation for the project. (Some of these preliminary costs will be revenue costs and will therefore be financed by a release from the Major Investment Reserve – as opposed to being financed by a release from the useable capital receipts reserve).
- 8.5 Officers continue to explore other options for funding, and the scheme is under consideration by Sustrans for a share of its [Connect2](#) funding. Connect2 is part funded by the Big Lottery Fund grant after the UK public voted the scheme the winner of the People's Millions Lottery contest on ITV1 in December 2007. A sum of between £100,000 and £200,000 has been mentioned, although any grant will depend on the level of take-up by schemes which had been previously approved for the Connect2 programme. A site visit has already taken place, and an application has now been invited and is being prepared by officers.
- 8.6 Positive discussions between the Leader and the County’s Executive Member have also led to verbal confirmation of funding from the Local Transport Plan of up to £250,000. Officers are discussing the potential release date of this funding, which would see the enhancement of the Route 23 scheme to include cycle loan provision at the Park and Ride South car park.

- 8.7 Given the emergence of these two potential funding streams, and the narrow window for Viaduct repairs, officers have not yet pursued a Heritage Lottery Fund bid. It is felt that this might be more helpful for a later phase of enhancements, providing money for interpretation, education and events based on community input.
- 8.8 Some preliminary conversations have also taken place with the Council's Open Space Project Officer about the potential of enhancement funds (eg for benches or art works) from developer contributions, helping to shape the Winchester stretch of Route 23 as a 'linear park' and adding additional interest for those using it.
- 8.9 Whilst Members and officers have therefore continued to seek external funding for the full project, the speed with which it is now necessary to commit to the Sustrans management contract for Viaduct Repairs makes it necessary for Members to approve a further release of £10,000.
- 8.10 A paper will be returned to Cabinet in early 2012, as previously indicated, reporting on the outcome of the Sustrans tendering process and providing additional financial costings for the project as a whole.
- 8.11 A simple summary of the project finances is set out below:

Funds allocated to project	Funds deployed	Nature of income/expenditure	Committed or proposed
500,000		WCC capital programme allocation	Allocated – subject to Financial Procedure Rules
48,630		LEADER grant	Confirmed
	25,000	Vegetation clearance	Committed
	48,630	ecological surveys, topographical surveys, design and feasibility work for Route 23 as a whole	Part committed, but pre-agreed for specific items with LEADER
	35,000	Sustrans management fee	Proposed
548,630	108,630	TOTALS	

8.12 Prudential Indicators

	2011/12	2012/13	TOTAL + Ongoing
	£000	£000	£000
<i>Project Expenditure Proposals: Hockley Viaduct</i>	110	440	550
TOTAL	110	440	550
Capital Programme			
Current Budget	500	0	500
<u>FUNDING</u>			
Capital Receipts	0	440	440
MIR	60	0	60
LEADER Funding	50	0	50
TOTAL Revenue & capital costs	110	440	550
<u>PRUDENTIAL CODE</u>			
<i>Interest on Capital</i>	0.95%	0.63%	1.40%
Full Yr Effect on Council Tax (Band D, £)	0.01	0.06	0.15

9.0 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 9.1. The rationale for progressing works to the Viaduct ahead of a decision about costs and plans for its integration into Route 23 is that a delay would contribute to the further degradation of the structure which in turn could escalate eventual project costs and/or lead to its becoming unsafe. Effectively, Members are being asked to mitigate against these risks by supporting the proposed works.
- 9.2. The timing of the proposed works seeks to reduce the risk of harm for the natural environment, as well a further harm to a much-loved local feature.
- 9.3. Specialist advice has been sought from a wide variety of agencies to ensure that works are planned in a way which improves outcomes and manages risks.
- 9.4. The key risk for Members is that of not being able to complete Route 23, or indeed not being able to integrate the Viaduct into it, for any reason – for example, issues of cost or land ownership. In this case, Members may feel that had invested in the Viaduct without getting ‘best value’ for this expenditure. However, most of the repairs would still need to be done, and bringing them forward has – as indicated above - the advantage of reducing the risk of bigger repair liabilities at a future stage. Moreover, Members will have a final opportunity to decide whether to commit to these repairs once the tender report is returned.

- 9.3 There is an additional risk that the cost of the repair works may exceed the available budget, however Members will have a chance to review this once the tendering process has been completed and before any further contracts are issued in the new year.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Winchester City Council, Hockley Bridge Inspections – Hampshire County Council August 2011 (hard copy available in Members' Room)

Further information on the National Cycle Network can be found on www.sustrans.org.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: National Cycle Network Route 23: Stage 2 Plan 1

Appendix 2: National Cycle Network Route 23: Stage 2 Plan 2